

THE HEBRAIC BIOGRAPHY



OF
Y-SHUA

WA Liebenberg

**בָּשָׁרֶשׁ כָּל־אַנְשֵׁי־הָעֵדָה
וְכָל־מִצְרָיִם וְכָל־עֲדֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל
בְּבָשָׁרֶשׁ כָּל־אַנְשֵׁי־הָעֵדָה
וְכָל־מִצְרָיִם וְכָל־עֲדֵי־יִשְׂרָאֵל**

UNDERSTAND THE DIFFICULT WORDS OF YASHAYAH

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Bv

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to
the Hebrews, YHWH's very elect.

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Modern scholars have greater access to documents and research developments relating to first-century Judaism than at any other time in history. Many scholars, who only a few years ago were trying to disprove the Bible, are now working together to gain a better understanding of the ancient culture in which Y'shua lived. Archaeological finds have become so plentiful that some have hailed these times as the beginning of a golden age of biblical archaeology.

All of these discoveries have not only given us further proof of the veracity of the Bible, but have given us a greater understanding of the period in which Y'shua lived out His life on the earth and further evidence of the Jewishness of His teaching. He was Jewish and His teachings reflect His Jewishness.

The church at Rome was admonished by Paul that its faith was never intended to be a denial of its Jewish roots; but rather a branch that "should" grew out of these roots. The essence of this study is that without Judaism, there would be no Christianity (although been heavily corrupted by the Roman Catholic Church).

Perhaps the most convincing evidence of the totally Jewish essence of Y'shua is His method of teaching. Over the past fifty years, studies of the Jewish nature of the early Church have brought to light many new insights into the First Century documents, especially concerning the idioms and Galilean teaching methods of Y'shua. In this exegesis we study the customs, traditions, life cycles and common idioms in the life of Y'shua and His disciples.

From the Sages

Accustom your tongue to say "I do not know".

(Berachos 4a) Iyar 6

"While no human being can know everything, some people cannot admit any ignorance about anything. For them, any admission of lack of knowledge threatens their fragile egos. Although they try to impress others with their omniscience, they accomplish the reverse, because the more they try to conceal their ignorance, the more prominent it becomes.

Furthermore, the only way we can acquire knowledge is by accepting that we do not have it. People who claim to know everything cannot learn. Therefore, many opportunities to learn pass them by, and their denying their ignorance actually increases their ignorance.

We do not have to know everything, and no one expects us to. Today, more than ever, with the unprecedented amount of information available, no one can be a universal genius. The simple statement, 'I don't know', is actually highly respected.

We should also open ourselves to acquiring knowledge from every source. Learning from someone whom we consider to be inferior to ourselves should not be demeaning. As the Psalmist says, 'I became wise by learning from all my teachers' (Psalms 119:99). A willingness to learn from everyone is a sign of greatness, while affecting omniscience actually betrays ignorance".

May we all admit that there are many things that we do not know, and may we all be willing to learn from anyone and everyone. (From page 216 of; *Growing Each Day*, by Rabbi Abraham J. Twerski, M.D., pub. Mesorah Publications, Ltd., New York, 1992.)

WARNING

It seems unbelievable that multitudes follow and serve
a God Whom they do not know
- not by Name, neither by His True Will or Purpose!

This study is a *MUST* for every professing Believer on earth.
To fully understand this study, you must start from the beginning.
To read sections only will cause confusion and misunderstanding of the truth.

The *Old King James Version* of the Bible has been used and not *The Scriptures* for a specific purpose, and that is to make explanations easier to understand for the new student of the Roots.

**Elohim, through the Holy Spirit,
is preparing to restore His Assemble to the biblical principles
found in the Judaic contours of its formative years.
The way it will happen is not by an "outpouring" of the Holy Spirit alone
but through a Word of Elohim revival.**

Here is the promise of YHWH:

**"My doctrine shall drop as the rain,
my speech shall distill as the dew,
as the small rain upon the tender herb,
and as the showers upon the grass:"**

Deut 32:2

The latter rain will be a rain of truth.

What Christians need today is the following:

"...the washing of water by the word".
Eph 5:25-26

"Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path".
Psalm 119:105

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FOREWORD

The purpose of this exegesis on the Gospel of Matthew is not to repeat what has already been presented in other works. Rather, I hope to bring fresh insight into the Scriptures from a Hebraic perspective. The book of Matthew is my first attempt, outside of the Eschatology Scriptures, to enable students and church leaders to reach a greater depth of understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures.

In this study, we're going to explore the Jewish background of the Believers' faith and some of the implications this has for Believers today. Having taught on the topic of the "Hebraic Roots of Christianity" for several years now, there are a few things I've learned along the way. I've learned that we can't take anything for granted when we try to teach others, because we're all at different levels of spiritual growth and maturity. I'm confident that this study will be a beginning point for many of you. Regardless of our level of understanding on this subject, I'm convinced it will be a useful overview for growing deeper in our understanding of the foundations of our faith.

My aim is to make this a "practical, hands on, how to" kind of teaching. The theoretical is important, but I'm concerned with helping people to get started; because if we never start restoring our lost heritage, we can never be, in my estimation, truly what God desires for us to become.

I've also learned that many are resistant to this concept concerned that by reintroducing the Jewishness of our faith, we somehow violate the spirit of God's grace. So I have chosen to introduce the subject by extending an invitation - an invitation to explore the riches of God's grace and the spiritual truths God has painted within the traditions and customs of Biblical Judaism; an invitation to open the eyes of our understanding that we may better know our Jewish Messiah, and to celebrate our great salvation and redemption that the Merciful One has so graciously bestowed upon us. Anyone care to join me?

How many of you have seen the movie, "Fiddler on the Roof"? Remember the opening song? Tradition! Tradition! Anyone who has seen this movie is aware of the importance of tradition in Jewish culture. It has been with the Jewish people for several thousand years—and the foundation of Jewish life and practice has long been the Hebrew Scriptures. Every culture has its own traditions: whether it is Israel, Africa, China or the Western Church. Even those who say they are "non-traditional" have, in reality, established their own new tradition. Before you accuse me of "waxing philosophic", let me clarify by saying I only say this to point out that the issue isn't whether Believers in Y'shua have traditions or not, but **what the approach should be to those traditions**. (Why do I pronounce Jesus' name as Y'shua? It will come out in the teaching).

In this study, we're going to look into some traditions and customs that are usually identified as "Jewish". The fact is that they are actually "biblical" customs. This means that these traditions are not only significant to Jews, but that any Bible-Believer can be blessed by an understanding of Biblical culture. After all, most Christians are aware that our Messiah lived as a Jew within the land of Israel. He had a Hebrew name, Y'shua, and all His earliest disciples were Jewish.

Unfortunately, many non-Jewish believers have had little, if any, exposure to the Hebraic roots of their own faith. It's a great tragedy that the Christian community has not understood, for the most part, the rich heritage on which its faith should be built. The Jewish people themselves also need to take a fresh look at the biblical/Jewish customs to understand their true meaning and purpose. Many in the Jewish community are being challenged to see the connection between Jewish culture and the *Brit HaDasha* - the New Covenant.

Today, hundreds of thousands of Jewish people believe that Y'shua is the Messiah and the saviour of mankind. They are rediscovering that Y'shua was a Jew (and still is - since nowhere does Scripture say or suggest that he has ceased to be a Jew) and that the New Covenant is a Jewish book.

Looking at Y'shua against His Jewish background enables us to recognise and appreciate His great influence on those around Him. He was part and parcel of the world of the Jewish Sages. He was no ignorant peasant and His acquaintance with the Written and Oral Law was considerable. The biblical customs are keys to unlocking the depths of Scripture. What better way to understand the Messiah than to study the context of the New Covenant?

Now, I want to clarify that I don't think everyone needs to run out and get themselves a *yarmulke* (Jewish head cover) and *tallit* (prayer shawl) or they're second-class citizens of the Kingdom. This isn't about legalism. Salvation is NOT contingent upon keeping the Law or the customs, but is based on Y'shua's atoning sacrifice and resurrection. This is about gaining an understanding of the biblical customs and exploring the spiritual blessings to be gained from that understanding. Historically, the church has had a deficient understanding of its roots in part because of its fear of legalism. What I find ironic is that the

Christian world has often rejected the biblical/Jewish traditions and substituted non-biblical ones. The danger of legalism is always there, yet incredible spiritual blessing can be found through a biblically-based study. So we'll seek a balanced approach to understanding the importance as well as the negative aspects of traditions.

Traditions are not the only element of a Hebraic Roots study. As we begin to objectively study the New Covenant, we find there is no escaping the inherent Jewishness of faith in Y'shua. He was a traditional Jew living in the land of Israel. He called other Jews to follow Him as *Mashiach* (Messiah) the anointed one from YHWH. His early followers considered themselves to be Jews who had found the promised Messiah, and naturally continued the Jewish expression of their faith. Their acceptance of Y'shua didn't mean they converted to a new religion. The Jewish believers actually saw themselves as having received the fulfilment of what was spoken of in the *Tanakh* — the Hebrew Scriptures (Old Covenant). They understood this to mean they were now Messianic Jews who would naturally continue in their God-given heritage.

A look at Acts 21:20 confirm this: "*Thou seest, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are which believe; and they are all zealous of the law*" (*Torah* = revelation or instruction from YHWH) The early believers continued in the only lifestyle they knew, and their new understanding that Y'shua was Messiah made them even more zealous for their traditions because their eyes had been opened to the spiritual reasons behind them. I'll illustrate this in a moment, but first I want to point out that Non-Jewish Believers were not excluded. Paul wrote to them concerning their new life in Messiah: "*Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which ye have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle*" (2 Thes 2:15). These non-Jewish believers understood many of the details of the Hebrew Scriptures and embraced them. An example of this is the cup shared at Messiah's last Passover Seder. The element is not mandated in the Hebrew Scriptures, yet it became part of the tradition of Passover (there's that word again). This third cup is called the Cup of Redemption; and, although it is a rabbinical tradition, it was blessed by Y'shua Himself.

Now back to the promised illustration. I'll continue with the Passover traditions and explain the *Matzah Tosh* (*Matzah* means, of course, unleavened bread and "*tosh*" means "pouch"). The *Matzah Tosh* is a pouch with 3 separate compartments, or pockets.

The *matzah* itself has to be prepared according to certain specifications: It must be pierced, to avoid any chance of its rising and giving the appearance of containing leaven - and it must be striped, to show that it has been properly baked. During the Seder, a piece of unleavened bread is placed into each of these pockets; and at a certain point, the middle piece is taken out and broken in half. Part of the broken piece is placed back into its pocket in the *tosh* and the other is wrapped in white linen and "buried" (hidden).

The Seder continues until it is time to eat the meal itself. Afterwards, before the celebration can resume, the children are sent in search of the broken piece, which has become known as the *afikomen* (a Greek word meaning "that which comes after" or "that which comes again"). The child who finds it returns to the Father and is given a reward. Does anyone see any significance to this tradition? I have written a teaching pictorial CD about the Passover in great detail (please see Product List at the back of this book), but for now I'll cut to the chase and give the Messianic interpretation.

The description of the appearance of the *matzah* helps us to understand. When the middle *matzah* is taken from the *tosh*, it represents Y'shua being sent to earth and made visible to us. The *matzah* is then broken into two pieces: one representative of His spirit, which is returned to the *matzah tosh*. The other representative of His body, which is wrapped in white linen and buried. The *matzah* is brought back, just as Y'shua was brought back from death and the grave. The one who finds this is given a great reward, just as we are blessed when we "find" our Messiah.

It was possible this piece - the *afikomen* - that Y'shua held up before His disciples that night and said, "*This is my body, given for you*". Each year at Passover, Messianic Believers continue to "do this in remembrance" of Him; to celebrate not only our redemption from slavery to Egypt, but the greater redemption provided to us by Messiah from our slavery to sin and death.

That was just a brief explanation of one of many "pictures" of Messiah YHWH has painted in the traditions of one of the Biblical Feasts. It's like a Treasure Hunt: YHWH has placed within the traditions and customs of biblical Judaism hidden blessings that can only be discovered, only be experienced, if we know where to look. It is my desire to help all believers to discover these "buried treasures".

One of the most famous books of our time is Alex Haley's "Roots". It's been translated into many languages and even made into a film. In the book, a black American searches for his origins and ends up in a remote village on the African continent. Such genealogical research can help us both to understand our own heritage, and to appreciate the achievements of past generations. It can even help towards understanding ourselves. The Christian church should also study the Hebrew roots, manifest in the Scriptures we know as

the Old and New Covenants. Both of these, however, have their origins in distant lands with a culture and language quite foreign to us today.

The basic message of the Bible is clear. It tells us to "seek out the book of the LORD and read". "This is what the LORD says: Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls".

Yet, the way found to be "good" by previous generations tends to be forgotten by those that follow. The Arabs say that "*the road is wiser than the man*". Knowing that all who are partakers of the promise share in the heritage of Israel should motivate us to seek a better understanding of just what that heritage is. The fact that we have become increasingly distanced from the roots of our faith, gives us good reason to embark on our own spiritual genealogical search.

Scripture makes it abundantly clear that believers in Y'shua have not been planted separately from Israel but have been "*grafted in among the others*" - the others most definitely being Israel. (See Romans 11 & Ephesians 2) The facts are simply not a matter of debate. All the first disciples of Y'shua were Jewish. The entire New Covenant was written by Jews with the possible exception of Luke, (although, given the depth of understanding of Judaism displayed in his writings, he was, in all likelihood, a Jewish proselyte.) The very concept of a Messiah is nothing but Jewish.

Christianity, no matter how un-Jewish some of its current forms of expression may be, has its roots in Judaism and in the Jewish people. The Lord's Supper is rooted in the Jewish Passover and Sabbath traditions; baptism is a Jewish practice [*mikvah*]; and indeed the entire New Covenant is built on the Hebrew Bible, with its prophecies and its promise of a New Covenant, so that the New Covenant without the Old is as impossible as the second floor of a house without the first.

There is a saying, "The New is in the Old concealed, the Old is in the New revealed". I think a much better way of expressing the relation between the Hebrew & Greek Scriptures is, "The New is in the Old contained, the Old is in the New explained".

I'm going to close with one more illustration of the significance of an understanding of our "Jewish Roots". Let me ask this question: What did Y'shua mean when He spoke of an "evil eye" (some translation say "bad eyes") in Mat 6:23?

Someone not knowing the Jewish background might suppose he was talking about casting spells. But in Hebrew, having an "evil eye", means being stingy; while having a "good eye", means being generous. Y'shua is warning against lack of generosity and nothing else. Moreover, this fits the context perfectly: "*Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.... You cannot serve both God and money*".

This emphasis on "Hebraic Roots" has, or should have one glorious goal. That goal is to seek to help the Body of Messiah to more fully understand and appreciate the Scriptures in depth and to come to know our Saviour better and more intimately. What higher goal can any of us have?

CHAPTER 1

JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY, YHWH'S BROKEN VEHICLES TO ACHIEVE HIS PLAN

Judaism is the original system that YHWH himself designed, approved and gave to his people through which his people could commune with their Maker repeatedly. However, men have drifted away from YHWH's design that his people commune with him in an intensely intimate, personal way. History records man's wavering between truth and apostasy, between intense worship and apathy toward YHWH. Even the vehicles which YHWH has designed to bring his people into intimacy with him have been perverted into lifeless rituals of vain repetition to the point that "*I hate your feasts*", and "*By your traditions you void the Word of God*", when men had perverted it into lifeless rituals.

Christianity, too, experienced apostasy, degenerating into such an abysmal state in the Dark Ages that it warranted the prophetic denunciation of being "*the cage of every evil and foul bird*". Both Judaism and Christianity have been victimised by satanic attacks that seek to limit or divert the worship of YHWH from its designed intent, either through a loss of passion and fervency or through the introduction of profane, non-biblical traditions.

Judaism is the Mother of Christianity

Christianity as a religion was an offshoot of Judaism as in Y'shua's time. It has been said that Judaism does not need Christianity to explain its existence, but Christianity needs Judaism both to explain its existence and what it believes. To put it simply, **Judaism is the name that men have attached to the formative stages of biblical faith (Old Covenant) and Christianity is the name that men have attached to the completing stage of biblical faith (New Covenant)**.

Hence, Christianity has also been termed historically as the Judeo-Christian faith. In the early years of the Christian faith, Christianity was regarded as just another sect of Judaism (Acts 28:22) known as the sect of the Nazarenes. The early disciples and the 12 Apostles were all Jewish. Apostle Paul even took a Nazarite vow (Num 6) to prove to his critics that he was a *Torah*-observant Jew (Acts 21:17-26). The term 'Christians' surfaced only in A.D. 42 when the disciples were first called that in Antioch (Acts 11:26). The term gradually was adopted to differentiate believing Jews from unbelieving Jews and over time, it became a separate identity altogether. "...*don't boast as if you were better than the branches! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you (Church)*". (Rom 11:18 JNT)

WAS Y'SHUA A JEW AND WAS HE ROOTED IN JUDAISM?

As surprising as it may seem, many Christians are not aware that Y'shua was a Jew. As a matter fact, when some hear it said that He was, they get angry and even mad. This has happened many times.

"How can you say Y'shua was a Jew? Everybody knows he was conceived of the Holy Spirit and is therefore God and not a Jew. He just happened to live among the Jews".

This is a verbatim response to a statement made by Dr. Roy Blizzard during an appearance on Trinity Broadcasting Network on February 21, 1985. The above was not an isolated response to Dr. Blizzard's statement. A number of other viewers reacted in a similar vein. For instance: "*What is all this stuff about Jesus being a Jew? He wasn't a Jew; he was the first Christian and the founder of the Christian Church*".

It is most unfortunate that this type of thinking is common in Christian circles today. Actually, it is an expression of a subtle, often subconscious, attitude on the part of many Christians that is quite serious and most dangerous. We might even go so far as to define it as "hellish". It is a "hellish", ingrained anti-Semitism that expresses itself in an unwillingness to accept Y'shua as a Jew. The perverted logic is, "How could anyone so dear and precious to me, someone I love so much and to whom I have surrendered my life, be a Jew?"

It is believed that this kind of thinking expresses the conviction of many Christians today. It is usually buried deep within the subconscious mind, or repressed, and only manifests itself overtly when one's spiritual guard is down. It is the result of the spiritual "ship" of the Word of God being torn loose from the jetty of the historical foundations of biblical faith that were secured firmly in the foundations of historic Judaism. As a result, the spiritual "ship" has, for centuries, been awash in a sea of pagan theology that has led to the gentilisation; i.e., paganism, of the Church. **We have forgotten that we were wild olive branches**

grafted into the natural olive tree. We have forgotten from whence it is that the branch receives the nourishing sap. We have forgotten that we no longer have pagan ancestors, but our ancestors are Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Sarah, Rebecca, and Rachel; and that we, too, passed through the sea with Moses. We have lost our affinity to things Jewish and, if you will, to a Jewish Y'shua.

The church has failed to recognise for the last 2,000 years that the movement to which Y'shua gave birth was a Jewish one, totally within the historic Judaism of his day. Further, Y'shua himself was a Jew, a rabbi, spoke Hebrew, used well-known rabbinic methods of teaching; and perhaps most importantly, drew largely on the Scriptures and oral traditions of his day in his teaching. It is often overlooked that much of what Y'shua said was not new or original but was based on what the rabbis had said and were saying. Y'shua was constantly referring back to the Scriptures and to the oral traditions of rabbis who had preceded him or who were of his generation. **Unless this fact is clearly understood, one will be greatly confused when an attempt is made to understand the magnificent sayings of Y'shua.** The above television viewers are obviously unacquainted with the real Y'shua. It is the purpose of this study to address the question – Was Y'shua a Jew?

It is very difficult for us, almost 2,000 years removed from Y'shua's day, to project ourselves back across the centuries of time to a culture and language so totally foreign to the western mind of today. And yet, before we can even begin to understand that magnificent and thrilling words of Y'shua, that is exactly what we must do.

And again, the first thing that one must realise is that Y'shua was a Jew. This fact should be obvious; however, as it has been mentioned, it is surprising how many Christians are shocked to learn that Y'shua was a Jew. And not just any ordinary Jew. He was a rabbi, a teacher, one learned in the Scriptures and the religious literature of his day, which was considerable.

Let us analyse the logic of the argument that Y'shua was not a Jew. The fact that multitudes of Christians believe this is astonishing. Even the skeptics and the agnostics throughout the ages never advanced this argument. To begin with, Y'shua's genealogy is Jewish. In the Gospels of Matthew and Luke, his lineage is traced back to David and the patriarchs in typical Jewish fashion. The angel Gabriel announced to Mary that the child, Y'shua, that would be conceived by the Holy Spirit within her womb, would be given "*the throne of his father David*" (Luke 1:32).

His family was Jewish: his earthly father's name, Joseph, was the second most common Jewish name of the period, exceeded only by the name Simeon. His mother's name, Miriam (Mary), was the most common Jewish feminine name of the period. Y'shua himself had a common Jewish name. We learn from the inscriptions dating from the first century that the name Y'shua was the third most common man's name, tied with the names Judah and Zachariah. Four out of the twenty-eight Jewish High-Priests in Y'shua's time were called *Yeshua* as some write it. He had Jewish relatives: Elizabeth, Zachariah the priest, and their son, John the Baptist; as well as his own brothers, James, Joseph, Simon, and Judah, and his sisters, who are unnamed (Matt 13:55-56; Mark 6:3). Y'shua was circumcised on the eighth day strictly according to Judaism's *Torah* (revelation or instruction from God) (Luke 2:21); and since his parents were not from the tribe of Levi, after Mary's purification, "*according to the Law of Moses*" (Luke 3:22). After Mary's period of uncleanness (Lev 12:2-8), when Y'shua was one month old, he was taken by his parents to Jerusalem for the ceremony known as *pidyon ha-ben*, or Redemption of the First Born (See Numbers 3:14, 16, 18; 18:15-16). Y'shua's parents went to Jerusalem every year to observe the Feast of Passover (Luke 2:41). Y'shua, too, was an observant Jew who honoured the *Torah*. It was His custom to attend the synagogue services on the Sabbath (Luke 4:16). According to the Gospels, on at least one occasion (Luke 4:17-20), he was called upon to publicly read from the Scriptures in the synagogue—something a non-Jew would never have been asked to do.

Like all observant Jews of the First Century, Y'shua wore *tzitziyot*, ("tassels" or "fringes") on the four corners of his robe, as commanded in Numbers 15:37-41 (compare Deuteronomy 22:12), to be reminded of the commandments. We see this dramatically illustrated in the story of the woman who, for twelve years, had suffered from a flow of blood. She was healed when she came up behind him and touched the "*tassel on his cloak*" (Luke 8:44 NASB). References to the fringed garment which Y'shua wore can also be found in Matt 14:36.

It is very likely that Y'shua also wore *tefillin* ("phylacteries"). These were the two leather boxes each containing four small parchments inscribed with a different passage of Scripture (Exod 13:1-16; Deut 6:4-9, 11:13-21) which were bound by leather straps—one on the forehead and one usually on the left arm. From Jewish sources, it is not certain whether the *tefillin* were worn all day or just at times of prayer. It appears that more observant Jews in Y'shua's day wore them all day. Actual phylacteries, or *tefillin*, dating from the First

Century, have been found in the Qumran caves along the shore of the Dead Sea. These ancient phylacteries are almost identical to those worn by Jews today.

How can we be nearly certain that Y'shua wore phylacteries—especially since the wearing of phylacteries is not specifically commanded in the Bible, but represents a rabbinic interpretation of the above four Scriptures? The answer is found in *Mat 23:5*: "...*They widen their phylacteries [tefillin] and lengthen their tassels [tzitziyot]...*" (NASB). Y'shua is here criticising certain of the Pharisees for their religious hypocrisy, enlarging their *tefillin* and lengthening their *tzitziyot* to demonstrate how "spiritual" they were. He was not criticising the wearing of *tefillin* and *tzitziyot*. As we have already shown, Y'shua himself wore *tzitziyot*! Furthermore, notice that in the beginning of this passage in Matthew 23, Y'shua tells his followers: "*Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they (the Pharisees) tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice*" (Matt 23:3 NASB). Y'shua never condemns the custom of wearing phylacteries. Further, had not Y'shua worn phylacteries along with fringes, he would surely have been criticised for this by the Pharisees. We can only conclude that in his manner of dress, Y'shua was just like the other observant Jews of his day.

Those outside the mainstream of Judaism, as well as non-Jews, also testify to his Jewishness. For example, when Y'shua meets the Samaritan woman at the well and asks her for a drink of water, she questions, "*How is it that thou, being a Jew, askest drink of me, which am a woman of Samaria?*" (John 4:9). During Y'shua's interrogation by Pilate, the Roman procurator of Judea (A.D. 26-36), Pilate explodes in frustration, "Am I a Jew?", and then states, "*Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me*" (John 18:35).

The skeptics who have tried to discredit Y'shua have frequently claimed that Y'shua did not believe he was the Messiah, nor claim to be the Messiah: but none have ever accused Y'shua of not being a Jew. And it is no wonder. In view of the evidence, if Y'shua was not a Jew—who is, or who was?

DID Y'SHUA GIVE AN INSTRUCTION TO ADHERE TO OUR HEBRAIC ROOTS?

"*You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews*" (John 4:22, NKJV). Y'shua said this to the Samaritan woman at the well who claimed to be worshipping the same God. It's not what one's claim is. It's what the truth is that matters.

For thousands of years, the Israelites were taught the Hebraic teachings and were supposed to be the forerunner and foundation of the coming move of YHWH, Judeo-Christianity. Y'shua was the manifestation of this promised abundant life, the manifested and promised essence of Judaism. He said that salvation belonged to the Jews, who were supposed to recognise the Savior and bring the Gospel to the world. "...and in you (Abraham and descendants), *all the families of the earth shall be blessed*" (Gen 12:3, NKJV).

Why were they chosen? Because they were the children of Abraham and they have the roots for correct foundation and doctrines of the Gospel. "*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*" (Rom 3:1-2, NKJV).

Alas, the Jews failed to receive Y'shua and the new move of YHWH that was about to conquer the world. Instead, the pagan Gentiles gladly received Him and embraced Christianity. But they were pagans who did not have the understanding of the oracles of YHWH (the Hebraic foundation, from Abraham to Y'shua, that took 2,000 years to establish); and began to spread a gospel that was according to their own cultures and pagan interpretations. It's another 2,000 years now, and it's time for the testing of the Christians to recognise and identify themselves with their forsaken Biblical Hebraic roots.

WHERE DID PAUL PREACH—IN A CHURCH OR SYNAGOGUE?

Paul often attended synagogue services where he worshipped with the Jewish people. Many synagogues even let him preach for a while.

Contrary to common accusations against Paul, he did not discredit Judaism, Jewish people, or Jewish worship. He revered the Jewish *Torah* (revelation or instruction from YHWH) and remained a Jew. He regularly visited the synagogue on his travels. A few examples of this are: in Salamis, Acts 13: 5; in Antioch, Acts 13:14; in Iconium, Acts 14:1; in Thessalonica, Acts 17:1; in Berea, Acts 17:10; in Athens, Acts 17:17; in Corinth, Acts 18:4; and in Ephesus, Acts 18:19. The synagogues were familiar and convenient to Paul. It was not abnormal for Paul to use them as a base of operations upon entering a new mission area.

IS THERE EVIDENCE OF “JEWISHNESS” IN THE EARLY CHURCH?

Contrary to what some believe, the first fifteen bishops of the original Church at Jerusalem were Jewish. In his *Ecclesiastical History*, Eusebius tells us that "*the church at Jerusalem, at first formed of the circumcision, came later to be formed of Gentile Christians, and the whole church under them, consisted of faithful Hebrews who continued from the time of the apostles, until the siege of Jerusalem*". (Isaac Boyle, trans, Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History, H.E. 5, (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974), pp. 4-6).

In his Second Century historical work, Hegesippus describes the rivalry between a man named Thebouthis and others who was seeking the position of bishop after the death of James, who was said to be the first pastor at Jerusalem (Ibid. H.E.3, 32, 6). According to Hegesippus, the Hebrew Christians finally chose Simeon, who was a cousin of Y'shua, to succeed James. Epiphanius lists the remaining thirteen Jewish pastors of the Jerusalem Church as Justus, Zaccheus, Tobias, Benjamin, John, Mathias, Philip, Seneca, Justus, Levi, Ephrem, Joseph, and Jude—completing the historical record all the way up to the Bar Kochba Revolt (A.D. 132-135) (Ibid. H.E.IV.5). These Jewish relatives of Y'shua who led the early Church were called *Desposynoi*, meaning "heirs"; and were often persecuted because of their Davidic lineage and their relationship to the Messiah.

During the reign of Hadrian (A.D. 117-138), the Jewish nation was crushed in what came to be called the Second Jewish War. Jerusalem was renamed *Aelia Capitolina* by the Romans, and Jews were forbidden to enter the city for one hundred years. As these dramatic events were unfolding, many of the Hebrew Christians fled to the mountains of Pella, located in present-day Jordan, in obedience to Y'shua's instruction found in Matthew 24:16. This left only Gentile believers in control of the Church for the first time, and they quickly appointed a man named Mark as Jerusalem's first non-Jewish pastor (Eus. H.E.III 5,3; Epiph. Paw. 29:7, 7; 30:2, 7) (Ibid. H.E. 4, 6). According to Baring Gould's history, the community of believers in exile, led by James and Simeon, was still clinging tightly to the old traditions while crouched at Pella. (Baring Gould, "Schonfield's History", Lost and Hostile History, (London: Duckworth Publications, 1936), p. 35).

The Influence of the Synagogue on the Organisational Structure of the Church

Since the Hebrew Christians were not completely removed from Jerusalem until well into the Second Century, for its first one hundred years the Church remained very much a part of First-Century Judaism, and its leaders stayed involved in many Jewish affairs. There was no immediate split from the synagogue, as evidenced by Y'shua's warning that some synagogues would punish His followers for preaching a different brand of Judaism (Matt 10:17). We know that this scourging by synagogue leaders was not an uncommon part of normative Judaism since it is mentioned a number of times in early rabbinical literature (Rabbi Isidore Epstein, ea., *Soncino Talmud*, Sanh. 9:6; Yev. 90 (London: Soncino Press, 1948)).

The structure of the local synagogues was carried over directly into the structure of the early Church. A president, deacons, a preceptor (song leader), and teachers can all be found in both the synagogue and the early Church. We know from early sources that there were between 394 and 480 synagogues in Jerusalem during the First Century; one being located within the area of the Temple itself (Jerusalem Talmud, Meg. 3:1; Ket. 105a; Sot. 7:7, 8; Yoma 7:1 (London: Soncino Press, 1948)). This is undoubtedly why the early pattern of the Church had its origins in the Jewish synagogue. Note the following similarities between the ancient synagogue and the early Church.

The principal leader of a synagogue was the *nasi* or president. In the Christian congregation, the leaders were still called *president* rather than *pastor* as late as A.D. 150, by such non-Jewish writers as Justin Martyr (Alexander Roberts, ea., *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company), p. 186). In the synagogue structure, three of these leaders would join together to form a tribunal for judging cases concerning money, theft, immorality, admission of proselytes, laying on of hands; and a host of other things mentioned in the Sanhedrin section of the *Mishnah*.

These men were known as the "rulers of the synagogue" because they took on the chief care of things, a title mentioned several times in the teachings of Y'shua (Mark 5:22 and Luke 8:41). This practice was still in use among the Gentile congregations at Corinth under the apostleship of Paul, where he spoke of the court within the congregation (1 Cor 6:1-2).

The *nasi* was the administrator of the synagogue; and we know that James, the half-brother of Y'shua, was the *nasi* of the early Church at Jerusalem. Early documents such as the *Didache* suggest that the churches in Asia Minor and Greece treated the Church at Jerusalem with much the same authority as the synagogues did the Sanhedrin (Roswell Hitchcock, ea., *Didache* 8, (Willits, CA: Eastern Orthodox Publishers, 1989),

chapters 11-15) (Isaac Boyle, trans., *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History* 3.25.4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974)).

There also was a public minister of the synagogue called a *chazen* who prayed, preached behind a wooden pulpit, and took care of the general oversight of the reading of the Law and other congregational duties. He did not read the Law—but stood by the one who did, to correct and oversee, ensuring that it was done properly. He selected seven readers each week who were well-educated in the Hebrew Scriptures. The group consisted of one priest, one Levite, and five regular Israelites (Luke 4:16). The terms *overseer of the congregation*, *angel of the church*, and *minister of the synagogue* all referred to this position (John Lightfoot, "Commentary on the Old Testament from the Talmud and Hebraica", *Hebraica*, Vol. 11., Rev. 3:1, 7, 14 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1979), pp.89-99).

There were also three men known as *almoners* or *parnasin* who cared for the poor and distributed alms and were expected to be scholars of the Scriptures. Since they were also known as *gabbay tzedikah*, it may be from this function that we get the modern term *deacon*. Some scholars hold that it was from these seven: the president, the ruler, the overseer, the *chazen*, and the three *parnas*, that the idea of selecting "seven good men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" came about (Acts 6:3). These men were appointed over the business affairs of the Church so the apostles would not have to be distracted from their study of the Scriptures and prayer.

In Jewish literature the question is asked, "*Who is a scholar worthy of being appointed Parnas?*" The answer is: "*He who is asked about a law from any source, and is able to give an answer*". (Rabbi Isidore Epstein, ea., *Soncino Talmud*, Shab. 114a (London: Soncino Press, 1948)). In modern times, the Jews use this term to refer to a lay person, who is also called an *elder*.

Another function in the ancient synagogue was the *shaliach*, or announcer. From this position we get the term *apostle*, meaning one who is sent forth to announce the Gospel, a role equivalent to that of our modern missionaries. There was also the *maggid*, a migratory evangelist of the First Century who spoke to various congregations; and the *batlanim*, a scholarly teacher who was either independently wealthy or on some kind of support so he would be available to provide the congregation with accurate academics and answers. There had to be at least ten *batlanim* in every congregation of one hundred and twenty members. There was even a tradition that a synagogue service could not commence without ten men present (Lightfoot, op. cit., p.89). Y'shua may have been referring to this tradition when He said, "*Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them*" (Matthew 18:20). Next, there was the *zakin*, a word meaning "old", more in the sense of maturity than age. This person provided counsel to the people and was similar to a modern-day pastor or elder. In Judaism, those who had reached the age of forty were considered to have attained understanding; and those who were over fifty were considered worthy to counsel the younger people (Philip Blackman, ea., *Mishnah*, I Pet. 5:5; I Tim. 5:1; Avot 5:21 (New York: Judaica Press, 1983)). The *rabbi* was a prophet after the manner of the post-exilic prophets of Judaism. He carried the responsibility of reading and preaching the Word as well as exhorting and edifying the people (1 Cor 14:3). There was also the interpreter, known as the *meturganim*. This was a person skilled in languages who stood by the one reading the Law or teaching in a *Bet Midrash* (a house of study) to interpret into the *lingua franca* of that day the Hebrew that was being spoken. The use of an interpreter goes back to the time of Ezra, when the interpreter was said to have *added the meaning*. The *Talmud* gives many details of the interpreter's duties in the synagogue (Rabbi Isidore Epstein, ea., *Soncino Talmud*, Meg. 4; Maimon. Tephillah, 12; Massecheth Soph. 10 (London: Soncino Press, 1948)). It is from this concept that we understand Y'shua's words, "*What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops*" (Matt 10:27). This phrase was easily understood by those who were familiar with the system of study in the *Bet Midrash*, where the teacher would literally speak the message in the interpreter's ear, who would then shout it out to others, both inside the classroom and out.

Jewish Customs in the Early Church

Besides the organisational structure of the early Church having its roots in the synagogue, many of its customs were also Jewish. All of the initial Christians were either Jews by birth or by conversion, and apparently there were no Gentile members for at least the first ten years. This conclusion is implied by several texts, including Acts 10, when, approximately ten years after His ascension, Y'shua had to instruct Peter three times to go into the house of a Gentile. This strongly suggests that the Jewish Church had been meeting in houses and breaking bread only in Jewish homes up to that time (Acts 2:42-46). Furthermore, when Peter entered the house of Cornelius, he explained to his household that he still understood it to be unlawful for a Jew to enter the house of a non-Jew (Acts 10:28).

Further evidence of the Jewishness of the early believers can be found in an incident recorded in Acts 21:20, an incident which occurred some twenty-five years after the Y'shua's ascension. When Paul returned to Jerusalem with some charitable contributions for the believers, he was told that during his absence many thousands of Jews had become believers; yet they continued to be staunch upholders of the Law.

Hebraic Names for the Early Church

Not only were the first fifteen elders of the Jerusalem Church Jewish, but so were the initial names applied to the early congregations. The term *Minim*, meaning "heretics" in Hebrew, was used by some in the Jewish community to describe the new believers. *The Way*, used in Acts 24:14 and 22 was a Messianic term taken from texts such as Isaiah 40:2, which refers to preparing "*the way of the Lord*". The *Nazoraioi* is Greek for Nazarenes (Acts 24:5) and is obviously derived from Y'shua's Jewish hometown. The term *Messianists* is derived directly from the Hebrew word Messiah. Epiphanius' history says that before the believers were called Christians, they were for a short time known by the title *Iessaoi*, probably derived from the name Y'shua (Ray Pritz, *Nazarene Jewish Christianity* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1992), p.13)), a name saturated with the idea of salvation. Each of these names has a Hebraic background and is closely related to an Old Covenant text.

The word *Christian* does not come from the Hebrew word for *Anointed One* but from a Greek word, and was not used by the Jerusalem Church at all. *Christian* was first used as a Gentile title for the believers at Antioch some forty to forty-five years into the First Century (Acts 11:26). The term "*were called*" suggests that the name was coined by those outside the Church, perhaps to distinguish the disciples of Y'shua from unconverted Gentiles, as well as from other branches of Judaism. There is no evidence that the term was used extensively as a self-designation by the early Church, since it is only used three times in the New Covenant and only once by a believer (Acts 11:26; 26:28; and 1 Peter 4:16).

The word *Christian* does not appear consistently as a self-designation until the *Didache* (Roswell Hitchcock, ea., *Didache*, 12:4 (Willits, CA: Eastern Orthodox Publishers, 1989)) and was used later by Ignatius during the late First or early Second Century.¹⁹ The reason this term was not used earlier may be explained by a letter from the Roman Governor Pliny the Younger to Emperor Trajan around the year A.D. 112. The letter indicates that those identifying with this name were killed (David Freedman, ea., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, Vol. I, (New York: Doubleday, 1992), pp.925-26).

In examining the Jewish roots of the Church, it is important to differentiate between the Hebrew Christians, such as the Nazarenes and Messianists at the beginning; and the various groups of Ebionites with their Judaizing traits, which were active around the turn of the First Century. The early Hebrew Church was composed of those who believed in justification by faith as well as those who stressed traditions that involved legalism. Although most Jewish believers continued to keep the Sabbath and the various laws that differentiated them from non-Jews (strictly as an identification code), they did not require it for their non-Jewish converts. This identification as a Jew had nothing to do with salvation, but was kept by Jews as a reminder of the special eternal Covenant that God had made with them as a chosen people. The Covenant reminded God's people that they were the guardians of the Holy Land and were obliged to maintain and preserve the Law (Gen 15:18, 17:7-10, Deut 7:6, Psalm 105:45, Ezek 16:6, Isaiah 44:1 and Rom 3:1-2).

After an investigation of all Scripture relating to Israel, it appears that the chosen people status was not awarded as a special privilege, but because the people of Israel could be trusted to preserve the Law of God (Psalm 105:45). Although some 170 of the 613 Laws of the *Torah* apply to moral and ethical matters, few Christians recognise them as a part of modern theology and it has fallen to the Jewish people to preserve this aspect of God's Law until the present.

Judaism and Christianity

To those outside of Judaism, Christianity was seen merely as another group of Jews. Christianity was identified by the world as nothing more than one additional view among many within the diverse religion of Judaism. That view from the outside continued for centuries.

Until the year A.D. 325 the Christians were considered to be a Jewish sect, and they had a large following in the country. Debates between the Orthodox and Christian Jews were a common occurrence (*Gershom Bader, translated by Solomon Katz, The Encyclopedia of Talmudic Sages* (Jason Aronson, Inc., Northvale, N.J., 1988), p. 462).

Then, as now, a variety of opinions were common within Judaism. Disagreement was acceptable and commonplace. Although Y'shua did not agree with all facets of Judaism or the Jewish leaders, He was a

Jew. In his book *The Origin of the Christian Faith*, Jeffrey Seif says, "Though He indeed was bodily resurrected some two thousand years ago, it may be said that His Jewish heritage was executed, buried, and has yet to fully arise". (Seif, p. 15).

The record of disagreement is recognised in the New Covenant by the Judaiser's concerns over what level of Judaic requirements were needed to be included in the lives of new adherents to their Jewish sect. The account in the Acts of the Apostles shows how truly Jewish they were. Their concerns were intended to ensure acceptance among their Jewish associates. They were not trying to protect their families. They were not trying to protect their jobs. They were not trying to ensure their safety. The Jerusalem Council was concerned about losing their credibility among the practicing Jews of Jerusalem. The truth of the Gospel was never compromised; but the *Torah* was upheld for law, order, ethnical reasons and hygienic purposes. They were conscious of the fact that their words, actions, attitudes, teachings, and doctrines were under constant scrutiny by the Orthodox Jewish leaders; as well as the Jewish people who watched the emerging Church developing in their midst. They did not want Jewish Christianity to be devalued in the eyes of their fellowmen due to the Gentiles' lack of understanding their Hebraic roots.

In fact, so exclusively Jewish was the early Church, that when the first non-Jewish converts were won through Peter and Paul's missionary endeavours among the non-Jews, the Church's Jewish leadership met in council in Jerusalem specifically to discuss whether or not it was necessary to impose circumcision and a Jewish life style upon these Gentile believers. This was their answer:

- (23) *"They wrote this letter by them: The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia: Greetings.*
- (24) *Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, "You must be circumcised and keep the law"; to whom we gave no such commandment;*
- (25) *it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul,*
- (26) *men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Y'shua the Messiah.*
- (27) *We have therefore sent Judas and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth.*
- (28) *For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things;*
- (29) *That ye abstain from meats offered to idols, and from blood, and from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell". (Acts 15:23-29)*

IS CHRISTIANITY A “JEWISH” RELIGION?

Unfortunately, the Jewishness of the early Church is often forgotten and may even today be offensive for some Christians. If the Gentile Church had a better recollection of its own beginnings, the darkness of Christian anti-Semitism would be forced into the light and broadly questioned. The historical authenticity of the original Jewish nature of Christianity is genuine and well-documented.

The body of compelling evidence to support this idea includes the various Gospel accounts and New Covenant depictions of life in the early Church. These historically valuable writings often revolve around Jewish festivals, customs, and Temple or synagogue worship. It is important to note that there was only one Temple, which was in Jerusalem; whereas, there were many synagogues. The holy site for all of the sacrificial and ceremonial rites for observant Jews took place exclusively at the Jerusalem Temple. Synagogues were a later development, which grew out of the necessity for a place to worship during the Babylonian exile of the Jewish people from Judah and Israel. Those Jews, who chose to live in the Diaspora after the exile ended, maintained the use of synagogues within their later practices. The Temple remained as the only approved site for much of the religious requirements of the Jewish people. Outside of Jerusalem, the people worshipped and gathered in synagogues. This evidence is overwhelming in the Gospels and New Covenant.

The Jewish nature of Christianity is unquestionable, and the Jewish nature of the earliest Christian writings is profound.

Also, the only source of Scripture that was read by the early Church came from teachings within their Jewish heritage. Truth was sought in the sacred writings of Judaism. The *Torah* that was studied in synagogues was also revered as the sacred writings studied by men of the early Church. Even Jewish texts that were not included in the Jewish Bible were read and valued by the early Church Fathers. Examples of this important category of revered ancient Jewish writings include the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha. Though not included in the accepted Jewish or Protestant canons of Scripture, they were extremely relevant to the early Church.

The writers of the New Covenant valued these ancient Jewish works so highly that they are quoted in Bibles. Perhaps you have wondered about the origins of some of the "curious" information in Jude. If so, you will be interested to learn that "*Jude explicitly quotes Enoch and introduces the quotation with the formula 'Enoch, the seventh from Adam, prophesied, saying'*" - found in Jude 14-15 (H. F. D. Sparks, Editor, *The Apocryphal Old Testament*. Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1990), p.169.)

Jude also refers to the obscure text of "The Assumption of Moses". The discussion arose about the body of Moses and the archangel Michael disputed with the devil, but "*dared not bring against him a reviling accusation, but said, 'the Lord rebuke you!'*" (Jude 9). "*More details about this dispute may be gleaned from other Fathers, some of whom explicitly name the Assumption as their source*". (Ibid. p. 602.).

Early Church Fathers were not in complete agreement as to what should be included in the canon. Many of the writings which were important to the Jews (both Jewish Christians as well as the Rabbinic Jews) were also important to the original non-Jewish Christians. Some were so important that they were viewed as potential candidates for inclusion into the Old Covenant. Sources as important to the early Church as Tertullian (late 2nd century) and Origen (mid 3rd century) accepted Enoch. St. Augustine (early 5th century) "admitted that Enoch had written 'not a little' by divine inspiration". (Ibid., p. 170. Quotation taken from Augustine's *Civ. Dei*, xv. 23, xviii. 38).

DOES PAUL WARN US FROM DEPARTING FROM OUR HEBRAIC ROOTS?

- (17) *"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.*
- (18) *But if you do boast, remember that you do not support the root, but the root supports you (Church).* (Rom 11:17-18, NKJ)

These were the exact words of the epistle written to the Roman believers, warning them of the infiltration of Roman paganism, of dead works, and of how they ought not to be haughty but to fear, and to remember the Hebraic roots. He further prophesied, "*that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles (Israel in the nations) has come in*" (Rom 11:25, NKJ).

But alas, the Church fell right into this very pitfall and plight of bringing in the Replacement Theology, a deception declaring that the Jews were rebellious and their roots were backward and had to be done away with, REPLACED with the new "spiritual Israelites – the Christians". But they did not know the Hebrew roots, and therefore interpreted the Scriptures from the pagan Greco-Roman culture that they were raised in. This was where the Church, in her haughtiness, departed from her Hebrew roots, its understanding of holiness and righteousness that began to bring into the Church pagan teachings and practices that were packaged into the Gospel wherever it went. And much still remains to this day.

The Jews were persecuted by the Christians for crucifying Y'shua, and the Hebrew roots were replaced with pagan practices. Why was the Hebrew roots inadvertently replaced? Because the ways of the Patriarchs were always abominations to the Greek and Roman cultures and will always be, as long as the world is still under that influence. Y'shua and grace are now preached, not against the backdrop of the Hebrew culture, but according to paganistic Greco-Roman culture and interpretations, that has its roots all the way back to Babylon. Thus the next prophecy of Paul came to pass, "*For I know this, that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock*" (Acts 20:29, NKJ).

You will be surprised that early church Fathers of Christianity, like Augustine and Origen, were among those who persecuted the Jews severely. Much of their theology remains deeply-rooted in modern Christianity despite awakenings in this century to recognise the Jews. Why God allowed the Church to sink so deep into the heathen mire, nobody can give a satisfactory answer—considering the mass blindness and terrible devastation of the spiritual dark ages that followed. But one thing we do know, Christians have to get out of it: "*And I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues"* (Rev 18:4 NKJ).

WHAT IS MY RESPONSIBILITY TOWARDS “JEWISHNESS” IN THE CHURCH?

The Bible teaches: “*Do your best to win full approval in God's sight, as a worker who is not ashamed of his work, one who correctly teaches the message of God's truth*” (2 Tim 2:15 GNB). Now, I feel it is my responsibility, my call, to speak out and to do it loudly! So, let me reiterate:

“*For Zion's sake will I not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until the righteousness thereof go forth as brightness, and the salvation thereof as a lamp that burneth*”. (Isaiah 62:1)

Y’shua is a Jew. He dressed as a Jew - talked like a Jew. He was a Jewish Rabbi and will come back just as Jewish! Should we not all understand the ways of the Jewish people? I believe we all should!

Christianity is Jewish!!! But "Messianic" is a better word. Christian was the name given to the Greek-Gentile believers in Acts 11:26, "Christianos". In all likelihood, the term was deprecatory, like "Moonies" in reference to the disciples of Sun Myung Moon. The Jewish believers were known as the Nazarenes, "Notzrim" (Acts 24:5).

We would not be saved today if it were not for the Jews. Y’shua said to the woman in Samaria, “*For salvation is of the Jews*”. It was the Jewish people who gave to us all the things needed to receive Messiah as Saviour (Rom 9:4-5). Never forget the debt we owe to them (Rom 15:26-27).

Dear reader, Y’shua taught true Biblical Judaism—He did not start a new religion. Christianity was Jewish and should be Jewish!!!

CHAPTER 2

HOW DID WE MOVE AWAY FROM OUR JEWISH ROOTS TO THE GENTILE CHURCH?

Exploring the formative and definitive developments

There is a rapid spread of the story about Y'shua, with followers being located in many parts of the Roman Empire by the end of the First Century AD: Syria, Jordan, Turkey, Balkans, Greece, Cyprus, Italy, Egypt, and Ethiopia. At what point in time can we appropriately speak of these followers as part of a religion that was Gentile as opposed to it being a sect within the umbrella of Judaism?

I'd like to suggest we can safely put it into the middle part of the Second Century AD—probably by the time of Hadrian's reign as emperor (117-138). There are two main reasons for this date:

- a) The imperial policy of Hadrian indicated a distinction was being drawn between Jews and Christians: his policy regarding the protection of Christians from prosecution; his decision to ban Jews from Jerusalem in the aftermath of the 132-135 revolt; the possible ban on circumcision and the plan to rebuild Jerusalem as Aelia Capitolina (*Historia Augusta, Had.* 14.2 re circumcision; Dio Cassius, *Roman History* 69.12-15 re Aelia Capitolina).
- b) Justin Martyr: a pagan convert to Christianity sought to engage in discussion between pagans and Jews regarding the truth of Christianity from a philosophical perspective. Hence, in his *Dialogue with Trypho*, he spoke of “we” and “you” – the former being the Christians and the latter the Jews (*Dialogue* 19:3-5, 46:6-7, 69:4, 110:3, 116:1, 122:5, 130:4). Even allowing for the clear polemical nature of the text it is apparent that Justin did not consider himself to have become part of a group that regarded itself as Jewish. We are now in the era of the Gentile church.

The ‘lateness’ of this change may appear, at first, to be puzzling. Let me explain the jarring element. Within the literature of early Christianity; and, therefore, within the received tradition regarding the origins of the sect, we have a picture in which the Gentile dimension of the religion exists from the very beginning.

The canonical framework

In the New Covenant, missionary activity centred on spreading the Good News to Gentiles, was controlled by a centralised leadership that was divinely directed: the work of the Spirit. The key players were Peter, the Apostles and Paul. Other examples include Mark: two feeding stories (Mark 6 for Jews, Mark 8 for Gentiles), with the crucial story in Mark 7; re, the Syro-Phoenician woman. Outsiders being open to the message – Luke/Acts – speech of Simeon (Luke 2.32), Acts 1:8—“*witnesses for me in Jerusalem, Judaea, Samaria and to the ends of the earth*”, commission of Paul. Magi, foreign acceptance, Matt 28.19—“*Go, then, to all peoples everywhere and make them my disciples*”; e.g., of Paul’s activity (self-claimed title, apostle of the Gentiles) Luke 9, 22, 26 (Gal 2)).

The picture can be misconstrued if viewed as an indication that after some initial uncertainty in terms of Jew or Gentile, the sect also became a Gentile religion. It is not nearly as neat as implied in the canonical literature. Although we may identify themes regarding the inclusion of Gentiles in the texts, it is likely that almost all the texts of the New Covenant were written by Jews, who were mainly of the Diaspora, the lost sheep of the House of Israel as spoken by Y'shua. The New Covenant writers wrote to and about them who were assimilated into the nations. The presence of Jewish Christians is not a heresy that came later. They were present from the start and endured to at least the Fourth Century.

The situation at the time of Paul and Justin, however, is substantially different. For Paul and the various Gospel writers; the issue was whether, and how, Gentiles could be included in the movement where all the key figures were Jewish. With Justin, however, it was of his opinion showing that the Gentile Church was the true follower of YHWH's way and why YHWH had condemned Judaism to punishment. With this there was a fundamental shift in self-perception.

Therefore, it is vital that we put the clear, canonical framework to one side. We need to understand that it is part of an internal debate regarding the identity of the sect, not only in terms of Jew versus Gentile but also Christian Jew versus Christian Jew.

We need to work within a framework that recognises Y'shua was a Galilean Jew, that his followers were also, first and foremost, Galilean Jews; and that the focus of the ministry was on working with fellow Judaean and Galilean Jews. Furthermore, we should not regard the dramatic transformation into a distinct religion

known as Christianity – whose adherents were mainly Gentile and resided outside Judaea – as being part of an original coordinated plan.

How and why the shift occurred

The moments to being a Gentile Church were in terms of perception/self-definition, and most importantly—in terms of the ethnic origin of the members whose desire, like Justin, was no longer to see themselves as Gentiles who joined a Jewish sect—but as a religion that is stridently non-Jewish!

This was also influenced by the following three broad categories:

- a) The socio-political environment (all external factors)
- b) Roman imperial policy (all external factors)
- c) The community experience (internal and external factors)

A. The Socio-Political Environment

The existence of the Roman Empire

There is no doubt that the Romans asserted their claim to rule over people around the Mediterranean and did so by force when it was necessary. It was an empire that relied heavily on the power of its army. The other side to this military presence was the establishment of an empire that brought many advantages for those wanting to move around or trade within its thriving urban centres, aided by holding Roman citizenship. First Century A.D. common Greek language was used throughout the empire. A century later, we begin to see a split: Latin in the West and Greek in the East.

Religion was part of the culture. There was openness to new religions (e.g., mystery cults, problems with the Isis cult in Rome and Mithras worship clearly expands). In the First Century, Judaism was generally given the green light within the imperial establishment; although later it proved a problem, especially in terms of the exclusive claims of Christianity. At the outset, people like Paul could present themselves as Jews with a particular line of teaching and be classified under that general label by Roman officials.

Presence of Jewish communities within the Diaspora

The followers of Y'shua who decided to travel outside Judea had a place to stay when they set foot in a foreign town. Like many back-packers today, they used contacts because they were from the same home country/community. Whether it is in terms of letters of introduction, accommodation, jobs or whatever, these Diaspora communities provided a natural point of contact. Indeed, it is no surprise that the main centres of the sect were also important Diaspora settlements.

Two very practical expressions of the importance to be associated with the Diaspora communities are the existence of Greek versions of the sacred writings (the *Septuagint*) and the interpretation of Scripture from a philosophical allegorical approach undertaken by Philo of Alexandria. At the very least, it meant that Y'shua's followers did not have to translate without any point of reference, nor did they have to re-invent the wheel when it came to expressing their ideas in order to dialogue with contemporary Graeco-Roman ways of thinking.

The existence of sympathisers of Judaism

Often coined by the term 'God-fearers', these sympathisers were Gentiles who were learned in the teachings of Judaism, thanks largely to the activity of Diaspora Jews within their synagogues. They had not necessarily converted to Judaism, it appears; partly because of some of the social costs associated with actual conversion; e.g., circumcision, loyalty to one God, etc. These sympathisers are known from various levels of Roman society, including those within the imperial household (e.g., Poppaea Sabina, wife of Nero *Ant. 20.195*). There was, therefore, a ready-made audience who may have been willing to hear what Y'shua's followers taught when they travelled around the empire. Do not assume that they automatically found the different teaching attractive because they were referred to in the beginning of the Second Century AD.

B. Roman Imperial Policy

Strange as it may seem, the imperial policy, such as it was, indicated that it was better not to be a Jew. We know of Nero's famous scapegoat abuse of the Christians in Rome in A.D. 64 in relation to the fire. We also have Pliny the Younger writing to Trajan for clarification of what to do regarding the Christians while he was governor in Bithynia. Yet these do not reflect a policy of persecution of Christians; if anything, Trajan's advice to Pliny is to avoid searching out the Christians.

It is in relation to Jews that we find imperial initiatives to discourage anyone choosing to become a Jew, or to be known as one. Under Vespasian the *fiscus Iudaicus* (register) was used to restore the Temple of Jupiter. Domitian, late in his reign, began exacting the tax with much more vigor and then tried people for their association with Judaism. Seutonius (*Dom.* 12.2) states: “*Domitian's agents collected the tax on Jews with a peculiar lack of mercy, and took proceedings not only against those who kept their Jewish origins a secret in order to pay the tax but against those who lived as Jews without professing Judaism*”. “*As a boy I remember once attending a crowded court where the Procurator had a ninety-year old man stripped to establish whether or not he had been circumcised*”.

The key phrase is “*those who lived as Jews without professing Judaism*”. The most likely understanding is that Domitian wanted anyone associated with Judaism to pay this tax. Clearly he ordered a more rigorous and harsh exaction of the tax from all Jews on the *fiscus Iudaicus* register but now sought a further way of increasing revenue. Domitian's activities had a more sinister aspect. He used association with Judaism as a basis for trial for treason – Dio Cassius, *Roman History*, 67.14.1-2 “*And in the same year [95 AD] Domitian slew, along with many others, Flavius Clemens the consul, although he was a cousin and had to wife Flavia Domitilla, who was also a relative of the emperor. The charge brought against them both was that of atheism, a charge on which many others who drifted into Jewish ways were condemned*”. Some of these were put to death, and the rest were at least deprived of their property!

This was a political activity concerned with power and money. To be wealthy and associated with Judaism under Domitian was a risky business. The extent of the problem is evident from the actions of Nerva almost immediately after the murder of Domitian. He banned the charge of treason on the basis of “*adopting the Jewish mode of Life*” and he issued coins announcing that the “*wickedness of the Jewish tax ended*”. He also defined those who were required to pay as people practicing Judaism.

Hadrian, as mentioned earlier, extended protection to Christians from false accusation and placed the responsibility on the accuser (the ban on circumcision, plans for Aelia Capitolina involved ongoing debate: were they pre or post the revolt?). In effect, Roman rule provided a context in which Jews and sympathisers had to make important decisions about their association with ‘Judaism’.

C. Community Experience

Absence of Y’shua

An eschatological dimension to the earliest stages of the sect incorporated an expectation of Y’shua’s return within the immediate future. When this return did not occur within ten, then twenty and then thirty years, questions were beginning to be asked; especially as many of the people associated with the start of the sect were dying.

Why was Y’shua’s return delayed? The search for possible explanations included speculation regarding the purpose of the community’s existence. It is here that much of the canonical framework, outlined at the beginning of this paper, has its origins. The concept of a mission to take the message of Y’shua as Messiah beyond the Jewish community and into the pagan world at large became a legitimating and justification for the continued absence of Y’shua.

Failure to persuade other Jews of Y’shua as Messiah

Whatever the target figures or grand hopes of Y’shua’s followers as to how their teaching would be received by fellow Jews, they were not achieved. They would not have received a bonus on a performance basis! This led to self-reflection and required a reassessment of what to do: should they adopt a sectarian approach, remove themselves from mainstream activity, or do they need to make a complete u-turn in terms of their centre of activity?

The other side to this failure/rejection was how other Jews looked upon this sect. Much has been said regarding the benediction against the heretics (*birkat ha-minim*): “*And for apostates let there be no hope; and may the insolent kingdom be uprooted quickly, in our days. And may the nosrim and the minim perish quickly; and may they be erased from the Book of Life; and may they not be inscribed with the righteous*”. This probably dates from the time of Gamaliel II.

On a practical level, the inability to win over many Jews to the sect meant that their own structures needed to be put in place; e.g., house churches – *ekklesia*. Some of this may be because of active rejection **of** the synagogue, active rejection **by** the synagogue because of persecution or simply as a matter of convenience.

Responses to the revolts

This is generally overstated as being a factor.

The Jewish revolt of A.D. 66-70 – The first break up of the Jewish community.

The revolt of A.D. 115-117 – The fate of Alexandrian Jews and their mass slaughter would have been reason for reflection about identity.

The Bar Kochba revolt of A.D. 132-135 – There is a possible reference to Christians in a letter being subject to attack by the rebels. This was a much localised revolt, where the consequences made being Jewish was very unfavourable, as indicated in the literature of Justin.

Christian awareness of the revolt and its consequences, in fact, **may have provided ‘a’ Christianity that could claim to be Gentile rather than Jewish**; an opportunity to assert legitimacy and even claim control of Judaea, especially Jerusalem. This revolt probably helped confirm that the future of the sect lay in its Gentile associations and may have given them a sense of vindication from the policy of the imperial power.

The expectations placed on pagan converts

Acts 15 and Gal 2 provide a glimpse of what appears to have been a very significant issue for the sect—not from the very outset, but after several years of activity that witnessed an increasing number of pagans displaying a desire to participate in the sect. It is sometimes referred to as the Apostolic council—a rather grand title to present the spread of Christianity in a co-ordinated, controlled manner.

It is clear from Paul's writings that a debate was taking place in the sect. If a pagan wishes to convert, what are they required to do? It is also part of a broader dialogue about ethical circumcision and ritual circumcision or just the former. Some say Paul spoke of the ethical, turning from pagan ways (Gal 2:3, 6:12); but others argued that the ethical is intimately associated with the physical circumcision (e.g., Philo, *Mig. of Abraham* 92, IQS 5.5-6).

Paul achieved a general ruling as given in the account in Gal 2/Acts 15 where people traveled to Galatia to impose/encourage circumcision. Christians state, it may be more a case of there being no clearly defined central leadership and policy that gave a definitive ‘ruling’ and that a practice developed in some areas, especially among Paul's communities, that pagans were not required to adopt all the ritual and physical practices of being a Jew, but is it really? (See our other teachings on our Website).

Conclusion

There are many pieces, and it is a result of the mixing together of some independent circumstances that the shift toward a Gentile church occurred. The socio-political environment provides the conduit by which a Galilean-based sect could spread across the empire. The absence of the Roman Empire or Diaspora communities or the sympathisers would have altered and delayed the way the sect developed.

A contributing external factor is the imperial policy of Domitian, Nerva and to a lesser extent Hadrian. It is not so much that these emperors were interested in Jewish-Christian debates or that they were intending to defend or attack the very existence of Jews or Christians. Rather, as a by-product of their decisions, they put Jews, Christian Jews and sympathizers into the position where they found it necessary to make a choice about their identity. The political climate made the choice of being Christian as distinct from Jewish a measurable one.

The other is an internal factor, the decision—or more likely the lack of a decision regarding what was required of a pagan who wished to convert to the sect. There was no certainty regarding this move – far from it, in fact. In a real sense, therefore, two quite independent factors lie at the heart of the transition from Jewish sect to a Gentile church.

CHAPTER 3

WHAT MAINSTREAM GROUPS ARE THERE IN CHRISTIANITY?

In this regard, two mainstreams in the historic Church have been prominent: One consists of those who have been utterly hostile to historic Israel and who, in spirit – if not in letter – have resembled the Second Century heretic, Marcion, who sought to detach the Gospel from its Hebrew sources. The other consists of those who have taught that the Church is the "New Israel" which completely replaces original Israel.

There is, however, a third stream, faithful both to the Hebrew roots of the Christian faith and to the universal teachings of YHWH's Torah, understanding clearly YHWH's separate plan for the Jews and for the non-Jew. But, standing together with the believing Jewish remnant, non-Jews clearly understand that they are part of YHWH's people: "*a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation*" (1Peter 2:9), and unfailing plan for the ages – in that Israel **will be saved** (Rom 11:26; Joel 2:32; Acts 2:21).

YHWH'S GRAND STRATEGY: GOING BACK TO OUR JEWISH ROOTS IN THREE STAGES

What does YHWH's Grand Strategy consist of? YHWH wants the restoration of the Renewed Messianic Congregation's position and culture of the Good News of the Jewish Messiah within a Messianic Renewed identity. His second purpose is the complete and full restoration of our worship and enjoyment of all three aspects of Elohim's Inner Nature, Father, Son and Spirit. The Church has lost that enjoyment in the wake of satan's counter-strategy.

His third purpose is the restoration of our benefitting from the "Old" Covenant, the Hebrew Scriptures. His fourth purpose is the restoration of Y'shua, the true Messiah of Israel, in our understanding; replacing all non-Jewish misunderstandings of Him. YHWH is carrying out these purposes through three reformation/restoration movements.

Protestantism: The First Reformation

Protestantism, the first Reformation that broke away from the Roman Catholic Church begun in 1517 by Martin Luther, was the restoration of the position of Y'shua to His appropriate place. This Reformation was, in hindsight, not thorough enough, since it left enough theological, spiritual, and identity-related links behind for the counterfeit movement to stage a successful comeback. So Protestantism was not yet the full restoration of our understanding of the true identity of Rabbi Y'shua, the Jewish Messiah. That is, Y'shua was back in His place—but as a Romanized, Gentile God only—not as the real, original Jewish Rabbi Y'shua of Nazareth as the Jews knew Him 2,000 years ago.

Pentecostalism: The Second Reformation

Pentecostalism, the second Reformation—which began in 1740, 1790, 1831, and the one on Azusa Street in 1906 which still going on today—has brought about the restoration of the position and identity of another part of God's Inner Nature, His Spirit, to His proper place in our lives and in Y'shua's Congregation; a.k.a., the Church. But again, it was still not the full picture.

Messianic Renewed Judaism: The Third Reformation

Returning to the ancient paths, the third Reformation—is the revived first century faith since 1970—which is beginning to restore us to seeing both the identity and the rightful position of bringing the Hebrew Scriptures back to their proper position in our hearts and lives; teaching us the identity and teachings of Y'shua, the King of Israel. It is restoring the Jews to the original culture of the Renewed Covenant with the Jewish culture taking its proper position as their own; and restoring the body of Israel—ie., the Land and the National identity of Israel to the soul of Israel—the scattered "lost sheep" worldwide.

The cultural restoration of the Renewed Covenant is currently being carried out by erasing the linguistic, theological, cultural and religious expressions of the old-time anti-Semitism, which displaced and disfigured the assembly's identity, position and culture. Simultaneously, it is restoring the Jewishness of our Hebraic Roots in each of these areas.

Picture, as an instance of this cultural anti-Semitism, the Hasidic Rabbi Sha'ul (Paul), a protégé of the famous Rabbi Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), wearing a tallit (prayer shawl with tzitziyot (fringes)), peyos (sidecurls)

and tefilin (leather boxes placed on one's arm and head) just like any other Orthodox Jew—since that was what he was. At the same time, contrast that picture of him with the common one: "the Apostle Paul" with a Mithraistic (sun-god worship) "Christian" halo around his head and being called "Saint" Paul by most Christian writers, and you will catch the inconsistency of the cultural anti-Semitism all at once! There are many examples of linguistic, cultural, and theological anti-Semitism in the Church today, and quite frankly we do not believe that YHWH is impressed with it.

REVIVING THE ROOTS TODAY?

Before the light of truth has been entirely extinguished; however, the ever-searching YHWH has always identified men and women whom He could call to renewal and restoration. Such is the case in the world today.

After centuries of Hellenisation and Latinisation that replaced the gold and jewels of divine truth, on which the Church was founded with the ornament and costume jewelery of human or even pagan tradition, Believers by the millions today are demanding the restoration of the Hebraic foundations of faith, practice, and discipline through which Y'shua and the apostles expressed their devotion to YHWH.

A profound movement of renewal is restoring to YHWH's people a passion for His Spirit and His truth. An over-Hellenised, over-Latinised Christianity is experiencing a re-Judaising process that is reattaching Christian faith to its Jewish and Hebraic Roots—this is a fact.

WHY THE NEED TO GO BACK TO THE BASICS?

Believers are no longer content to follow blindly in the traditions of blind leaders of the past, and are consequently finding themselves in ditches of despair and confusion. They are searching the Scriptures for themselves like the noble Berean Jews.

How can we possibly worship YHWH Almighty in truth if we do not understand the Hebrew Roots? Worship is commonly defined as "the act or feeling of adoration or homage; the paying of religious reverence as in prayer, praise, and so forth". It is derived from the Old English worship, the act of ascribing "worth" to someone or to some thing.

When we analyse the Hebrew and Greek words for worship however, we gain a somewhat deeper meaning of the act of worship. The Hebrew word for worship is segad, and it means to bow oneself down, to fall down flat, to reverence, or to do obeisance. It has the connotation of total submission to a superior (e.g., the king). The Greek translation of this word is proskunéo, and it means to prostrate oneself in homage or more graphically, to "kiss as a dog would lick its master's hand".

This is exactly what happened during worship ceremonies in the Temple area in biblical times. Men would lay flat on their faces before the Creator of the universe. Likewise today, YHWH is revealing His Word in a clarity not witnessed since the first century as Believers are recovering the faith of Y'shua and learning to be true worshippers by worshipping the Father in spirit and in truth, or in spiritual truth.

The more Christians discover the true Hebrew nature of their faith, the more they will be challenged to live according to the Scriptures.

It seems unbelievable that multitudes follow and serve "a God whom they do not know"—not by Name, neither by His True Will or Purpose! Therefore, Torah-observant Messianism is a "must" for every professing Believer on earth.

This emphasis on "Hebrew Roots" has, or should have, one glorious goal. That goal is to help the Body of Messiah attain a fuller understanding and appreciation of the Scriptures in depth, and to come to know our Messiah and Saviour intimately—as there is a Jewish wedding approaching. What higher goal can any of us have? Make sure you are part of it!

ARE THE JEWISH ROOTS OUR UNIFYING POINT?

Today, Christianity is embraced by people all over the world, each with their own unique culture superimposed by a Western culture brought along by Western missionaries. Someone wrote this: "*The important fact to remember is that Western culture is a mixture of Christian and pagan worldviews*".

Christianity has been packaged for much of the world with a Western culture. At the same time, much interpretation of the Word of YHWH is based on the theology of the Western Church whose roots sprang from Rome, not Jerusalem. And the Western Church has always used Greek rather than the original Hebrew tools for interpreting the Bible. Thus, it is no wonder that, while the Church is together in believing in the Messiah, they are widely divided when it comes to doctrines.

The cause of all these doctrinal differences clearly lies in the departure of the Church from her Jewish origins, which is her only unifying point. The only way to truly have the correct interpretation of the Word is to return to the culture and Scriptures of the Jews. We need to understand YHWH's intention for Him to be revealed and made known from the *Torah* and the Jewish culture. Any other sources of interpretation will definitely turn away from the truth, especially when they are based in paganism—as was the Western Church. We are wild olive branches that have been grafted into the olive tree; hence we need to know the nature of this olive tree and to partake of that same nourishing sap that comes from its roots.

"An over-Hellenised, over-Latinised Christianity needs a re-Judaising process to bring it back to its founding Jewish roots and renew it more in keeping with its own inherent ideals". Edward Flannery, Catholic scholar.

As a result of the drift, YHWH's family is now divided into two kingdoms: Judaism and Christianity. Both have preserved certain truths of YHWH's Word and both have erred. The day is coming when these two factions will be united and become one kingdom. Christianity needs to repent for rejecting the *Torah* (biblical patriarchy) and return to embrace it, while Judaism needs to repent for rejecting Messiah Y'shua and turn their hearts to Him. The people of YHWH are one: one kingdom, one *Torah* and one Messiah.

Another puts it this way: *"Both Judaism and Christianity have erred in worshipping the God of Israel. BOTH are guilty. It is not a matter of choosing one over the other. Is today's Judaism biblical? In some cases, it is and in other cases, it is not. They have preserved some truths and departed from others. Is today's Christianity biblical? In some cases it is and in some cases, it is not. Christianity has preserved faith and belief in Y'shua as Messiah. Judaism has preserved our heritage".*

Finally, if there is anything inferior about the Jews, it is because they are compared with Y'shua the Messiah and not because they are compared with the Christians, for they are in every way more superior than the Christians (Rom 3:1-2) when it comes to knowing the ways of YHWH. Are the Christians, like the Jews, well versed with the specifics concerning matters like raising children, marital and holiness standards, family and community relationships and many other things in life? The answer is no. The Jews were committed the oracles of YHWH via the *Torah*. That's why Paul cautioned the Gentile believers not to exalt themselves but to fear, for what had happened to the Jews may happen to them: rejecting the Truth.

The truth is that Judaism was reformed and reshaped—not removed, but perfected in Y'shua the Messiah. It is deception to think that Y'shua came to do away with Judaism. The Jews missed the mark, "Y'shua", not because they were under the Law, but rather because they did not have it in their heart; for Y'shua told them that if they had truly obeyed the Law of Moses, they would have known Him. The majority of the Jews missed Him at the First Coming. Will the majority of the Christians miss Him at the Second Coming? It's very possible.

WHAT ARE THE THREE MOST CRUCIAL QUESTIONS FACING CHRISTIANS TODAY?

- 1) Are we willing to see ourselves as part of a Jewish family? (Closely related is the question of our willingness to view Jerusalem and the land of Israel as our spiritual center).
- 2) Will we stand by our family, the Jewish people, and resist all attempts to harm or destroy this family?
- 3) Will we preserve our Jewish identity by studying Hebrew language, literature, and culture?

It is my sincere belief that many of the issues that currently divide brethren are being cleared in this study. Y'shua said; **"By this shall all men know that ye are My disciples, if ye have love one to another"**. (John 13:35)

CHAPTER 4

WHY THE NEED TO USE EXTRA-BIBLICAL HEBREW MATERIALS TO IMPROVE UNDERSTANDING?

Because of common misconceptions. Two common teachings heard in many Bible study circles are:

- 1) You don't need anything other than the Bible to understand the Bible.
- 2) The "Holy Spirit" will guide you to understanding, so nothing else is required.

Although it is absolutely true that Scripture is the best source for interpreting Scripture, the fact is that much of what is written in the Bible cannot be fully understood without turning to extra-Biblical Hebrew texts. Maintaining a "Sola Scriptura" approach leads to horrific error in understanding of the Hebrew texts, as everyone is then free to interpret the more difficult passages from their own personal viewpoint, rather than looking at where the author was coming from culturally and religiously. (Simply reading our Bibles will not give us full understanding in order to properly interpret) For this reason, it helps to study the Jewish culture of the first century and learn about their customs and traditions. This is where various books and publications can be of assistance.

Take the following questions as a simple example:

- What is Rome?
- What is a centurion?
- What is a legion?

Of course, most people might already know what these terms mean, having acquired the knowledge from their own education. But what if they did not already know? Does the Bible explain what these words designate? No. You would have to go outside of the Bible to find out. If something as simple this requires looking into extra-Biblical material for proper understanding, then how much more does this apply to complex Hebrew religious concepts that are not defined in the pages of the Bible?

People often say they "let the Scriptures speak for themselves"; unfortunately, they don't practice what they preach. Typically, meaning is "assigned" to topics and verses in the Bible based on the particular doctrine of a person's religious denomination (i.e., "The cart is put in front of the horse").

Regarding the "*Holy Spirit guiding you to understanding*" – though this statement is true, it is not an excuse for misinterpreting the texts due to your own bias, as will occur if you don't put them back into their Hebrew context. The Holy Spirit will not contradict what the authors were conveying within their Hebrew understanding of YHWH's word.

There are many passages in the Bible to which people arrive at completely different and even contradictory interpretations—all caused by erroneously "believing they are right because the Holy Spirit showed them", rather than using the minds YHWH gave them to dig for the truth.

What additional resources are used in this study?

In order to gain insight into Hebrew interpretation of the Bible's Hebrew texts, this Matthew study made use of Jewish religious and historical texts including:

Talmud – Scripture commentaries from before and after Y'shua's time, made up of:

Mishnah – Earlier material (much predating Y'shua) compiled around A.D. 220.

Gemarah – Later material compiled between A.D. 200-500.

Targums – Aramaic language documents that contained Scripture and commentary together. They were commonly read and discussed in Y'shua's day.

Midrash Rabbah – Includes very old material, compiled between A.D. 600-1000.

Zohar, Bahir, Sefer Yetzirah – Ancient material from the more mystical branches of Judaism

Rabbinic Commentaries – Including those of: Rashi, Maimonides and Nachmanides.

Qumran Texts – Texts of the Dead Sea Scrolls written from around 200 B.C. to A.D. 180.

Historical accounts of Josephus, Eusebius, Philo and others.

Apocrypha – 15 books written between 300 B.C. and Y'shua's time.

Pseudepigrapha – 60 books written from 300 B.C. to A.D. 100. Hellenistic Jewish influences.

Book of Jasher – An ancient Biblical history book, referred to in Joshua 10:13 & 2 Sam. 1:18.

Book of Enoch – Another ancient text, mentioned in the book of Jude.

It is critical to remember that these texts contain a wide range of opinion. Their proper use will help shed great light on any Bible study and help in arriving at a proper Hebraic (original) understanding of the more difficult passages.

Many of the concepts Y'shua taught were already present in Jewish thought. His teachings were not entirely "new", but the authority with which He delivered them was.

Also see the list of exhaustive resources under the heading BIBLIOGRAPHY to make this study a possibility. I also want to thank each and every person and group whose knowledge contributed to make this exegesis a possibility.

WHY DO WE HAVE TO UNDERSTAND THE NEW TESTAMENT FROM A HEBREW PERSPECTIVE?

I discovered that much Scripture was from a Semitic (Hebrew) original. To confirm this discovery, I went to many Jewish bookstores in South Africa as well as in Israel. I bought many books, and to my astonishment I found that almost everything in the New Covenant had a parallel in the Old Covenant or in other Jewish sources corresponding to or pre-dating the time of Y'shua.

The daily use of the Old Testament was a principal concern of the writers of the New Covenant. Throughout the New Covenant, the writers were basically arranging and commenting on common Jewish knowledge and the Law of YHWH, both oral and written.

It makes you think that the students of the Old Covenant do not necessarily need to have the New Covenant to know YHWH, because under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit they can draw from the Old Covenant and come to know the "fulfillment" of it. But the reverse is not true.

Once a person has discovered that **Y'shua** is the "fulfillment", he or she is then ready to learn the complete meaning of that fulfillment. From the Old Covenant, we could almost completely compile another New Covenant, minus historical events. The New Covenant does give us information from the Old Covenant, as well as historical facts and the cultural setting of the time. However, from the New Covenant alone, we cannot reassemble the Old Covenant, but can only guess as to its content.

We need to go back a few centuries to the translating of the Old Covenant into Greek. This translation is called the *Septuagint* (the "Seventy") and was written around 284-247 B.C. in Alexandria, Egypt by, according to popular tradition, seventy Jewish elders.

By 331 B.C., there were Jews all over the Middle East, and Greek was the common spoken language on many of the trading routes. Greek was also the language spoken by the majority of people in the synagogues outside of Israel, making it extremely difficult to read the Hebrew Scriptures to Greek-speaking people. This created a need to translate the Hebrew into Greek.

Hebrew is a pictorial, realistic language and does not have the concept of "past, present, and future"; but has a verb construction called "vav conversive". To quote from a textbook called Contemporary Hebrew, "*some of the outstanding features of biblical Hebrew is the use of vav conversive with verbs. When the conjunction 'and' (vav) is prefixed to the past (perfect) tense, it changes its meaning to future (imperfect). When the vav is prefixed to the future (imperfect), it changes its meaning to the past (perfect).*"

It is important to note that the Hebrew thought imparted is that YHWH spoke everything in the beginning and **it is either completed or being completed**. The Greek thought is just the opposite, which presents us with our first problem.

In Greek, we have a tense of verbs called *aorist*, meaning non-defined. Some non-Greeks using Seminar Greek will tell you that this is past tense, but it is not. It derives its tense from Hebrew thought. Aorist tense comes from the past and is current in the present (whenever it is read; that is, the present), and in the future it will still be current. This first problem of tenses was solved by writing most of the Hebrew in *aorist* tense, thereby retaining its Hebrew thought.

The second problem was the fact that Hebrew **is pictorial and realistic**, while Greek is analytical and scientific. There was no simple way around this. The next step required the elders who were extremely qualified in Hebrew and Greek, and in the cultures of both peoples, as well as the Scriptures, to become very creative with classical Greek. They combined additional letters and sometimes even other words to allow the

Greek to create the same pictures. When this was accomplished, the people of all lands could read the Scriptures with the Hebrew context and meaning retained.

The third problem was the fact that **Hebrew was created around a monotheistic** (one) God, and Greek around pantheism (more than one). This was resolved in the fact that Greek, as well as Hebrew, can have words that are plural with a singular result, such as *Elohim* in Hebrew and *Pneumati* in Greek.

When the wandering rabbi of Y'shua's day taught, his disciples would transcribe his sayings and his quotes from Scripture, as well as any teaching that he did, in the form of *Haggadah* and *Halachah* (parables and laws). This was probably the case with Y'shua as well. The disciples were his chief learners who, in turn, were to make learners out of future generations in keeping with Hebrew customs of passing along instruction from generation to generation as with Hillel, Akiva, and Rambam (Jewish sages: see glossary for more info).

The big difference between Judea and Alexandria is that, in Judea, Hebrew was not a dormant language in biblical studies. In fact, it was a living language of conversation and study. So as Y'shua's disciples wrote down what he said, **it was in Hebrew with pure Hebrew thought** – the language of the Old Covenant.

In summation, since the New Covenant is Greek written to convey Hebrew ideas, why stop at the Greek when we have the root benchmark, which is Hebrew. The New Covenant is of the Jewish common people, translated and transliterated into Greek, the language of all Anglo-European thought and concepts.

The main purpose of this section is to show that what is written in the New Covenant is actually pulled from the Old Covenant. The Old Covenant and other Jewish writings, being pure Hebrew and Aramaic, have stood the tests of time and languages. For even today, the Hebrew language is almost exactly the same as the Hebrew of Y'shua's day and before. The proof of this is to be found in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Therefore, should we not approach our studies of the New Covenant by returning to the original concepts stemming from Hebrew words, thoughts, and traditions of Y'shua's day?

Unfortunately, **the English Bible is not nearly as carefully or prayerfully translated as we have been led to believe**. Until we go back to the benchmark works and understand them as YHWH intended, we will remain in division and denomination. YHWH gave Adam the earth in perfect order and Adam allowed it to become a mess. YHWH gave us the divinely inspired Scriptures in the language he selected to communicate his word and will, and in our translations we have created confusion, which led to division in the Church.

YHWH is not the author of confusion. He is the author and finisher of our faith. He made us to be free-will agents of whatever He gives us, and it is up to each one of us to study to show ourselves approved before Him because we know how to correctly interpret and understand his word. That is why we have to get back to our Hebrew roots.

CHAPTER 5

WHAT IS THE TANACH AND WHY DO WE NEED TO UNDERSTAND IT?

The Old Covenant is known as the TaNaCh in Hebrew. **TaNaCh** is a Hebrew acronym¹ for Torah, Nevi'im and Chetuvim. The Five Books written by Moshe (Moses) is known as the **Torah**² in the TaNaCh. **Nevi'im** is the Hebrew for Prophets, and they are the collected Books of the Prophets or the Prophetic Books. **Chetuvim** (Hebrew for the Writings) are the remaining Books; the sayings and the historical Books. In other words, the **TaNaCh** is the entire Old Covenant; what the Hebrews call the Hebrew Bible.

The purpose of TaNaCh is as different as its parts: the Torah (meaning teaching/instruction), is YHWH's plan on how to live life (in book form – in order for YHWH to bless us). The Torah is the Believer's Life Manual. Nevi'im represents the blood, sweat and tears of the Prophets' leadership over a period of 920 years, beginning with Samuel and ending with Ezra. Though the last Prophet died long ago, their prophecies still apply today. While many of their prophecies were immediately applicable, many are about Messiah Y'shua. The Moshiach³ is the most fundamental Jewish belief.

Chetuvim are the collected writings of Moshe (Book of Job), King David (Psalms) and Solomon (Proverbs, the Song of Songs, Ecclesiastes), the Prophets Samuel (the Scroll of Ruth), Jeremiah (the Scroll of Lamentations); and Daniel (the Book of Daniel) as well as the Men of the Great Assembly (the Scroll of Esther). Listed below are the Books of the TaNaCh with their Hebrew names:

The Torah (Teachings or Instruction from YHWH)

- a) *Bereishit* (Hebrew "In the beginning" – Anglicized name for Genesis is "creation")
- b) *Sh'mot* (Hebrew "Names" – Anglicized name is Exodus meaning "departure")
- c) *Vayikra* (Hebrew "He called" – Anglicized name is Leviticus meaning Levites)
- d) *B'dmidbar* (Hebrew "In the wilderness" – Anglicized name Numbers mean Numbers)
- e) *Devarim* (Hebrew "Things" – Anglicized name Deuteronomy mean "second word")

The Nevi'im (Consisting of the Major Prophets and the Twelve Minor Prophets)

<i>Yehoshua</i>	(Joshua)
<i>Shoftim</i>	(Judges)
<i>Shmuel</i>	(Samuel I & II)
<i>Melachim</i>	(Kings I & II)
<i>Yeshayah</i>	(Isaiah)
<i>Yirmiyah</i>	(Jeremiah)
<i>Yechezkel</i>	(Ezekiel)
<i>Trey Asar</i>	("The Twelve", treated as one book)

- 1) *Hoshea* (Hosea)
- 2) *Yoel* (Joel)
- 3) *Amos* (Amos)
- 4) *Ovadyah* (Obadiah)
- 5) *Yonah* (Jonah)
- 6) *Michah* (Micah)
- 7) *Nachum* (Nahum)
- 8) *Chavakuk* (Habakkuk)
- 9) *Tzefanyah* (Zephaniah)
- 10) *Chagai* (Haggai)
- 11) *Zecharyah* (Zechariah)
- 12) *Malachi* (Malachi)

¹ Acronym is short form or a contraction

² Also known as the Chumash

³ Messiah

The Chetuvim (Writings)

- | | |
|--------------------------|---------------------------------|
| a) <i>Tehillim</i> | (Psalms) |
| b) <i>Mishlei</i> | (Proverbs) |
| c) <i>Iyov</i> | (Job) |
| d) <i>Shir HaShirim</i> | (Song of Songs) |
| e) <i>Rut</i> | (Ruth) |
| f) <i>Eichah</i> | (Lamentations) |
| g) <i>Kohelet</i> | (Ecclesiastes) |
| h) <i>Ester</i> | (Esther) |
| i) <i>Daniel</i> | (Daniel) |
| j) <i>Ezra &</i> | (Ezra) |
| k) <i>Nechemyah</i> | (Nehemiah, treated as one book) |
| l) <i>Divrei Hayamim</i> | (Chronicles I & II) |

IS THE TANACH OF HEBREW ORIGIN?

The *Tanach* is a Hebrew book, written by Hebrews for Hebrews. It was written entirely by the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob under the inspiration of YHWH.

The first five books of the Bible (the *Torah*) were written by Moses under the direct influence of YHWH, whom he spoke with face to face: "But since then there has not arisen in Israel a prophet like Moses, whom the LORD knew face to face..." (Deut 34:10)

Moses was from the Israelite tribe of Levi, the tribe that was selected by YHWH to take care of the Tabernacle (and later on the Temple) and to participate in its worship.

Various Israelite men also wrote the other books of the Tanach. For example:

- *The Book of Joshua* was written by Joshua who was from the tribe of Ephraim.
- *Ruth, Judges and I & II Samuel* were written by the Ephraimite Samuel or one of his students.
- *I & II Kings* were written by Jeremiah the Prophet who was a Levitical Priest.
- *Ezra and I & II Chronicles* were written by Ezra, the Levitical Priest and Scribe.
- The Prophetic books were written by the various prophets from various tribes.
- The *Psalms* were written by King David of Judah and others.
- The *Proverbs* were compiled by King Solomon of Judah.
- *Ecclesiastes* and *Song of Solomon* were written by King Solomon of Judah.

So we see that the *Tanach* is strictly a product of Israelites or Hebrews (some from the tribe of Judah and some not) writing under the inspiration of the YHWH of their forefathers: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

IS THE NEW TESTAMENT A HEBREW BOOK?

Just as the *Tanach* is strictly a Hebrew book—so, too, is the *Brit Chadasha* (New Covenant) where all of the authors were Hebrews with the possible exception of Luke, who was in all probability, a Jewish proselyte. Many scholars believe the book of Hebrews was written by Paul. Others prefer Barnabas, Luke, or Clement (an early Church leader). Still others claim it was written by a Believer who came from the sect of the Essenes (those who wrote the *Dead Sea Scrolls*). Whatever the case, Hebrews had to have been written by someone who was knowledgeable about the sacrifices and rituals of the Wilderness Tabernacle. It is highly unlikely that a Gentile convert to the Believing community would have had in-depth knowledge about such matters.

Also the bulk of the Epistles were written by the Apostle Paul, who clearly stated that he was Jewish: "...circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews: concerning the law, a Pharisee..." (Phil 3:5)

Of the other New Covenant authors, we know that Matthew and John were Jewish because they were among the twelve most intimate of the disciples, all of whom were Hebrews. Mark was also Jewish, for according to Acts 12:12, his mother (named *Miriam* or Mary) had a large house in Jerusalem which the disciples used for gatherings. Col 4:10 also states that Mark and Barnabas were cousins.

The General Epistles were also written by Jews. James (*Ya'acov* or Jacob in the original), and Jude (*Y'hudah*) were both half brothers of none other than Y'shua himself. Peter and John were two of the 'chief apostles'. John also was the one who recorded the visions he saw in the *Apokalypsis* or *Book of Revelation*, the final prophetic unveiling.

It was YHWH's choice to use the children of Israel (all Hebrews) to communicate the Scriptures to the world.

WAS IT DIFFICULT TO LIVE UNDER THE TORAH (LAW) DURING THE TIME OF THE OLD TESTAMENT?

The 'written' *Torah* consists of the 5 books of Moses and the 'oral' *Torah* consists of additional instructions passed down from generation to generation orally. The Written *Torah* is viewed as YHWH's expressed will, and the Oral *Torah* viewed as the detailed instructions of how to fulfil that expressed will. After the destruction of the Second Temple, Rabbi Yehudah Hanassi (Judah the Prince) began to collect, sift, arrange, classify and edit the great body of Oral *Torah* into a basic compendium of authoritative *Torah* Law called the *Mishnah*.

Over succeeding generations, as rabbis continued their study of the Oral *Torah*, a tradition of commentary and explanation began to grow. This expanding mass of material became an object of study in its own right and was called the *Gemara* in Aramaic – meaning, study. Both the *Mishnah* and *Gemara* were combined into a single document and called the *Talmud* – meaning, 'to study' in Hebrew. The *Talmud* is divided into 6 divisions, in which there are various tractates on different topical areas. Today, there are only 37 of the original sixty tractates of the Babylonian *Talmud* (*Bavli*) and 39 of the original sixty-three tractates of the Jerusalem *Talmud* (*Yerushalmi*).

Now, there are 613 commandments in the Written *Torah* (revelation or instruction from YHWH). These 613 commandments list what is required, permitted, and forbidden by YHWH—and range from activity of the lay person in everyday life to the strict procedures followed by the High Priest. The 613 commandments are codified and divided into the 248 positive and 365 negative Laws.

Yes, it was indeed very difficult to live a righteous life under the *Torah* as guidance: "*He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:*" (Heb 10:28). We can thank YHWH for grace through His Son Y'shua *HaMashiach* who gives us salvation today and not through the *Torah*. The only way to receive salvation today is through Y'shua, the door to eternal life. Now what about the *Torah*?

The New Covenant affirms that the *Torah* is good: "*Wherefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good*" (Rom 7:12). The Law of Moses is a series of instructions given to help Israel live holy lives, and within the core of the Mosaic Law are the sacrifices. It is evident that YHWH knew Israel would not be able to keep the Law; i.e., the sacrificial system that declares YHWH's grace and his willingness to forgive the sins of his people. The Grace is the salvation; but the Law is for **protection, direction and correction**, and **both are vital**. If you study the Law closely, you will find that we all would have been killed by two or three witnesses, as it is virtually impossible to comply fully with the Law.

It is interesting to note that the year is divided into 54 sections for the reading of the *Torah*. Each section is called a *Parshah*. The *Parshot* are in the progressive order that they are read through the year. The first *Parshah*, *Bereshit* (Genesis) is read following *Shimini Atzeret* "the assembly of the eighth (day)" just after the festival of *Sukkot* (the Feast of Tabernacles) in the fall season (winter in Israel). This listing of the 613 commandments below do not follow the order of the *Parshah* as thought by categorising them together will give the reader a better understanding of the *Torah*. (Please note P stands for Positive Law and N for negative Law).

THE 248 POSITIVE MITZVOT (COMMANDMENTS)

YHWH

P 1 N 1	Exod 20:2	To believe in YHWH.
P 2 N 1	Deut 6:4	To acknowledge the Unity of YHWH.
P 3	Deut 6:5	To love YHWH.
P 4 N 1	Deut 6:13	To fear YHWH.
P 5 N 1	Exod 23:25	To serve YHWH (Deut 11:13; 13:5).
P 6 N 1	Deut 10:20	To cleave to YHWH (holdfast, pursue closely).
P 7	Deut 10:20	On taking an oath by YHWH's Name.
P 8 N 1	Deut 28:9	On walking in YHWH's ways.
P 9	Lev 22:32	On Sanctifying YHWH's Name.

TORAH

P 10	Deut 6:7	On reciting the Sh'ma each morning and evening.
P 11	Deut 6:7	On studying and teaching Torah.
P 12	Deut 6:8	On binding Tefillin on the head.
P 13	Deut 6:8	On binding Tefillin on the hand.
P 14	Num 15:38	On making Tzitzit with thread of blue (garment's corners).
P 15	Deut 6:9	On affixing a Mezuzah to doorposts and gates.
P 16	Deut 31:12	On Assembling each 7 th year to hear the Torah read.
P 17	Deut 17:18	On that a king must write a copy of Torah for himself.
P 18 N 1	Deut 31:19	On that everyone should have a Torah scroll.
P 19	Deut 8:10	On praising YHWH after eating (Grace after meals).

TEMPLE AND THE PRIESTS

P 20	Exod 25:8	On building a Sanctuary/(Tabernacle/Temple) for YHWH.
P 21	Lev 19:30	On respecting the Sanctuary.
P 22	Num 18:4	On guarding the Sanctuary.
P 23	Num 18:23	On Levitical services in the Tabernacle.
P 24	Exod 30:19	On Cohanim washing hands & feet before entering Temple.
P 25	Exod 27:21	On kindling the Menorah by the Cohanim.
P 26	Num 6:23	On the Cohanim blessing Israel.
P 27	Exod 25:30	On the Showbread before the Ark.
P 28	Exod 30:7	On Burning the Incense on the Golden Altar twice daily.
P 29	Lev 6:6	On the perpetual fire on the Altar.
P 30	Lev 6:3	On removing the ashes from the Altar.
P 31	Num 5:2	On removing unclean persons from the camp.
P 32	Lev 21:8	On honouring the Cohanim.
P 33	Exod 28:2	On the garments of the Cohanim.
P 34	Num 7:9	On Cohanim bearing the Ark on their shoulders.
P 35	Exod 30:31	On the holy anointing oil.
P 36	Deut 18:6-8	On the Cohanim ministering in rotation/watches.
P 37	Lev 21:2-3	On the Cohanim being defiled for dead relatives.
P 38	Lev 21:13	On that Cohen haGadol may only marry a virgin.

SACRIFICES

P 39	Num 28:3	On the twice Daily Burnt (tamid) offerings.
P 40	Lev 6:13	On Cohen haGadol's twice daily meal offering.
P 41	Num 28:9	On the Shabbat additional (musaf) offering.
P 42	Num 28:11	On the New Moon, Rosh Chodesh, additional offering.
P 43	Lev 23:36	On the Pesach additional offering.
P 44	Lev 23:10	On the second day of Pesach meal offering of the Omer.
P 45	Num 28:26-27	On the Shavuot additional (musaf) offering.
P 46	Lev 23:17	On the Two Loaves of bread Wave offering on Shavuot.
P 47	Num 29:1-2	On the Rosh HaShannah additional offering.
P 48	Num 29:7-8	On the Yom Kippur additional offering.
P 49	Lev 16:29	On the service of Yom Kippur (Avodah).
P 50	Num 29:13	On the Sukkot (musaf) offerings.
P 51	Num 29:36	On the Shemini Atzeret additional offering.
P 52	Exod 23:14	On the three annual Festival pilgrimages to the Temple.
P 53	Exod 34:23	On appearing before YHVH during the Festivals (Deut 16:16).
P 54	Deut 16:14	On rejoicing on the Festivals.
P 55	Exod 12:6	On the 14 th of Nisan, slaughtering the Pesach lamb.
P 56	Exod 12:8	On eating the roasted Pesach lamb the night of Nisan 15.
P 57	Num 9:11	On slaughtering the Pesach Sheini (Iyyar 14) offering.
P 58	Num 9:11	On eating the Pesach Sheini lamb with Matzah and Maror (Exod 12:8).
P 59	Num 10:9-10	Trumpets for Feast sacrifices brought & for tribulation.
P 60	Lev 22:27	On minimum age of cattle to be offered.
P 61	Lev 22:21	On offering only unblemished sacrifices.
P 62	Lev 2:13	On bringing salt with every offering.
P 63	Lev 1:2	On the Burnt-Offering.
P 64	Lev 6:18	On the Sin-Offering.
P 65	Lev 7:1	On the Guilt-Offering.
P 66	Lev 3:1	On the Peace-Offering.
P 67	Lev 2:1;	On the Meal-Offering (Lev. 6:7).

P 68	Lev 4:13	On offerings for a Court (Sanhedrin) that has erred.
P 69	Lev 4:27	Fixed Sin-Offering, by one unknowingly breaking a karet.
P 70	Lev 5:17-18	Suspensive Guilt-Offering if there's doubt of breaking a karet.
P 71	Lev 5:15; 19:20-21	Unconditional Guilt-Offering, for stealing, etc.
P 72	Lev 5:1-11	Offering higher or lower value, according to one's means.
P 73	Num 5:6-7	To confess one's sins before YHWH and repent of them.
P 74	Lev 15:13-15	On offering brought by a zav (man with a discharge).
P 75	Lev 15:28-29	Offering brought by a zavah (woman with a discharge).
P 76	Lev 12:6	On offering brought by a woman after childbirth.
P 77	Lev 14:10	On offering brought by a leper after being cleansed.
P 78	Lev 27:32	On the Tithe of one's cattle.
P 79	Exod 13:2	Sacrificing the First-born of clean (permitted) cattle.
P 80	Exod 22:29	On Redeeming the First-born of man (Pidyon ha-ben—Num 18:15).
P 81	Exod 34:20	On Redeeming the firstling of an ass, if not...
P 82	Exod 13:13	...breaking the neck of the firstling of an ass.
P 83	Deut 12:5-6	On bringing due offerings to Jerusalem without delay.
P 84	Deut 12:14	All offerings must be brought only to the Sanctuary.
P 85	Deut 12:36	On offerings due from outside Israel to the Sanctuary.
P 86	Deut 12:15	On Redeeming blemished sanctified animal offerings.
P 87	Lev 27:33	On the holiness of substituted animal offerings.
P 88	Lev 6:9	On Cohanim eating the remainder of the Meal Offerings.
P 89	Exod 29:33	On Cohanim eating the meat of Sin and Guilt Offerings.
P 90	Lev 7:19	Burn Consecrated Offerings that have become tameh/unclean.
P 91	Lev 7:17	Burn remnant of Consecrated Offerings not eaten in time VOWS.
P 92	Num 6:5	The Nazir letting his hair grow during his separation.
P 93	Num 6:18	Nazir completing vow shaves his head and brings sacrifice.
P 94	Deut 23:24	On that a man must honour his oral vows and oaths.
P 95	Num 30:3	On that a judge can annul vows, only according to Torah.

RITUAL PURITY

P 96	Lev 11:8, 24	Defilement by touching certain animal carcasses.
P 97	Lev 11:29-31	...by touching carcasses of eight creeping creatures.
P 98	Lev 11:34	Defilement of food & drink, if contacting unclean thing.
P 99	Lev 15:19	On Tumah of a menstruate woman.
P100	Lev 12:2	On Tumah of a woman after childbirth.
P101	Lev 13:3	On Tumah of a leper.
P102	Lev 13:51	On garments contaminated by leprosy.
P103	Lev 14:44	On a leprous house.
P104	Lev 15:2	On Tumah of a zav (man with a running issue).
P105	Lev 15:6	On Tumah of semen.
P106	Lev 15:19	Tumah of a zavah (woman suffering from a running issue).
P107	Num 19:14	On Tumah of a human corpse.
P108	Num 19:13	Law of the purification water of sprinkling (mei niddah—Num 19: 21).
P109	Lev 15:16	On immersing in a mikveh to become ritually clean.
P110	Lev 14:2	On the specified procedure of cleansing from leprosy.
P111	Lev 14:9	On that a leper must shave his head.
P112	Lev 13:45	On that the leper must be made easily distinguishable.
P113	Num 19:2-9	On Ashes of the Red Heifer used in ritual purification.

DONATIONS TO THE TEMPLE

P114	Lev 27:2-8	On the valuation for a person himself to the Temple.
P115	Lev 27:11-12	On the valuation for an unclean beast to the Temple.
P116	Lev 27:14	On the valuation of a house as a donation to the Temple.
P117	Lev 27:16, 22-23	On the valuation of a field as a donation to the Temple.
P118	Lev 5:16	If benefit from Temple property, restitution plus $\frac{1}{5}$ th.
P119	Lev 19:24	On the fruits of the trees fourth year's growth.
P120	Lev 19:9	On leaving the corners (Peah) of fields for the poor.
P121	Lev 19:9	On leaving gleanings of the field for the poor.
P122	Deut 24:19	On leaving the forgotten sheaf for the poor.
P123	Lev 19:19	On leaving the misformed grape clusters for the poor.
P124	Lev 19:10	On leaving grape gleanings for the poor.
P125	Exod 23:19	On separating & bringing First-fruits to the Sanctuary.
P126	Deut 18:4	To separate the great Heave-offering (terumah).

P127	Lev 27:30	To set aside the first tithe to the Levites (Num 18:24).
P128	Deut 14:22	To set aside the second tithe, eaten only in Jerusalem.
P129	Num 18:26	On Levites' giving tenth of their tithe to the Cohanim.
P130	Deut 14:28	To set aside the poor-man's tithe in 3 rd and 6 th year.
P131	Deut 26:13	A declaration made when separating the various tithes.
P132	Deut 26:5	A declaration made bringing First-fruits to the Temple.
P133	Num 15:20	On the first portion of the Challah given to the Cohen.

THE SABBATICAL YEAR

P134	Exod 23:11	On ownerless produce of the Sabbatical year (shmitah).
P135	Exod 34:21	On resting the land on the Sabbatical year.
P136	Lev 25:10	On sanctifying the Jubilee (50th) year.
P137	Lev 25:9	Blow Shofar on Yom Kippur in the Jubilee and slaves freed.
P138	Lev 25:24	Reversion of the land to ancestral owners in Jubilee year.
P139	Lev 25:24	On the redemption of a house within a year of the sale.
P140	Lev 25:8	Counting and announcing the years till the Jubilee year.
P141	Deut 15:3	All debts are annulled in the Sabbatical year, but...
P142	Deut 15:3	...one may exact a debt owed by a foreigner.

CONCERNING ANIMALS FOR CONSUMPTION

P143	Deut 18:3	The Cohen's due in the slaughter of every clean animal.
P144	Deut 18:4	On the first of the fleece to be given to the Cohen.
P145	Lev 27:21	(Cherem vow) one devoted thing to YHWH, other to Cohanim (Lev. 27: 28).
P146	Lev 12:21	Slaughtering animals, according to Torah, before eating.
P147	Lev 17:13	Covering with earth the blood of slain fowl and beast.
P148	Deut 22:7	On setting free the parent bird when taking the nest.
P149	Lev 11:2	Searching for prescribed signs in beasts, for eating.
P150	Deut 14:11	Searching for the prescribed signs in birds, for eating.
P151	Lev 11:21	Searching for prescribed signs in locusts, for eating.
P152	Lev 11:9	Searching for the prescribed signs in fish, for eating.

FESTIVALS

P153	Exod 12:2	Sanhedrin to sanctify New Moon, and reckon years and seasons (Deut 16:1).
P154	Exod 23:12	On resting on the Shabbat.
P155	Exod 20:8	On declaring Shabbat holy at its onset and termination.
P156	Exod 12:15	On removal of chametz, leaven(ed), on (Nisan 14) Pesach.
P157	Exod 13:8	Tell the story of Exodus from Egypt 1 st night Pesach, (Nisan 15).
P158	Exod 12:18	On eating Matzah the first night of Pesach, (Nisan 15).
P159	Exod 12:16	On resting on the first day of Pesach.
P160	Exod 12:16	On resting on the seventh day of Pesach.
P161	Lev 23:35	Count the Omer 49 days from day of first sheaf (Nisan 16).
P162	Lev 23:21	On resting on Shavuot.
P163	Lev 23:24	On resting on Feast of Trumpets (Rosh HaShannah).
P164	Lev 16:29	On fasting on Yom Kippur.
P165	Lev 16:29	On resting on Yom Kippur.
P166	Lev 23:35	On resting on the first day of Sukkot.
P167	Lev 23:36	On resting on the 8th day (Shemini Atzeret).
P168	Lev 23:42	On dwelling in a Sukkah (booth) for seven days.
P169	Lev 23:40	On taking a Lulav (the four species) on Sukkot.
P170	Num 29:1	On hearing the sound of the Shofar on Rosh HaShannah.

COMMUNITY

P171	Exod 30:12-13	On every male giving half a shekel annually to Temple.
P172	Deut 18:15	On heeding the Prophets.
P173	Deut 17:15	On appointing a king.
P174	Deut 17:11	On obeying the Great Court (Sanhedrin).
P175	Exod 23:2	On in case of division, abiding by a majority decision.
P176	Deut 16:18	Appointing Judges and Officers of the Court in every town.
P177	Lev 19:15	Treating litigants equally/impartially before the law.
P178	Lev 5:1	Anyone aware of evidence must come to court to testify.
P179	Deut 13:15	The testimony of witnesses shall be examined thoroughly.
P180	Deut 19:19	False witnesses punished as they intended upon accused.
P181	Deut 21:4	On Eglah Arufah, on the heifer when murderer unknown.

P182	Deut 19:3	On establishing Six Cities of Refuge.
P183	Num 35:2	Give cities to Levites who've no ancestral land share.
P184	Deut 22:8	Build fence on roof, remove potential hazards from home.

IDOLATRY

P185	Deut 12:2	On destroying all idolatry and its appurtenances (Deut. 7:5).
P186	Deut 13:17	The law about a city that has become apostate/perverted.
P187	Deut 20:17	On the law about destroying the seven Canaanite nations.
P188L	Deut 25:19	On the extinction of the seed of Amalek.
P189L	Deut 25:17	On remembering the nefarious deeds of Amalek to Israel.

WAR

P190	Deut 20:11-12	Regulations for wars other than ones commanded in Torah.
P191	Deut 20:2	Cohen for special duties in war; also men unfit return.
P192	Deut 23:14-15	Prepare place beyond the camp, so to keep sanitary and...
P193	Deut 23:15	...to include a digging tool among war implements.

SOCIAL

P194	Lev 5:23	On a robber to restore the stolen article to its owner.
P195	Deut 15:8	On to give charity to the poor (Lev 25:35-36).
P196	Deut 15:14	On giving gifts to a Hebrew bondman upon his freedom.
P197	Exod 22:24	On lending money to the poor without interest.
P198	Deut 23:21	On lending money to the foreigner with interest.
P199	Deut 24:13	On restoring a pledge to its owner if he needs it (Exod 22:25).
P200	Deut 24:15	On paying the worker his wages on time.
P201	Deut 23:25-26	Employee is allowed to eat the produce he's working in.
P202	Exod 3:5	On helping unload, when necessary, a tired animal.
P203	Deut 22:4	On assisting a man loading his beast with its burden.
P204	Deut 22:1	On lost property that must be returned to its owner (Exod 23:4).
P205	Lev 19:17	On being required to reprove the sinner.
P206	Lev 19:18	On loving your neighbour as yourself.
P207	Deut 10:19	On being commanded to love the convert/proselyte.
P208	Lev 19:36	On the law of accurate weights and measures.

FAMILY

P209	Lev 19:32	On honouring the old (and wise).
P210	Exod 20:12	On honouring parents.
P211	Lev 19:3	On fearing parents.
P212	Gen 1:28	On being fruitful and multiplying.
P213	Deut 24:1	On the law of marriage.
P214	Deut 24:5	On bridegroom devotes himself to his wife for one year.
P215	Gen 17:10	On circumcising one's son (Lev 12:3).
P216	Deut 25:5	If a man dies childless his brother marries widow, or...
P217	Deut 25:9	...releases her/the-widow (Chalitzah).
P218	Deut 22:29	A violator must marry the virgin/maiden he has violated.
P219	Deut 22:18-19	The defamer of his bride is flogged and may never divorce.
P220	Exod 22:15-23	On the seducer must be punished according to the law.
P221	Deut 21:11	Captive women treated according to special regulations.
P222	Deut 24:1	The law of divorce, only by means of written document.
P223	Num 5:15-27	Suspected adulteress has to submit to the required test (sotah).

JUDICIAL

P224	Deut 25:2	On whipping transgressors of certain commandments.
P225	Num 35:25	On exile to city of refuge for unintentional homicide.
P226	Exod 21:20	On beheading transgressors of certain commandments.
P227	Exod 21:16	On strangling transgressors of certain commandments.
P228	Lev 20:14	On burning transgressors of certain commandments.
P229	Deut 22:24	On stoning transgressors of certain commandments.
P230	Deut 21:22	Hanging after execution, violators of certain commandments.
P231	Deut 21:23	On burial on the same day of execution.

SLAVES

P232	Exod 21:2	On the special laws for treating the Hebrew bondman.
P233	Exod 21:8	Hebrew bondmaid married to her master or his son, or...
P234	Exod 21:8	...allow the redemption to the Hebrew bondmaid.
P235	Lev 25:46	On the laws for treating an alien bondman.

PRIVATE OR CIVIL WRONGS

P236	Exod 21:18	On the penalty for a person inflicting injury.
P237	Exod 21:28	On the law of injuries caused by an animal.
P238	Exod 21:33-34	On the law of injuries caused by a pit.
P239	Exod 21:37; 22:3	On the law of punishment of thieves.
P240	Exod 22:4	On the law of a judgment for damage caused by a beast.
P241	Exod 22:5	On the law of a judgment for damage caused by a fire.
P242	Exod 22:6-8	On the law of an unpaid guardian.
P243	Exod 22:9-12	On the law of a paid guardian.
P244	Exod 22:13	On the law of a borrower.
P245	Lev 25:14	On the law of buying and selling.
P246	Exod 22:8	On the law of litigants.
P247	Deut 25:12	Save life of one pursued: even if needed - kill oppressor.
P248	Num 27:8	On the law of inheritance.

THE 365 NEGATIVE MITZVOT (COMMANDMENTS)

IDOLATRY AND RELATED PRACTICES

N 1	Exod 20:3	Not believing in any other god except the One God.
N 2	Exod 20:4	Not to make images for the purpose of worship.
N 3	Lev 19:4	Not to make an idol (even for others) to worship.
N 4	Exod 20:20	Not to make figures of human beings.
N 5	Exod 20:5	Not to bow down to an idol.
N 6	Exod 20:5	Not to worship idols.
N 7	Lev 18:21	Not to hand over any children to Molech.
N 8	Lev 19:31	Not to practice sorcery of the ov (necromancy).
N 9	Lev 19:31	Not to practice sorcery of yidde'oni (familiar spirits).
N 10	Lev 19:4	Not to study idolatrous practices.
N 11	Deut 16:22	Not to erect a pillar which people assemble to honour.
N 12	Lev 20:1	No figured stones (dais) to lay prostrate on.
N 13	Deut 16:21	Not to plant trees in the Sanctuary/Temple.
N 14	Exod 23:13	Swear not by an idol nor instigate an idolater to do so.
N 15	Exod 23:13	Not to divert any non-Jew to idolatry.
N 16	Deut 13:12	Not to try to persuade a Jew to worship idols.
N 17	Deut 13:9	Not to love someone who seeks to mislead you to idols.
N 18	Deut 13:9	Not to relax one's aversion to the misleader to idols.
N 19	Deut 13:9	Not to save the life of a misleader to idols.
N 20	Deut 13:9	Not to plead for (defend) the misleader to idols.
N 21	Deut 13:9	Not to oppress evidence unfavourable to the misleader.
N 22	Deut 7:25	No benefit from ornaments which have adorned an idol.
N 23	Deut 13:17	Rebuild not a city destroyed as punishment for idolatry.
N 24	Deut 13:18	Not deriving benefit from property of an apostate city.
N 25	Deut 7:26	Do not use anything connected with idols or idolatry.
N 26	Deut 18:20	Not prophesying in the name of idols.
N 27	Deut 18:20	Not prophesying falsely in the Name of YHWH.
N 28	Deut 13:3-4	Listen not to one who prophesies in the name of idols.
N 29	Deut 18:22	Not fearing or refraining from killing a false prophet.
N 30	Lev 20:23	Imitate not the ways nor practice customs of idolaters.
*N 31	Lev 19:26	Not practising divination (Deut 18:10).
*N 32	Deut 18:10	Not practising soothsaying (ONAN OBSERVER OF TIME).
*N 33	Deut 18:10-11	Not practising enchanting (NACHASH).
*N 34	Deut 18:10-11	Not practicing sorcery (QASAPH WITCH).
*N 35	Deut 18:10-11	Not practicing the art of the charmer.
*N 36	Deut 18:10-11	Not consulting a necromancer who uses the ov (PRACTICE)(SHA'AL).
*N 37	Deut 18:10-11	Not consulting a sorcerer who uses the ydo'a (WIZARD YIDANI).
*N 38	Deut 18:10-11	Not to seek information from the dead (necromancy).
N 39	Deut 22:5	Women not to wear men's clothes or adornments.

N 40	Deut 22:5	Men not to wear women's clothes or adornments.
N 41	Lev 19:28	Not tattoo yourself, as is the manner of the idolaters.
N 42	Deut 22:11	Not wearing a mixture of wool and linen (Shatnes).
N 43	Lev 19:27	Not shaving the temples/sides of your head.
N 44	Lev 19:27	Not shaving your beard.
N 45	Deut 16:1; 14:1	Not making cuttings in your flesh over your dead (Lev 19:28).

NOTE:

- 1) Divination (Qasam) – Any attempt to foretell the future by use of omens or talismans. This would include common modern methods like the use of tarot cards, palm reading, fortune cookie messages, rolling of dice, throwing of "magic" sticks, reading of the "Eight Ball", etc. A form of divination.
- 2) Astrology (Onan) – Astrology or the use of illusions as magic (even if the participants know that the "tricks" are illusions). A form of divination.
- 3) Superstitions (Nachash) – To foretell the future by personal experience or by diligent observance. This includes all superstitions – both those that are long-standing folklores and personal superstitions that are created either spontaneously or by previous experience. A form of divination.
- 4) Casting Spells (Qasaph) – The casting of spells. The attempt to "make" things happen by saying words (and, potentially, performing other acts of a religious nature). A form of witchcraft.
- 5) Charming (Chover chaver) – Charm with words. To quote sayings or phrases that are designed to alter one's mental state regarding some bad or good thing. A form of witchcraft.
- 6) Medium for the Dead (Ov) – Contacting a medium for the purposes of coming in contact with a dead human ghost. A form of necromancy.
- 7) Medium for Other Spirits (Yidani) – Contacting a medium for the purposes of consulting beings from the spirit world other than humans. This might be the most logical mitzvah prohibiting the use of the Uija Board. A form of necromancy.
- 8) Enlightenment from the Dead (Drash muut) – Seeking enlightenment and knowledge from humans who are dead – even if those human spirits do not directly communicate through methods associated with a medium. A form of necromancy.

PROHIBITIONS RESULTING FROM HISTORICAL EVENTS

N 46	Deut 17:16	Not returning to Egypt to dwell there permanently.
N 47 N1	Num 15:39	Not to follow one's heart or eyes, straying into impurity.
N 48L	Exod 23:32;	Not to make a pact with the Seven Canaanite Nations (Deut 7:2).
N 49L	Deut 20:16	Not to spare the life of the Seven Canaanite Nations.
N 50	Deut 7:2	Not to show mercy to idolaters.
N 51	Exod 23:33	No one serving false gods to settle in Eretz-Israel.
N 52	Deut 7:3	Not to intermarry with one serving false gods.
N 53	Deut 23:4	Not to intermarry at all with a male from Ammon or Moav.
N 54	Deut 23:8	Exclude not marrying a descendant Esau if a proselyte.
N 55	Deut 23:8	Not to exclude marrying an Egyptian who is a proselyte.
N 56	Deut 23:7	Not permitted to make peace with Ammon and Moav nations.
N 57	Deut 20:19	Not destroying fruit trees, even in time of war.
N 58L	Deut 7:21	Not fearing the enemy in time of war.
N 59	Deut 25:19	Not forgetting the evil which Amalek did to us.

BLASPHEMY

N 60	Lev 24:16	Not blaspheming the Holy Name of YHWH [rather]: (Exod 22:27).
N 61	Lev 19:12	Not violating an oath by the Holy Name (shevuas bittui).
N 62	Exod 20:7	Not taking the Holy Name in vain (shevuas shav).
N 63	Lev 22:32	Not profaning the Holy Name of YHWH.
N 64	Deut 6:16	Not testing/trying His (YHWH God) promises and warnings.
N 65	Deut 12:4	Do not destroy houses of worship or holy books.
N 66	Deut 21:23	Leave no body of executed criminal hanging overnight.

TEMPLE

N 67	Num 18:5	Be not lax in guarding the Sanctuary/(Temple).
N 68	Lev 16:2	Cohen haGadol enter Sanctuary only at prescribed times.
N 69	Lev 21:23	Cohen with blemish enter not Temple, from Altar inwards.
N 70	Lev 21:17	Cohen with a blemish not to minister in the Sanctuary.
N 71	Lev 21:18	Cohen with temporary blemish not to minister in the Sanctuary.

N 72	Num 18:3	Levites and Cohanim not to interchange in their functions.
N 73	Lev 10:9-11	Drunk persons may not enter Sanctuary or teach Torah.
N 74	Num 18:4	A Zar (non-Cohen) not to minister in the Sanctuary.
N 75	Lev 22:2	Tameh (unclean) Cohen not to minister in the Sanctuary.
N 76	Lev 21:6	Cohen who is tevel yom, not to minister in the Sanctuary.
N 77	Num 5:3	Tameh (unclean) person not to enter any part of the Temple.
N 78	Deut 23:11	Tameh person not to enter the camp of Levites (Temple mount).
N 79	Exod 20:25	Build no Altar of stones which were touched by iron.
N 80	Exod 20:26	Not to have an ascent to the Altar by steps.
N 81	Lev 6:6	Not to extinguish the Altar fire.
N 82	Exod 30:9	Offer nothing but specified incense on the Golden Altar.
N 83	Exod 30:32	Not to make any oil the same as the Oil of Anointment.
N 84	Exod 30:32	Anoint no one with special oil, except Cohen Gadol and King.
N 85	Exod 30:37	Not to make incense the same as the burnt offering on the Altar in the Sanctuary.
N 86	Exod 25:15	Not to remove the staves from their rings in the Ark.
N 87	Exod 28:28	Not to remove the Breastplate from the Ephod.
N 88	Exod 28:32	Make no incision in Cohen haGadol's upper garment.

SACRIFICES

N 89	Deut 12:13	Offer no sacrifices outside Sanctuary/(Temple) Court.
N 90	Lev 17:3-4	Slaughter no consecrated animals outside Temple Court.
N 91	Lev 22:20	Dedicate no blemished animal to be offered on Altar.
N 92	Lev 22:22	Not to slaughter a blemished animal as a korban.
N 93	Lev 22:24	Not to dash the blood of a blemished beast on the Altar.
N 94	Lev 22:22	Not to burn the inner parts of blemished beast on the Altar.
N 95	Deut 17:1	Not to sacrifice a beast with a temporary blemish.
N 96	Lev 22:25	Not to offer a blemished sacrifice of a Gentile.
N 97	Lev 22:21	Not to cause a consecrated offering to become blemished.
N 98	Lev 2:11	Not to offer leaven or honey upon the Altar.
N 99	Lev 2:13	Not to offer a sacrifice without salt.
N100	Deut 23:19	Offer not on the Altar: "hire of a harlot" or "price of a dog".
N101	Lev 22:28	Not to slaughter an animal and its young on the same day.
N102	Lev 5:11	Not to put olive oil on the sin meal-offering.
N103	Lev 5:11	Not to put frankincense on the sin meal-offering.
N104	Num 5:15	Not to put olive oil on the jealousy offering (sotah).
N105	Num 5:15	Not to put frankincense on the jealousy offering (sotah).
N106	Lev 27:10	Not to substitute sacrifices.
N107	Lev 27:26	Not to change sacrifices from one category to the other.
N108	Num 18:17	Redeem not the firstborn of permitted (clean) animals.
N109	Lev 27:33	Not to sell the tithe of the herd of cattle.
N110	Lev 27:28	Not to sell a devoted field (by the Cherem vow).
N111	Lev 27:28	Not to redeem a devoted field (by the Cherem vow).
N112	Lev 5:8	Not to split head of bird slaughtered for Sin-offering.
N113	Deut 15:19	Not to do any work with a dedicated beast.
N114	Deut 15:19	Not to shear a dedicated beast.
N115	Exod 34:25	Slaughter not Pesach/Passover lamb if chametz is about.
N116	Exod 23:10	Leave not sacrificial portions of Pesach lamb overnight.
N117	Exod 12:	Allow not meat of Pesach lamb to remain till morning.
N118	Deut 16:4	No meat of Nissan 14 Festive offering may remain till day 3.
N119	Num 9:13	No meat of 2nd Pesach lamb offering may remain till morning.
N120	Lev 22:30	No meat of Thanksgiving Offering to remain till morning.
N121	Exod 12:46	Not to break any bones of Pesach lamb offering.
N122	Num 9:12	Not to break any bones of 2 nd Pesach lamb offering.
N123	Exod 12:46	Not to remove Pesach offering from where it is eaten.
N124	Lev 6:10	Not to bake the remainder of a meal offering with leaven.
N125	Exod 12:9	Not to eat the Pesach offering boiled or raw.
N126	Exod 12:45	Not to allow an alien resident to eat Pesach offering.
N127	Exod 12:48	An uncircumcised person may not eat the Pesach offering.
N128	Exod 12:43	Not to allow an apostate to eat the Pesach offering.
N129	Lev 12:4	Tameh (ritually unclean) person may not eat holy things.
N130	Lev 7:19	Eat no meat of consecrated things that have become tameh.
N131	Lev 19:6-8	Not to eat sacrificial meat beyond the allotted time.

N132	Lev 7:18	Eat no sacrificial meat slaughtered with the wrong intention.
N133	Lev 22:10	A zar/non-Cohen may not eat terumah / (heave offering).
N134	Lev 22:10	A Cohen's sojourner or hired worker may not eat terumah.
N135	Lev 22:10	An uncircumcised person may not eat terumah.
N136	Lev 22:4	Tameh (ritually unclean) Cohen may not eat terumah.
N137	Lev 22:12	Bat-Cohen, if married to non-Cohen, not to eat holy food.
N138	Lev 6:16	Not to eat the Meal-offering of a Cohen.
N139	Lev 6:23	Eat no Sin-offering meat sacrificed within Sanctuary.
N140	Deut 14:3	Not to eat consecrated animals that've become blemished.
N141	Deut 12:17	Eat no unredeemed 2 nd corn tithe outside Yerushalayim.
N142	Deut 12:17	Consume no unredeemed 2 nd wine tithe outside Jerusalem.
N143	Deut 12:17	Consume no unredeemed 2 nd oil tithe outside Jerusalem.
N144	Deut 12:17	Eat not an unblemished firstling outside Yerushalayim.
N145	Deut 12:17	Eat not sin or guilt offerings outside Sanctuary court.
N146	Deut 12:17	Not to eat the meat of the burnt offering at all.
N147	Deut 12:17	Eat no lesser sacrifices before blood dashed on Altar.
N148	Deut 12:17	A zar/non-Cohen is not to eat the most holy offerings.
N149	Exod 29:33	A Cohen not to eat First Fruits outside Temple courts.
N150	Deut 26:14	Eat no unredeemed 2 nd tithe while in state of impurity.
N151	Deut 26:14	Not eating the 2 nd tithe while in mourning.
N152	Deut 26:14	On 2 nd tithe redemption money (only for food and drink).
N153	Lev 22:15	Not eating untithed produce (tevel).
N154	Exod 22:28	Not changing the order of separating the various tithes.
N155	Deut 23:22	Delay not payment of offerings (freewill or obligatory).
N156	Exod 23:15	Go not to Temple on pilgrim festivals without offering.
N157	Num 30:3	Not to break your word, even if without an oath.

PRIESTS

N158	Lev 21:7	A Cohen may not marry a harlot (zonah).
N159	Lev 21:7	A Cohen may not marry a woman profaned from the Priesthood.
N160	Lev 21:7	A Cohen may not marry a divorcee.
N161	Lev 21:14	Cohen haGadol may not marry a widow.
N162	Lev 21:15	Cohen haGadol may not take a widow as a concubine.
N163	Lev 10:6	Cohen with dishevelled hair may not enter the Sanctuary.
N164	Lev 10:6	Cohen wearing rent garments may not enter Sanctuary.
N165	Lev 10:7	Cohanim may not leave Temple courtyard during the service.
N166	Lev 21:1	Common Cohen must not be defiled for dead, except some.
N167	Lev 21:11	Cohen haGadol may not be under one roof with dead body.
N168	Lev 21:11	Cohen haGadol must not be defiled for any dead person.
N169	Deut 18:1	Levites have no part in the division of Israel's land.
N170	Deut 18:1	Levites share not in the spoils of war.
N171	Deut 14:1	Not to tear hair out for the dead.

DIETARY LAWS

N172	Deut 14:7	Not to eat any unclean animal.
N173	Lev 11:11	Not to eat any unclean fish.
N174	Lev 11:13	Not to eat any unclean fowl.
N175	Deut 14:19	Not to eat any creeping winged insect.
N176	Lev 11:41	Not to eat anything which creeps on the earth.
N177	Lev 11:44	Not to eat a creeping thing that breeds in decayed matter.
N178	Lev 11:42	Not to eat living creatures that breed in seeds/fruit.
N179	Lev 11:43	Not to eat any detestable creature.
N180	Deut 14:21	Not to eat any animal which died naturally (a nevelah).
N181	Exod 22:30	Not to eat an animal which is torn or mauled (a treifah).
N182	Deut 12:23	Not to eat any limb taken from a living animal.
N183	Gen 32:33	Not to eat the sinew of the thigh-vein (gid ha-nasheh).
N184	Lev 7:24	Not to eat blood.
N185	Lev 7:23	Not to eat certain types of fat of clean animal (chelev).
N186	Exod 23:19	Not to boil young male goat (meat) in its mother's milk.
N187	Exod 34:26	Not to eat young male goat cooked in its mother's milk.
N188	Exod 21:28	Not to eat the flesh of a condemned & to be stoned ox.
N189	Lev 23:14	Eat not bread made from grain of new crop before Omer.
N190	Lev 23:14	Eat not roasted grain of new crop before Omer offering.

N191	Lev 23:14	Eat not green ears of new crop, before Omer (Nisan 16).
N192	Lev 19:23	Not to eat orlah.
N193	Deut 22:9	Eat not growth of mixed vineyard planting (kilai hakerem).
N194	Deut 32:38	Not to use wine libations for idols (yayin nesach).
N195	Lev 19:26;	No eating or drinking to excess (gluttony and drunkenness Deut 21:20).
N196	Lev 23:29	Not to eat anything on Yom Kippur/Day of Atonement.
N197	Exod 13:3	Not to eat chametz, leaven(ed), on Pesach.
N198	Exod 13:7	Not to eat an admixture of chametz/leaven(ed) on Pesach.
N199	Deut 16:3	Not to eat chametz, leaven(ed), after noon of 14 Nisan.
N200	Exod 13:7	No chametz may be seen in our homes during Pesach.
N201	Exod 12:19	Not to possess chametz, leaven(ed), during Pesach (NAZIRITES).
N202	Num 6:3	A Nazir may not drink wine or any beverage from grapes.
N203	Num 6:3	A Nazir may not eat fresh grapes.
N204	Num 6:3	A Nazir may not eat dried grapes.
N205	Num 6:4	A Nazir may not eat grape seeds/kernels.
N206	Num 6:4	A Nazir may not eat grape peels/husks.
N207	Num 6:7	Nazir may not rend himself tameh (unclean) for the dead.
N208	Lev 21:11	Nazir must not become tameh entering a house with a corpse.
N209	Num 6:5 A	Nazir must not shave his hair during his vow.

AGRICULTURE

N210	Lev 23:22	Reap not a whole field without leaving corners for the poor.
N211	Lev 19:9	Not to gather ears of grain that fell during harvesting.
N212	Lev 19:10	Not to gather the misformed clusters of grapes.
N213	Lev 19:10	Not to gather single fallen grapes during the vintage.
N214	Deut 24:19	Not to return for a forgotten sheaf.
N215	Lev 19:19	Not to sow diverse kinds of seed in one field (kalayim).
N216	Deut 22:9	Not to sow grain or vegetables in a vineyard.
N217	Lev 19:19	Not to cross-breed animals of different species.
N218	Deut 22:10	Work not with two different kinds of animals together.
N219	Deut 25:4	Muzzle not an animal working in a field to prevent from eating.
N220	Lev 25:4	Not to cultivate the soil in the 7 th year (Shmitah).
N221	Lev 25:4	Not to prune the trees in the 7 th year.
N222	Lev 25:5	Reap not self-grown plant in 7 th year as ordinary year.
N223	Lev 25:5	Gather not self-grown fruit in 7 th year as ordinary year.
N224	Lev 25:11	Not to till the earth or prune trees in Jubilee year.
N225	Lev 25:11	Reap not aftergrowths of Jubilee year as ordinary year.
N226	Lev 25:11	Not to gather fruit in Jubilee year as in ordinary year.
N227	Lev 25:23	Sell not one's Eretz Yisrael land holdings permanently.
N228	Lev 25:33	Not to sell/change the open lands of the Levites.
N229	Deut 12:19	Not to leave the Levites without support.

LOANS, BUSINESS, AND THE TREATMENT OF SLAVES

N230	Deut 15:2	Not to demand payment of debts after (7 th) Shmitah year.
N231	Deut 15:9	Not to refuse loan to poor because Shmitah year is near.
N232	Deut 15:7	Not to deny charity to the poor.
N233	Deut 15:13	Not sending a Hebrew bondman away empty-handed.
N234	Exod 22:24	Not demanding payment from a debtor known to be unable to pay.
N235	Lev 25:37	Not lending to another Jew at interest.
N236	Deut 23:20	Not borrowing from another Jew at interest.
N237	Exod 22:24	Not participating in an agreement involving interest.
N238	Lev 19:13	Oppress not an employee by delaying payment of his wages.
N239	Deut 24:10	Not taking a pledge from a debtor by force.
N240	Deut 24:12	Not keeping a poor man's pledge when he needs it.
N241	Deut 24:17	Not taking any pledge from a widow.
N242	Deut 24:6	Not taking one's business (or food) utensils in pledge.
N243	Exod 20:13	Not abducting an Israelite.
N244	Lev 19:11	Not stealing.
N245	Lev 19:13	Not robbing.
N246	Deut 19:14	Not fraudulently altering land boundaries/landmarkers.
N247	Lev 19:13	Not usurping our debts/do not defraud.
N248	Lev 19:11	Not repudiating debts, denying receipt of loan/deposit.
N249	Lev 19:11	Not to swear falsely regarding another man's property.

N250	Lev 25:14	Not wronging/deceiving one another in business.
N251	Lev 25:17	Not wronging/misleading one another even verbally.
N252	Exod 22:20	Not harming the stranger among you verbally.
N253	Exod 22:20	Not injuring the stranger among you in business/trade.
N254	Deut 23:16	Not handing over a slave who's fled to Israel.
N255	Deut 23:17	Take no advantage of a slave who's fled to Israel.
N256	Exod 22:21	Not afflicting the orphans and widows.
N257	Lev 25:39	Not employing a Hebrew bondman in degrading tasks.
N258	Lev 25:42	Not selling a Hebrew bondman.
N259	Lev 25:43	Not treating a Hebrew bondman cruelly.
N260	Lev 25:53	Not allowing a heathen to mistreat a Hebrew bondman.
N261	Exod 21:8	Not selling a Hebrew maidservant and if you marry her... ...withhold not: food, raiment, or conjugal rights.
N262	Exod 21:10	Not selling a captive woman.
N263	Deut 21:14	Not treating a captive woman as a slave.
N264	Deut 21:14	Not coveting another man's possessions/property, etc.
N265	Exod 20:17	Covet not one's possessions; even the desire is forbidden.
N266	Deut 5:18	A worker is not to cut down standing grain during work.
N267	Deut 23:26	A hired labourer not to take more fruit than he can eat.
N268	Deut 23:24	Not ignoring lost property to be returned to its owner.
N269	Deut 22:3	Refuse not to help man or animal collapsing with burden.
N270	Exod 23:5	Not cheating/defrauding with weights and measurements.
N271	Lev 19:35	Not to possess false/inaccurate weights and measures.
N272	Deut 25:13	

JUSTICE

N273	Lev 19:15	A Judge is not to commit unrighteousness.
N274	Exod 23:8	A Judge is not to accept bribes/gifts from litigants.
N275	Lev 19:15	A Judge is not to favour (be partial to) a litigant.
N276	Deut 1:17	Judge not avoid justice being in fear of wicked person.
N277	Lev 19:15	A Judge not to decide in favour of poor man, out of pity [rather]: Exod 23:3.
N278	Exod 23:6	A Judge is not to discriminate against the wicked.
N279	Deut 19:13	Judge not to pity one who killed or caused loss of limb.
N280	Deut 24:17	A Judge not perverting justice due strangers or orphans.
N281	Exod 23:1	Judge not to hear one litigant in absence of the other.
N282	Exod 23:2	Court may not convict by majority of 1 in capital case.
N283	Exod 23:2	Judge accept not colleague's opinion, unless sure he is right.
N284	Deut 1:17	Not appointing an unlearned judge ignorant of the Torah.
N285	Exod 20:16	Not bearing false witness.
N286	Exod 23:1	A Judge is not to receive a wicked man's testimony.
N287	Deut 24:16	A Judge to receive no testimony from litigant's relatives.
N288	Deut 19:15	Not convicting on the testimony of a single witness.
N289	Exod 20:13	Not murdering a human being.
N290	Exod 23:7	No conviction based on circumstantial evidence alone.
N291	Num 35:30	A witness must not sit as a Judge in capital cases.
N292	Num 35:12	Not killing a murderer without trial and conviction.
N293	Deut 25:12	Not to pity or spare the life of a follower.
N294	Deut 22:26	Not punishing a person for a sin committed under duress.
N295	Num 35:31	Not accepting ransom from an unwitting murderer.
N296	Num 35:32	Not accepting a ransom from a wilful murderer.
N297	Lev 19:16	Hesitate not to save life of another person in danger.
N298	Deut 22:8	Not leaving obstacles on public or private domain.
N299	Lev 19:14	Not misleading another by giving wrong advice.
N300	Deut 25:2-3	Inflict no more than assigned number of lashes on the guilty.
N301	Lev 19:16	Not to tell tales.
N302	Lev 19:17	Not to bear hatred in your heart toward your brethren.
N303	Lev 19:17	Not to put one another to shame.
N304	Lev 19:18	Not to take vengeance on another.
N305	Lev 19:18	Not to bear a grudge.
N306	Deut 22:6	Not to take entire bird's nest, mother and her young.
N307	Lev 13:33	Not to shave a leprous skull.
N308	Deut 24:8	Not to cut or cauterise (remove) other signs of leprosy.
N309	Deut 21:4	Plow not a valley where slain body found (eglah arufah).
N310	Exod 22:17	Not permitting a witch/sorcerer to live.

N311	Deut 24:5	Take not the bridegroom from the home in the first year of marriage.
N312	Deut 17:11	Not to differ from or disobey the Cohanim and the Judge.
N313N1	Deut 13:1	Not to add to the Mitzvot/commandments of Torah.
N314N1	Deut 13:1	Not to detract from the Mitzvot/commandments of Torah.
N315	Exod 22:27	Not to curse a judge.
N316	Exod 22:27	Not to curse a ruler.
N317	Lev 19:14	Not to curse any Jew.
N318	Exod 21:17	Not cursing parents.
N319	Exod 21:15	Not to strike parents.
N320	Exod 20:10	Not to work on Shabbat.
N321	Exod 16:29	Not to walk beyond permitted limits (eruv) on Shabbat.
N322	Exod 35:3	Not to inflict punishment on the Shabbat.
N323	Exod 12:16	Not to work on the first day of Pesach.
N324	Exod 12:16	Not to work on the seventh day of Pesach.
N325	Lev 23:21	Not to work on Shavuot.
N326	Lev 23:25	Not to work on Rosh HaShannah.
N327	Lev 23:35	Not to work on the first day of Sukkot.
N328	Lev 23:36	Work not on the 8 th -day/Shemini-Atzeret, (after Hoshana Rabba).
N329	Lev 23:28	Not to work on Yom Kippur/the Day of Atonement.

INCEST AND OTHER FORBIDDEN RELATIONSHIPS

N330	Lev 18:7	No relations with one's mother.
N331	Lev 18:8	No relations with one's father's wife.
N332	Lev 18:9	No relations with one's sister.
N333	Lev 18:11	No relations with step-sister.
N334	Lev 18:10	No relations with one's son's daughter.
N335	Lev 18:10	No relations with one's daughter's daughter.
N336	Lev 18:10	No relations with one's daughter.
N337	Lev 18:17	No relations with a woman and her daughter.
N338	Lev 18:17	No relations with a woman and her son's daughter.
N339	Lev 18:17	No relations with a woman and her daughter's daughter.
N340	Lev 18:12	No relations with one's father's sister.
N341	Lev 18:13	No relations with one's mother's sister.
N342	Lev 18:14	No relations with wife of father's brother.
N343	Lev 18:15	No relations with one's son's wife.
N344	Lev 18:16	No relations with brother's wife.
N345	Lev 18:18	No relations with sister of wife, during wife's life.
N346	Lev 18:19	No relations with a menstruate.
N347	Lev 18:20	No relations with another man's wife.
N348	Lev 18:23	Men may not lie with beasts.
N349	Lev 18:23	Women may not lie with beasts.
N350	Lev 18:22	A man may not lie carnally with another man.
N351	Lev 18:7	A man may not lie carnally with his father.
N352	Lev 18:14	A man may not lie carnally with his father's brother.
N353	Lev 18:6	Not to be intimate with a kinswoman.
N354	Deut 23:3	A mamzer may not have relations with a Jewess.
N355	Deut 23:18	No relations (harlotry) with a woman outside marriage.
N356	Deut 24:4	Remarry not your divorced wife after she has remarried.
N357	Deut 25:5	Childless widow can marry no one except late husband's brother.
N358	Deut 22:29	Divorce not wife that he has to marry after raping her.
N359	Deut 22:19	Divorce not wife after falsely slandering her.
N360	Deut 23:2	Man unable to procreate (eunuch) not to marry Jewess.
N361	Lev 22:24	Not to castrate a man or beast.

THE MONARCHY

N362	Deut 17:15	Not appointing a king who is not of the seed of Israel.
N363	Deut 17:16	A king not to accumulate an excess number of horses.
N364	Deut 17:17	A king not taking many wives.
N365	Deut 17:17	A king not amassing great personal wealth.

DID Y'SHUA LIVE UNDER THE LAW AND DID HE HAVE TO COMPLY WITH IT?

Before I answer the question, let us first look at some background that would add clarity to understanding. That brings us to the question, 'what is *Halacha* and *Aggadah*'? There are two different types of literature within the *Mishnah* (Oral *Torah*). The first is known as *Halacha*. *Halacha* is the body of literature that interprets the *Torah* and seeks evidence to establish judicial laws (both civil and religious) that consist of codes of behavior and religious practice and procedures. For instance, the requirements for waving the *lulav* and *etrog* (four species of plants) on the holiday of *Sukkot* (Feast of Tabernacles), the laws of marriage and divorce, the ethics of giving charity, and the requirements for returning lost property would all be considered *Halacha*.

The second type of literature is known as *Aggadah* and is all material contained in the *Talmud* that isn't *Halacha*. It consists of the "wise sayings or tellings" of the sages. *Aggadah* is much looser than *Halacha* and refers to literature, parables, theological or ethical statements, and homilies. Both *Aggadah* and *Halacha* may be found mixed together, with *Aggadah* teaching a principle based upon a *halachic* text ("Back to the Sources - Reading the Classic Jewish Texts", p.178-179).

The Hebrew word "*halacha*" means "to walk in the way". It is a term used for the rules that govern religious life. *Halacha* is an ancient term reflected in the New Covenant, meaning someone who "walks in the way". A few examples of this are found in Luke 1:6; Acts 21:21; Rom 13:13; 1 Cor 7:17; Eph 4:17; 5:15; Col 4:5; 1 Thes 2:12; 4:1; 2 Peter 2:10; 2 John 4-6. From these passages, there seems to be a clear indication that in the First Century congregations there was a Messianic Jewish *Halacha* observed and that it was often referred to as a "walk".

In the book of Acts, we find reference to a group of believers who walk in "the Way". We find mention of them before *Sha'ul's* (Paul's) encounter with Y'shua; also during *Sha'ul's* ministry after receiving Y'shua and at the end of his ministry as He is standing trial. In Acts 24:14 he says this: "*But I admit that I follow the Way, which they call a sect. I worship the God of our ancestors, and I firmly believe the Jewish law and everything written in the books of prophecy.*"

First, the "Way" was referred to as a sect within Judaism. Second, we read that *Sha'ul* (Paul) continued to believe everything in accordance with the *Torah* (Law) and *Nevi'im* (Prophets). How else was it that *Sha'ul* could enter a synagogue and be allowed to teach openly from the *bema* (raised platform in the centre of the synagogue)? Because he had not forsaken his Jewish heritage. He never states, "*I am no longer a Jew, now I am a Christian*". In fact, we read about him spending months inside synagogues teaching and reasoning with the Jews and the Greeks. The "Messiahship of Y'shua" was always the issue that ultimately got him cast out of the synagogue. The reason the leaders of the synagogues allowed *Sha'ul* to come in was due to his *Halacha* - his walking in "the Way".

In Acts 21, we read about the leaders in Jerusalem telling *Sha'ul* how many believers there were and how they were all zealous for the *Torah*. He then goes and purifies himself at the Temple for seven days. Why? Because he was walking in *Halacha*. In Acts 22, he tells the people that he was trained under Rabbi Gamaliel and was thoroughly trained in *Torah*. In Acts 23, *Sha'ul* is taken before the *Sanhedrin* - a Jewish court of law. If *Sha'ul* was no longer considered Jewish because of his renunciation of Judaism, then he would have never been allowed to enter into the inner court of the Temple, get up and speak and teach in their synagogues, and then be taken before a Jewish court of law. *Sha'ul* addresses the Sanhedrin, "*my fellow Jews...*" and he tells them, "*brothers, I myself am a Parush (Pharisee), the son of P'rushim (Pharisee)*". In Acts 24:14 he says, "*I worship the God of our fathers in accordance with halacha (the Way)*".

Did *Rav Sha'ul* (Rabbi Paul) throw out the *Torah* and denounce it as legalism? There are many today who believe and teach just that. In Rom 3:31 he asks, "*do we abolish the Torah (Law)? Heaven forbid! On the contrary, we confirm Torah (Law)*". In Rom 7:12 he wrote, "*so the Torah (revelation or instruction from God) is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good*".

Y'shua and Halacha

So, how did Y'shua relate to the *Halacha* teaching of his day? As might be suspected, there is some difference of opinion over this question, as is illustrated by the following: At times, Y'shua speaks about the permanent authority of the *Torah* in Matt 5:17-18 (as we will see in the exegesis of the book of Matthew); yet his actions and words often seem contrary to the *Torah* as we see in Mark 2:18-27. Where did Y'shua stand in relation to the Judaism of his day? Did he place himself against the traditions and practices, within them, or somewhere in between? The answers to these questions have significant consequences for us today, especially within Messianic theology and practice.

The New Covenant accounts (Luke 2:39-52, John 8:46) stress that Y'shua was brought up as a Jewish child in the traditions and faith of his ancestors: "But when the right time came, God sent his Son, born of a woman, **subject to the law**" (Gal 4:4 NLT). His later life was also stamped by his Jewish heritage. He used and taught the traditional prayers of his time such as the *Amidah* - the "Lord's Prayer" (Matt 6:9-13). His special prayer is merely a shortened form of the third, fifth, sixth, ninth and fifteenth of the Eighteen Benedictions of the *Amidah*. He used the familiar blessings over bread and wine when he gave thanks at meals (Luke 22:19-20). He was Jewish in his dress code. When the woman with the flow of blood reached for him, she grabbed the hem of his garment (Mark 6:56; Matt 9:20; Luke 8:44). What was on the hem of a Jewish man's garment? The *tzitzit* or fringes, which YHWH had commanded the Jewish people to wear (Num 15:37-41).

His way of life reflected other Jewish customs as well. He followed the custom of not only preaching in the synagogue, but in the open air like the rabbis who preached everywhere, on the village square and in the countryside as well as in the synagogue. The frequent use of baptism associated with his ministry was also quite common in his time, as the *Talmud* itself testifies in Sanhedrin 39a. Whether one accepts it or not, **it is a fact attested** to by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John; that even in his final hour, **Y'shua did not stop practicing the basic rites of Judaism.**

Perhaps most significant was his relationship to the *Torah* and traditions, which some have described as "entirely orthodox". He declared the permanence of the whole *Torah* in Matt 5:17-19 and even accepted Pharisaic extensions in Matt 23:2-3 when he said, "*do whatever they tell you, but not as they do*". Some of these include: tithing of herbs (Matt 23:23), grace at meals (Mark 6:41; 8:6), blessings over wine, and the reciting of the *Hallel* at the Passover *Seder* (meal) (Mark 14:22-23, 26).

In the Encyclopedia Judaica (vol. 10, p. 14), it says that "*the Gospels provide sufficient evidence to the effect that Jesus did not oppose any prescription of the written or oral Mosaic Law*". Another Jewish author, Yehezkel Kaufmann, puts it this way: "*The attitude of Jesus to the Torah is the very same attitude one finds among the masters of Halacha and Aggadah who followed in the Pharisaic tradition*".

Remember that Y'shua preached regularly in the synagogues. This would not have been possible if his lifestyle or teachings had been profoundly different from the current *Halacha* of his day. In fact, even the "Sermon on the Mount", often viewed as an overview summary of Y'shua's teaching, reflects concepts familiar to the Jews of his day that are consistent with rabbinical teaching. Much of his teaching consists of illustrations of the proper understanding of the *Torah*, spelling out its wider implications. Many illustrations he used were common to the rabbis. He uses a *midrashic* style which is an interpretation of the Scriptures, much like we find in the *Talmud*.

The famous "*turn the other cheek*" passage (Mat 5:38-48) is often cited as an example of the radical newness of Y'shua's teachings. But it is the same spirit which inspired the best teaching of the rabbis. The point Y'shua emphasised here is the proper response to insult, "*the slap in the face*". A person is not to seek retaliation but should endure the insult humbly. The rabbis agreed with this, and counseled that a person struck on the cheek should forgive the offending party even if he does not ask forgiveness (*Tosefta Baba Kamma* 9:29). The *Talmud* commends the person who accepts offense without retaliation and submits to suffering and insult cheerfully (*Yoma* 23a). In fact, one can find parallels in the rabbinical material to almost all of Y'shua's statements in verses 5:38-42.

Going on in Matt 5, verses 43-47, He builds on "*loving your enemy*". Here, too, statements expressing similar ideas can be found in the writings of the rabbis. For example, "*if anyone seeks to do evil unto you, you do well that you pray for him*" (*Testament of Joseph XVIII.2*). While it is true that the rabbis did not always agree over how to treat an enemy, many of them taught perspectives similar to Y'shua.

The Schools of Shammai and Hillel

At the time of Y'shua, there were debates between the teachings of the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel (see Glossary section for more information) on the interpretation of the tradition and its application to contemporary life. While Y'shua was very in tune with his times and his people, there were, nevertheless, points of conflict between him and some of the religious leaders over interpretations of the *Torah*. It must be remembered, then, that He did not violate generally accepted customs and practice; He simply disagreed with certain specific pronouncements put forward by some teachers.

When Y'shua appeared before the *Sanhedrin* (Mark 14:55), there is no proven basis for any accusations leveled against him. Y'shua took the clear position, **not against the *Torah*, but against excessive**

importance that particular Pharisees added to them. He spoke out about a tendency to put the 'letter' of the *Torah* before the 'spirit' of the *Torah*.

A number of Y'shua's comments also indicate that he interacted with the discussion between the schools of *Hillel* and *Shammai*. Therefore, He would naturally be in conflict with one or the other. For example, the statement about "tithing mint and anise and cummin" (Matt 23:23.) reflects one of the things included for tithing by *Shammai*, but not by *Hillel* (*Maaserot* 1.1 cf. 4.6; *Eduyyot* 5.3; *Demai* 1.3). The reference to enlarging the *tzitzit* (tassels) alludes to another discussion between the two schools. In response to the command to make *tzitzit* (Deut 22:12), *Shammai* wanted to make broader *tzitzit* than the followers of *Hillel* (*Menahot* 4).

What, then, was the major focus of the conflict between Y'shua and some of the religious leaders of his day? Was it simply differing interpretations or applications of the *Torah*? A disagreement over *Halacha*? Or, was it something entirely different? The key to the conflict between Him and some of the rabbis of his day revolved around Y'shua's uniqueness and authority as Messiah, and as the Second Moses. Not unlike today. Y'shua did not disregard the provisions of the *Torah* but did elaborate on the implications of its guidelines and principles, as was expected in the Messianic Age.

Often his statements were, "*you have heard it said, but I say*". This **is not** an indication of him setting aside the *Torah*. Rather, these statements function to get the listener to hear and understand a deeper, fuller meaning of the *Torah*. Matt 5:17-20 brings this point home. He states, "*don't think for a moment that I have come to abolish Torah, but rather to fulfill it*". Never think that I have come to abolish the *Torah*, Y'shua says. Rather I came to "fulfill" the *Torah*. Not to make an end of it, or to do away with it. In the Jewish-authored Septuagint, the word "fulfill" means to completely fill up, to make full.

As it turns out, the words "abolish" and "fulfill" were part of a scholarly debate and rabbinical discussion. A sage was accused of abolishing or canceling the *Torah* if he misinterpreted a passage, nullifying its intent. If he fulfilled it, he had properly interpreted Scripture so as to preserve and correctly explain its meaning. When Y'shua talked of not even the smallest letter - *yod* or the least stroke of a pen passing away, he spoke in terms similar to the sages. The rabbis wrote, "*If the whole world were gathered together to destroy the yod which is the smallest letter in the Torah, they would not succeed*" (*Canticles Rabbah* 5.11; *Leviticus Rabbah* 19). "*Not a letter shall be abolished from the Torah forever*" (*Exodus Rabbah* 6.1). Please view the size of the *yod* letter below.



Did Y'shua condemn the Pharisees?

Y'shua was a Pharisee in the First Century AD, and all the arguments that he had with the Pharisees were typical arguments between Jewish *yeshiva* (school) students and their rabbis. It was with the school of the Pharisees that Y'shua and his disciples identified. This is also the reason why Y'shua is so involved and at times even angry with the Pharisees because they were the closest to him. The same is true concerning the Pharisees. Y'shua is considered to be one of them. We all argue with the people closest to us, and expose hypocrisy with those whom we know best.

In Matt 23:1-4 we read, "*then Y'shua said to the crowds and to his disciples: "The teachers of the law and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. But do not do what*

they do, for they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy loads and put them on men's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to lift a finger to move them".

Is Y'shua condemning the Pharisees in Matt 23? **Yes, he condemns their hypocrisy, not their teachings.** We find that even in the *Talmud*, the Pharisees criticise those who are hypocrites and insincere. They are labeled "sore spots" and "plagues" and "destroyers of the world" (*Berakot 14b; Hagigah 14a; Sotah 3.4*).

Challenging Passages

Matt 5:21-48 (NLT): "*You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Do not murder. If you commit murder, you are subject to judgment' You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Do not commit adultery'. ... You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'If an eye is injured, injure the eye of the person who did it. If a tooth gets knocked out, knock out the tooth of the person who did it. But I say, don't resist an evil person! If you are slapped on the right cheek, turn the other, too' ... You have heard that the law of Moses says, 'Love your neighbor' and hate your enemy'. But I say, love your enemies!"*

Frequently, this passage "*You have heard that the law of Moses says... but I say...*" or as some Bibles put it, "*You have heard it said... but I say to you...*", which is found in the Sermon on the Mount, is presented as evidence of his opposition to the traditions. Actually, this statement reflects a rabbinical approach used to indicate that there is a deeper meaning to a particular passage found in the Bible. In fact, this is a phrase that Rabbi Ishmael, a contemporary of Y'shua and one of the foremost scholars cited in the *Talmud*, used frequently (*Mekilta 3a, 6a*). You think that the Scripture has a certain meaning, but there is a deeper meaning that we need to learn to understand. This was a rabbinical way of disproving an inaccurate or incomplete understanding of Scripture.

Virtually all of Y'shua's teachings from the Sermon on the Mount are paralleled in the rabbinical materials. Several examples should suffice. "*He who is merciful to others shall receive mercy from Heaven*" (*Shabbat 151b; cf. Matthew 5:7*); *Let your yes be yes and your no be no* (*Baba Metzia 49a; Matthew 5:37*); "*Do they say, 'Take the splinter out of your eye?' He will retort, 'Remove the beam out of your own eye'*" (*Baba Bathra 15b; Matthew 7:3*).

Y'shua did not oppose the *Torah*. Rather, he was contrasting two interpretations; his, based on his own authority—and some other commonly accepted one. In effect He intensified the *Torah* with His declarations.

The passage in that same chapter where he states, "*I did not come to destroy Torah or the Prophets, but to make it complete*". The rabbis taught that if you did not live out *Torah* in your lives, then you were destroying *Torah*. On the other hand, if you were obedient to YHWH's instruction (*Torah*), you were fulfilling it.

Mark 2:23-28; Matt 12:1-5: The account of Y'shua and his *talmidim* (disciples) going through some wheat fields. They were hungry, so the *talmidim* picked off the heads of grain and ate them. They were accused by the *Prushim* (Pharisees) of desecrating *Shabbat* (Sabbath).

The Gospels record a number of discussions and differences between Y'shua and some of the religious leaders regarding activities appropriate to the Sabbath. Some people have seen teachings of Y'shua setting aside the *Torah* concerning the Sabbath in these accounts. It is important to remember that the rabbis allowed certain "violations" of the Sabbath.

The prevailing view was, "*It is right to violate one Sabbath in order that many may be observed; the laws were given that men should live by them, not that men should die by them*". All the following were permitted: saving life, alleviating acute pain, curing snake bites and cooking for the sick were all allowed on the Sabbath (*Shabbat 18.3; Roseate Shabbat 15.14; Yoma 84b; Tosefta Yoma 84.15*).

Y'shua did not deny the validity of the *Torah* or *Halacha* but merely countered these extreme interpretations promoted by some. In this, he usually opposed the views of School of *Shammai* in favour of those of School of *Hillel*. It was more in tune with doing good and meeting people's needs.

There was disagreement and discussion in Y'shua's time over what was and was not lawful; it was not a settled matter. He entered this discussion in a rabbinical manner and proclaimed his teachings. In them He acknowledged the prohibitions against working on the Sabbath and explained their applications and qualifications. But then, this is exactly how the religious leaders handled the Sabbath regulations.

The fact is that he took the trouble to argue and to declare certain things lawful, and did not just say the Sabbath traditions were suspended. It means he acknowledged that certain actions were unlawful on the

Sabbath. If He had broken the Sabbath traditions, evidence of this violation would have been used against Him at His trial before the Sanhedrin. Yet there is no trace of it (Mark 14:55-64).

The argument Y'shua presented here was familiar to his opponents for several reasons. The key phrase, "*the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath*", appears in the rabbinical material (*Mekilta 103b*, *Yoma 85b*). Also, the Rabbis frequently used the quotation from Hosea 6:6 to argue that helping people was of greater importance than observing the rituals and customs (*Sukkah 49b*, *Deuteronomy Rabba on 16:18*, etc.), as Y'shua did here. In fact, they used the same examples Y'shua presented – David's eating the Tabernacle bread and the Temple offerings made on the Sabbath – to demonstrate the same general principle, that the needs of life override the Sabbath restrictions (*Y'lomm'denu*, *Yalkut II, par. 130*, *Tosefta Shabbat 15b*).

Matt 15:1-18; Mark 7:1-19 we read about some *P'rushim* (Pharisees) and *Torah* (revelation or instruction from YHWH = Law) teachers asking Y'shua, "Why is that your *talmidim* (disciples) do not wash before they eat?" Y'shua responds that it is not that which goes into your stomach that makes you unclean, but rather that which comes out.

In pre-Pharisaic times, the washing of hands was necessary for handling holy objects (*Shabbat 14b*). This was later extended to the handling of food. But once again there was a debate between the Schools of *Shammai* and *Hillel*. *Shammai* insisted on washing the hands before filling the cup. Y'shua referred to this when he said, "*they clean, or declare pure, the outside of the cup*". Hand washing was not, then, a universal command; although some chose to live under such restrictions. Apparently, at this time a majority of purity laws applied only to priests, or to laymen who had occasion to enter the Temple.

Y'shua's response to this situation compared favourably with other rabbis of his time. The famous First Century rabbi, Yohanan ben Zakkai, stated: "*In life it is not the dead who make you unclean; nor is it the water, but rather the ordinances of the king of kings that purifies*". Much later, Maimonides made the same comment, "*For to confine oneself to cleaning the outward appearance through washing and cleaning the garment, while having at the same time a lust for various pleasures and unbridled license ... merits the utmost blame*". So, Y'shua's analysis and criticism were quite Jewish and most appropriate. The evil things that come out of our hearts make us unclean.

Many have interpreted the passage in Mark 7:17-19 to mean that Y'shua set aside the food laws - clean and unclean foods. But by doing so he would have contradicted himself. His attackers had just accused him of not observing their traditions, and He had responded that they did far worse; they did not observe the commandments of the *Torah* (verse 9-13). For Y'shua to set aside a commandment of the *Torah* would have undermined the point he was trying to make. What Y'shua was saying - bottom line - was this, "*the washing or not washing of hands before you eat does not make you ceremonially clean or unclean, but it is what comes out of your heart that makes one unclean. Therefore the foods you eat, pass through you, and have no affect on the cleanliness of the heart. Therefore all food God has given you to eat is ritually clean, whether you have washed or not washed*".

We **cannot assume** that Y'shua opposed the Jewish dietary food laws established by YHWH. But by the Third Century, Origen understood it as signifying the rejection of Jewish dietary laws by Y'shua. The overwhelming majority of modern translators accept Origen's interpretation when they take Mark 7:19 to mean "*Thus he declared all foods clean*".

If this was so, why did Peter react so strongly against the possibility of eating non-kosher food when he saw the vision in Acts 10? He expressed great indignation and shock. Why did he not say in Acts 11, "Now, I remember the words of Y'shua, all foods are clean?" He said nothing of the sort, because Y'shua had not in fact set aside the dietary laws of the *Torah*.

Y'SHUA AND TRADITION

In Luke 4:16 we read that Y'shua attended a synagogue, participated in its service, and read the *Haftorah* portion which was Isaiah 61. Much of the traditional synagogue service was intact during Y'shua's time. And, his followers shared the same attachment to these traditional institutions (Acts 13:14-15; 14:17).

In John 8:46 Y'shua challenged the people, including the religious leaders, "Who among you can accuse me of any wrong?" No one came forward to claim he had violated any of the biblical laws or any of the Jewish traditions. Not one religious leader was able to point to a flaw in his behaviour or conduct, even with respect to the traditions!

Y'shua stood before the *Sanhedrin* (Mark 14:55-56). Some of the religious leaders tried to find something of which to accuse Him. Nevertheless, they were unable to find one thing in His life that they could present as a violation; He had lived flawlessly according to the traditions. But finally, they found something. As a man, He had claimed to be YHWH; blasphemy from their perspective.

They could accuse Him of no other violation of the *Torah* or the traditions! Did He break any one commandment of the 613? Then He would have been guilty and a sinner, which He was not. Was Y'shua *Torah* observant? You bet!

Y'shua was a Pharisee in good standing. An Orthodox scholar and rabbi, Pinchas Lapide, wrote, "*Jesus never and nowhere broke the law of Moses, nor did he in any way provoke its infringement – it is entirely false to say that he did ... In this respect you must believe me, for I know my Talmud more or less ... This Jesus was as faithful to the law as I would hope to be. But I suspect that Jesus was more faithful to the law than I am – and I am an Orthodox Jew*".

As a result of Y'shua's example and teaching, we find his followers remained fully involved in the Jewish community. They continued to worship in the Temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1).

They continued to worship in the synagogue and to pray the liturgy (Acts 2:42). In fact, we find that several centuries later Jewish believers were still observing Jewish traditions, as Epiphanius (A.D. 375-400) noted about the Nazarenes (*Panarion 30:18; 39:7*). "*They make use not only of the New Testament, but they also use the Old Testament of the Jews; for they do not forbid the books of the Law, the Prophets, and the Writings ... so that they are approved of by the Jews, from whom the Nazarenes do not differ in anything; and they profess all the dogmas pertaining to the prescriptions of the Law and to the customs of the Jews, except they believe in Christ*".

Further, Jerome indicates that the Nazarenes are to be found "*in all the synagogues of the East among the Jews*". Viewing the First Century, it is accurate to say that the *talmidim* and their followers remained a part of the "traditional" Jewish community, as Y'shua had instructed them.

WHOSE AUTHORITY ARE WE UNDER?

Doing good deeds to obtain a reward was opposed by the rabbis, not just by Y'shua. The *Midrash* expounds on that this way. "*David said, 'Some trust in their fair and upright deeds, and some in the works of their fathers, but I trust in you. Although I have no good works, yet because I call upon you, you answer me'*". Likewise, the Pharisees criticized those among them who continually asked, "*What good deed may I do?*" In their discussions and commentaries, the Rabbis repeatedly refer to YHWH's grace. The *Midrashim* reflect on this Scripture, "*Deal with the servant according to your mercy*" (Psalm 119:124) with this comment "*Perhaps you take pleasure in our good works? Merit and good works we have not; act toward us in grace*". (*Tehillim Rabbah*, on 119:123).

YHWH's grace is an important concept in rabbinical teaching; it is a significant and representative aspect of the rabbis' thinking. Pinchas Lapide once again makes this clear: "*It is evident to all Masters of the Talmud that salvation, or participation in the world to come, as it is called in Hebrew, can be attained only through G-d's gracious love (grace)*". Another statement of the *Talmud* says this: "...*then came the prophet Habakkuk and reduced all the commands to one, as it is written: 'the just shall live by his faith'*". (*Makkot 23-24*).

SO WHAT IS THE FOCUS OF MESSIANIC JUDAISM?

The focus of Messianic Judaism (Torah-observant Messianism) is to remain focused squarely on Y'shua, but this does not mean setting aside *Torah* or Jewish traditions. Y'shua, the apostles, and the early Messianic Jews all deeply respected the traditions and devoutly observed them; and in so doing, validated them.

There are many Jewish traditions that do not contradict the Bible and provide a great deal of richness, beauty and depth in Messianic Judaism's adherents' walk with YHWH. Messianic Judaism's adherents are not under "the authority of the rabbis" – rather, Messianics are under Messiah's authority – who is the living *Torah*!

LAW OR NO LAW?

The Need for Laws

Anarchy and chaos would take over if all laws were abolished. Imagine for a moment a single country without laws:

- No Highway Code to control the movement of traffic,
- No Property Law to control the possession and sale of houses and land,
- No Food and Hygiene Laws to control the nations health,
- No Moral Law to control the behaviour of individuals

Just everyone doing exactly as they pleased. Now imagine, if you can, the universe running along those lines. No gravitational law to control the movement of galaxies, stars and planets, no magnetic laws, no heat, light and sound laws - no laws at all. Every thinking person will immediately see that the result would be unimaginable chaos. In other words, without law there can be no order, no health and certainly no happiness. Lawless societies, lawless organisations and lawless individuals are, as most authorities know, the biggest threat to peace and happiness that they face. I need not elaborate on this obvious fact.

The Purpose of Law

Moral laws define human behaviour. Moral laws tell us what is right and what is wrong. Governments the world over struggle daily with the repercussions of the behaviour of their citizens:

- The cost of defence against terrorist attack, espionage or outright war
- The rising cost to the public purse of crime: vandalism, burglary, theft and fraud
- The rising cost to the public purse of drug and alcohol abuse
- The rising cost to the public purse of broken homes: single parent families, homelessness, child abuse, battered wives.

These are all moral issues and they must be controlled by moral laws. And yet, strange as it may seem, it is extremely difficult to legislate on moral issues. Governments around the world are unable to formulate moral laws. No sooner have they passed one law—which even remotely relates to a moral issue—than a few years later they amend, update or even scrap it. Why this dilemma? The answer is: because moral issues are spiritual territories, the prerogative of YHWH! He created the human race; so He alone has the ability and the right to legislate on moral behaviour. We humans may fool ourselves into thinking that we can enter the territory of morals and make laws as to how people should live: what they should do, and what they should not do. But we deceive ourselves, because we just do not have the wisdom, the knowledge or the authority to legislate on moral issues. We may try, YHWH knows we try; but the world's present chaotic state is proof that we have miserably failed. The fact is, only YHWH can dictate as to moral behaviour. His commandments are the final word in moral matters. By them we are able to determine what is right and what is wrong.

Any attempt to ignore or change YHWH's laws will end in disaster. Sooner or later this vital fact will become evident to the whole human race. Till such time as it does, people and governments will blunder along vainly attempting to define their own moral codes; and the cost to the public purse will rise year after year. Better that we go straight to YHWH's Word and accept His laws before we bankrupt the human race.

YHWH's Law Defines Sin

YHWH's law defines sin. It tells us what is right and what is wrong. The Bible says:

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law". (1 John 3:4)

"What shall we say then? Is the law sin? God forbid. Nay, I had not known sin, but by the law: for I had not known lust, except the law had said, Thou shalt not covet". (Rom 7:7)

"...for by the law is the knowledge of sin" (Rom 3:20)

In other words, you have committed a sin when you break one or more of YHWH's commandments. "Rubbish!" I hear someone say. "I am a free moral agent, and I can - and will - do as I please".

My answer to that is: Don't be hasty, calm down and read this passage slowly. It says that if the wicked person turns from his/her wickedness he/she will not die - but live! It also says that if a good person turns to a life of sin, he/she will die.

"Yet the children of thy people say, The way of the Lord is not equal: but as for them, their way is not equal. When the righteous turneth from his righteousness, and committeth iniquity, he shall even die thereby. But if the wicked turn from his wickedness, and do that which is lawful and right, he shall live thereby". (Ezek 33:17-19)

The Limitations of the Law

Nevertheless, much as we recognise the need for moral law to define sin, much as we need YHWH's law to tell us what is right and what is wrong, the Bible makes it perfectly clear that the law has limitations. It cannot empower you to do right. It cannot stop you from sinning if you want to sin. For example, consider the traffic laws: they lay down speed limits, they point to various places, and they inform the motorist as to how to use the road. But traffic laws cannot make you a good driver. They cannot make you go right if you are determined to go left (or wrong). It is exactly the same with YHWH's law. It is a spiritual signpost; but it is unable to move you to the destination of righteousness, holiness. **It can only point the way.** That is its purpose.

Read Romans chapter 7. This chapter tells of the sinner's awful condition. Much as he wants to obey the law of YHWH, there exists in the human mind another law: the **law of sin and death**. And this law of sin and death is in conflict with YHWH's law of life. And so we have these two laws set before us, each pointing to a different objective.

- 1) The FIRST to salvation through Y'shua HaMashiach
- 2) The SECOND exerting a downward pull to disobedience and eternal death.

Which law are you going to obey? YHWH's law, which identifies sin and points to Y'shua the Saviour? Or the law of sin and death, which will ultimately consign you to eternal damnation?

YHWH's law of life (Gal 3:24): "*Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith*".

The Law of Sin and Death (Rom 6:23): "*For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord*".

Y'shua came to earth to save mankind from sin and death - eternal death. Though perfect in every way, YHWH's law cannot cancel your past sins. It cannot save you from punishment. It cannot turn you into a good person. **It can only point the way to perfection – Y'shua HaMashiach.** And that is where the Saviour's power comes into the picture. He can save. He can purify. He can give you the power to keep his Father's law. This is what the Scriptures are all about. YHWH's law points out our sins. It also points to the only One who can save us from sin – Y'shua. It is then the power of the Saviour which makes it possible for the righteousness of the law to be fulfilled in us.

"For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". (Rom 8:3-4)

In short: The law of YHWH points to Y'shua the Messiah; and it is in Y'shua that the sinner finds forgiveness, peace, obedience and love. When this beautiful state is reached, YHWH's law has found fulfilment in you. It is doing its job. It has brought you to Y'shua, who produces righteousness (obedience) in your life.

The Law an Instrument of Judgment

Every judgment is based on law, and all laws are instruments of judgment. Go into any courthouse, and you will see judgment being applied according to law. I am not saying that all laws are good. Everyone knows that some laws (even in this country) are not good. What I am saying is that laws are instruments of judgment. That is why laws are sometimes referred to as "judgments" because people are judged by them. Judges, in accordance with law, hand out sentences; and even the judges themselves are guided by what the law says. Here we can see the importance of law. Visit any courthouse and you will appreciate this fact. On the great [Day of Judgment](#), the whole Universe will recognise the value and weight of YHWH's holy Law. By it, men and angels will be judged.

“...For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God”. (Rom 14:10-12)

At that Judgment, we will be weighed against YHWH's Law. All judges act according to existing laws. Indeed, their very judgment must be in accordance with law. It is the same with Y'shua. On the Day of Judgment, He will judge mankind according to his Father's law. At the moment, He offers to be your solicitor. But one day He will be your judge. YHWH has already appointed the time and the judge for that great day.

“And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent: Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead”. (Acts 17:30-31)

In this day and age, YHWH's Law is mostly used to identify is, to point to Messiah, to '**convert the soul**' (Psalm 19:7). But on the terrible Day of Judgment, it will be used as an instrument of justice. The Bible says:

“For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad”. (2 Cor 5:10)

“For as many as have sinned without law shall also perish without law: and as many as have sinned in the law shall be judged by the law; (For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified”. (Rom 2:12-13)

“So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty”. (James 2:12)

Summary

Much has been written and spoken against the Law of the Most High. Next to His own holy character, YHWH's Law is the most misunderstood thing in the Universe. **Sad to say, even millions of Christians are under the false impression that YHWH's Law is done away with, abolished and no longer of any practical use to the believer.** This error has paved the way for sin and confusion too terrible to describe. From the highest to the lowest rank, iniquity is rampant in all countries: and YHWH's name is blasphemed every time sinners (who were made in His image) break it. What, then, should the true believer's attitude and outlook be towards YHWH's law? What must we remember?

- That we need YHWH's Law: for without it the Universe would spiral into moral chaos.
- YHWH's Law defines sin, and without it we would not be able to tell right from wrong.
- That it has its limitations. It cannot make us good. It cannot move us to our destination. It can only identify sin and point the way to salvation. The Bible tells us in Psalm 19:7, "**The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul...**
- YHWH's Law will be used on the Day of Judgment: for by it all our actions will be judged, whether they be good or whether they be evil. On that awesome Day, Y'shua the Messiah will be the Judge.

CHAPTER 6

WHAT ARE THE IMPORTANT RULES OF INTERPRETATION?

- Warning: not written from any denomination's doctrinal point of view.
- Used Matthew as the basis and the other Gospels to fill in.

The King James Version will be the primary text presented in this study for no other reason other than it is popular and well-recognised. If another version is used, it will be cited. In each section, the text of the chapter will be shown in full, followed by commentary on selected verses. In some cases, there may be multiple verses that are not discussed. In others, a single verse (or even a single word) may merit a great deal of study.

Proper Interpretation of Biblical Texts

The modern manner of interpreting Biblical text is commonly called exegesis. This method concerns itself mostly with the literary and grammatical context of Scripture verses. Practitioners of exegesis sometimes view anything beyond the literal text as "eisogenesis" and often pay little heed to it, or regard it with suspicion. This is an unfortunate error, a result of a backlash against improper allegorising of the Scriptures, resulting in a case where "the baby is thrown out with the bath water".

With regard to the proper understanding of the Hebrew Scriptures in their proper context, including the "New Testament" books, there are in fact "levels" of interpretation that must be taken into consideration. This was the method used to write and interpret Scripture by the authors themselves as well as the audience of their time and culture.

The rules of 'Pardes' interpretation

The four levels of interpretation are called: *Parshat*, *Remez*, *D'rash* & *Sod*. The first letter of each word P-R-D-S is taken, and vowels are added for pronunciation, giving the word *PARDES* (meaning "garden" or "orchard"). Each layer is deeper and more intense than the last, like the layers of an onion.

P'shat (pronounced 'peh-shaht' - meaning "simple")

The *p'shat* is the plain, simple meaning of the text. It is the understanding of Scripture in its natural, normal sense using the customary meanings of the words being used, literary style, historical and cultural setting, and context. The *p'shat* is the keystone of Scripture understanding. If we discard the *p'shat*, we lose any real chance of an accurate understanding and we are no longer objectively deriving meaning from the Scriptures (exegesis), but subjectively reading meaning into the Scriptures (eisogenesis). The Talmud states (see the GLOSSARY for an explanation on what the *Talmud*, *Midrash Rabbah* and *Zohar* are) that no passage loses its *p'shat*:

Talmud Shabbat 63a – Rabbi Kahana objected to Mar, son of Rabbi Huna: “A verse cannot depart from its plain meaning, he replied”.

Note that within the *p'shat* you can find several types of language, including figurative, symbolic and allegorical. The following generic guidelines can be used to determine if a passage is figurative and therefore figurative even in its *p'shat*:

- 1) When an inanimate object is used to describe a living being, the statement is figurative. Example: Isaiah 5:7: “For the vineyard of the Lord of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant; and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry”.
- 2) When life and action are attributed to an inanimate object, the statement is figurative. Example: Zech 5:1-3: “Then I turned, and lifted up my eyes, and looked, and behold a flying scroll. And he said to me, What do you see? And I answered, I see a flying scroll; its length is twenty cubits, and its width ten cubits. And he said to me, This is the curse that goes out over the face of the whole earth; for everyone who steals shall be cut off henceforth, according to it; and everyone who swears falsely shall be cut off henceforth, according to it”.
- 3) When an expression is out of character with the thing described, the statement is figurative. Example: Psalm 17:8: “Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of your wings...”

Remez (pronounced 'reh-mez' - meaning "hint")

This is where another (implied) meaning is alluded to in the text, usually revealing a deeper meaning. There may still be a *p'shat* meaning as well as another meaning, as any verse can have multiple levels of meaning. An example of implied "Remez": Prov 20:10 – "*Different weights, and different measures, both of them are alike an abomination to the Lord*". The *p'shat* would be concerned with a merchant using the same scale to weigh goods for all of his customers. The *remez* implies that this goes beyond this into aspects of fairness and honesty in anyone's life.

D'rash (pronounced 'deh-rahsh' also called "Midrash"- meaning 'teaching')

This is a teaching or exposition or application of the *P'shat* and/or *Remez*. (In some cases this could be considered comparable to a "sermon".) For instance, Biblical writers may take two or more unrelated verses and combine them to create a verse(s) with a third meaning.

There are three rules to consider when utilising the *d'rash* interpretation of a text:

- 1) A *d'rash* understanding can not be used to strip a passage of its *p'shat* meaning, nor may any such understanding contradict the *p'shat* meaning of any other Scripture passage. As the *Talmud* states, "No passage loses its *p'shat*".
- 2) Let Scripture interpret Scripture. Look for the Scriptures themselves to define the components of an allegory.
- 3) The primary components of an allegory represent specific realities. We should limit ourselves to these primary components when understanding the text.

Sod (pronounced sawd or sood (like "wood") - meaning "hidden")

This understanding is the hidden, secret or mystic meaning of a text. Some examples of this would be the "dragon", and "whore of Babylon", from the book of Revelation. Others would include Y'shua's command in John 6:53: "*Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink his blood, ye have no life in you*". Or Paul's statement in Gal 4:26: "*But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all*".

Examples of Pardes from Matthew

Examples of the *Remez*, *D'rash* and *Sod*, can be found in Matthew as follows. (Of course, the *p'shat* is throughout the text.) Without knowledge and application of the rules of *Pardes*, these verses would either not make sense or indicate an error on the part of the author:

Remez: Matt 2:15: "*Out of Egypt I called my son*". This is a quote from Hosea 11:1 that Matthew is applying to Y'shua. If we were to insist on a literal exegesis only and researched the quote, we would have to accuse Matthew of improperly using Scripture, as Hosea is clearly speaking of the nation of Israel, and not the Messiah. Matthew, however, is hinting (*remez*) at the relationship between Israel and the Messiah in this and other verses he uses.

D'rash: Matt 18:18: "... *Whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven*" This is a verse that has been interpreted in numerous (incorrect) ways due to a lack of understanding that this is a *d'rash* (teaching) concerning decisions one makes in your personal "walk with YHWH" (called your "*halakha*" in Hebrew/Judaism).

Sod: Mat 26:28: "*Then He took the cup, gave thanks and offered it to them saying, Drink from it all of you, This is my blood...*" Taken literally, this verse would not only be a violation of the Old Covenant *Torah* (revelation or instruction from YHWH = Law) commandment against consuming blood, but along with other verses about eating Y'shua's flesh (John 6:51-56) could be grounds for accusations of cannibalism. There is a far deeper, more mystical meaning here, however (the *sod*), even one that those who heard Him did not understand (John 6:52).

The above verses will be discussed in more detail when we come to them in this study. It is my belief that when all of us learn to study the Scriptures more effectively, then differences in interpretation will begin to disappear.

WHAT ARE HEBREW IDIOMS?

A place to begin learning about Hebrew thought is in the realm of the Hebrew idiom. By definition an idiom is:

"A speech form or an expression of a given language that is peculiar to itself grammatically or cannot be understood from the individual meanings of its elements, as in keep tabs on". (The American Heritage Dictionary)

The English language is full of idiomatic expressions. That is one of the reasons it is such a difficult language for non-English speakers to learn.

Hebrew is also rich in idiomatic expressions. Since very few Believers are fluent in Hebrew, it is necessary for us to read and study the Scriptures in our native language. **One of the most difficult tasks a translator faces is how to make the idioms understandable in the language to which he is translating.** While this is certainly a challenge for the scholars who translate the Old Covenant from Hebrew to English, the task is complicated even further when it comes to the New Covenant. Many Biblical scholars now agree that many of the New Covenant books were originally written in Hebrew and later translated into Greek. This means that our English copies of the New Covenant are really translations of translations, which makes the rendering of the Hebrew idioms even more difficult than merely going directly from Hebrew to English.

Because of these idiomatic problems, certain New Covenant passages are difficult to understand, as the following example illustrates. Here Y'shua is teaching about putting material things (vs. spiritual things) in their proper perspective:

"Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also."

The lamp of the body is the eye. If therefore your eye is good your whole body will be full of light. But if your eye is bad [evil' in KJV], your whole body will be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in you is darkness, how great is that darkness!

No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon". (Mat 6:19-24 NKJV)

This passage continues on with more exhortation about seeking the Kingdom of YHWH, rather than chasing after physical things.

The question often arises: Why is the passage about the 'evil eye' stuck in the middle of an exhortation about material possessions as opposed to spiritual riches? The answer is simple if one understands the Hebrew idiom involved, for in Hebrew the expression 'evil eye' means a person who is stingy. In Jewish teaching, it specifically pertains to the farmer who was required by *Torah* to leave the corners of his fields for gleaning by the poor:

"When you reap the harvest of your land, you shall not wholly reap the corners of your field, nor shall you gather the gleanings of your harvest. And you shall not glean your vineyard, nor shall you gather every grape of your vineyard; you shall leave them for the poor and the stranger: I am the LORD your God". (Lev 19:9-10 NKJV)

A farmer who left large corners of his field unharvested and did not pick his grapes too closely was considered to have a 'good eye'. This meant that he was a generous man who provided adequately for the poor. However, one who left only very small corners on his field, and picked the vines nearly clean was said to have an 'evil eye'. Thus, we see that Y'shua was using a Hebrew idiom common to His day in order to teach a lesson about being generous to those in need. In the larger context of the passage, it is evident that Y'shua was telling the people that a person with an 'evil eye' was one who was more concerned with the material than he was with the spiritual. Therefore, that person's god had become mammon, rather than the merciful YHWH of *Avraham, Yitzchak* and *Ya'acov* (Abraham, Isaac and Jacob), who was intimately concerned about the needs of the poor. This understanding would have been readily apparent to the Jewish people present when Y'shua gave this teaching, but it is hidden from most Christians' understanding today because of His use of this Hebrew idiom.

WHAT ARE MISTRANSLATIONS AND MISUNDERSTANDINGS?

A common problem that exists in our English Bibles is mistranslation of the original text. Sometimes this seems to be the direct result of translators who were attempting to remove all hint of 'Jewishness'

from the New Covenant in order to support their particular theology. Other times it appears to be caused by ignorance of the Hebrew idioms or expressions. A classic example of the latter can be found in the story concerning Peter's denial of Y'shua on the night of the Last Supper:

"And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren'. But he said to Him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death'. Then He said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster ('cock' in KJV) will not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me'". (Luke 22:31-34)

Later that night the Temple Guards arrested Y'shua and took Him to the house of the High Priest. There, Simon Peter was allowed admission to the courtyard in view of where they were questioning Y'shua:

"And a certain servant girl, seeing him as he sat by the fire, looked intently at him and said, 'This man was also with Him'. But he denied Him, saying, 'Woman, I do not know Him'. And after a little while another saw him and said, 'You also are of them'. But Peter said, 'Man, I am not!' Then after about an hour had passed, another confidently affirmed saying, 'Surely this fellow also was with Him, for he is a Galilean'. But Peter said, 'Man, I do not know what you are saying!' And immediately, while he was still speaking, the rooster (cock) crowed. And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, 'Before the rooster (cock) crows, you will deny Me three times. Then Peter went out and wept bitterly'". (Luke 22:56-62)

This is one of the more famous stories in the Gospel accounts, repeated in both Matthew and Mark as well. However, there is one problem with the translation: chickens were not allowed in Jerusalem during Temple times. The reason for this prohibition was because chickens are very dirty birds and they have the obnoxious habit of finding their way into places where they do not belong. Therefore, to assure that chickens could not gain access to the Temple and desecrate the Holy Place; or worse yet, the Holy of Holies, the Priests simply forbid everyone in Jerusalem from having chickens.

So, what about this famous passage of Scripture? It clearly says in the New King James Version, just quoted, that a 'rooster' crowed and it was heard in the courtyard of the palace of the High Priest.

The proper translation is really quite evident when the practices of that time are understood. The 'rooster' or 'cock' that Peter and Y'shua heard was not a bird at all, but a man. That man was a priest at the Temple. He was the one who had the responsibility of unlocking the Temple doors each and every morning before dawn. Every night this priest would lock the doors to the Temple and place the key in an opening in the floor of one of the Temple side rooms. Then he would place a flat stone over the opening and place his sleeping mat over the stone. He would literally sleep over the key to the Temple. In the morning this priest would arise at first light and retrieve the key. He would then proceed to unlock the doors to the Temple and cry out three statements in a loud voice: "All the *cohanim* (co-heh-neem = priests) prepare to sacrifice". "All the *Leviim* (Leh-vah-eem = Levites) to their stations". "All the Israelites come to worship". Then he would repeat these statements two more times.

The priest in question was known as the Temple Crier, and he was called 'alektor' in Greek, which can either be a 'cock' or 'man'. This man is *Gever* in Hebrew, which was incorrectly translated 'cock' or 'rooster'. It was his obligation to rouse all the Priests, Levites, and worshippers and call them to begin their preparations for the morning sacrifice service. In the stillness of the early morning, sound carries well and since the palace of the High Priest was within a very short walk from the Temple, it was the *Gever's* cry that was heard in the courtyard where Y'shua was being questioned. Josephus, the historian, confirms this by stating that no chickens were allowed inside Jerusalem's walls as they flew into the Temple and defiled the Temple.

While this example does not change the meaning of the story (that Peter would deny Y'shua despite his bravado earlier in the evening), it does serve to illustrate how English-reading (as well as other languages) Bible students have been shortchanged in their understanding of some of the events as they actually took place. Also, by knowing the true facts about the *Gever*, one's attention becomes focused on the fact that Y'shua, the Son of YHWH, was being questioned while standing within earshot of His Father's House (the Temple).

CHAPTER 7

WHY UNDERSTAND THE CONTEXT OF BIBLICAL PASSAGES?

WHAT IS MEANT BY "CONTEXT"?

Most Bible studies will teach the concept of "taking verses in context". Unfortunately, the only concept of "context" usually taught is, "*literary-grammatical*", referring to the surrounding words and sentences. While literary-grammatical context is important, there are others just as important to consider, including:

- Religious/Cultural Context (First Century Jewish)
- Historical/Political Context (Jewish, Roman and Jewish-Roman)

Religious/Cultural Context

This would include "theological" statements made by Y'shua and the authors of the "New Testament", as often-times they are reflecting Second Temple era religious opinions, including those found in the *Talmud*. It also takes into account habits of Jewish lifestyle, Judaism's relationship to the Gentile world, and idioms and figures of speech used in First Century Hebrew dialogue.

Historical/Political context

This includes "global" events leading up to the first century scene depicted in the "New Testament", First Century Jewish life under Roman authority; and relationships between Jewish religious factions, such as the Pharisees, Sadducees and Essenes.

"RENEWING" YOUR MINDSET

Most people studying the Scriptures today, as said, have an "approach" that is formed by their church, cultural, educational and family background. No matter how objective they try to be ("letting the Scriptures speak for themselves"), the fact is that they are 21st Century, "western-minded" people who are reading documents from another time and (Hebrew) culture. In the case of the New Covenant letters, you also have documents that were translated into the Greek language of 1900+ years ago and then into today's modern language(s).

All of this presents not only a question of grammatical difficulty, it also often involves understanding complex Hebrew religious concepts for which there was no adequate expression in the Greek language, and are "lost" in the translation. We need to put the text back into the context the Hebrew authors intended it to be read in.

Although this may sound "simple", it is in reality the single greatest obstacle for the modern Bible student to overcome, especially one raised in the "Christian World" outside Israel.

The first step toward eliminating bias is to understand that Matthew, as well as the rest of the books of the "New Testament", must be studied in the following context:

- 1) They are First Century Hebrew texts written by authors with a Hebrew understanding of such things as "faith" or "salvation" or "law". They were never meant to be interpreted with a 21st Century "western mindset", (that has been tainted by almost 2,000 years of non-Jewish and even anti-Jewish theology).
- 2) They were written with an assumption that the reader(s) have some grounding in *Torah* (i.e., books with the primary focus on Gentiles, such as "Romans"), and in some cases are well-established in *Torah* (i.e., books with the primary message to Jews, such as "Hebrews").
- 3) They are written at a time when Rome controlled the land of Israel and its people; and Gentiles "coming to faith" by the preaching of the disciples, were entering from a very anti-Semitic Roman culture and had little regard for anything Jewish, even as believers.
- 4) They are written at a very "Messianically-focused" time in Israel's history.
- 5) There was a wide range of opinion on spiritual matters in Judaism at that time.

WHAT IS AN EXEGESIS?

Exegesis is a Greek word. An "exegesis" is the process of analysing the Biblical text by studying the historical and linguistic (science of language) context, examining the words of the original language of the text, and formulating a study or textual outline of the passage. This is what I attempted in this study on the Book of Matthew.

WHAT ARE HERMENEUTICS?

Hermeneutics refers to the science of meaning. "Hermeneutics" is often confused with another Greek word, exegesis. As said, exegesis refers to the interpretation of a text while hermeneutics refers to understanding what method was used to interpret. In other words:

Exegesis: Interpretation of a text.

Hermeneutics: Methods of interpretation.

Example

Verse: "*Circumcise the foreskin of your heart*":

Exegesis: "It **means** stop being stubborn by rejecting *Torah*".

Hermeneutics: "The phrase must be metaphorical because Scripture would not have commanded us to cut our hearts causing our own deaths".

Hermeneutical rules:

- Scripture does not command impossible things.
- Scripture does not defy reason.

WHY DO I USE HEBREW WORDS?

Why do I use Hebrew words, terms, and phrases in this study? Many ask why I use these "foreign" words when all of us speak English. What does the Hebrew language have to do with me?

So, let's begin with a word we probably use the most. Y'SHUA! Why don't we just say Jesus? This exegesis is designed to study more fundamental issues and teaching. So I do my best not to clutter up things by using terms that may not yet be familiar. There are many reasons for this, and I have chosen a few to stop and discuss.

The number one reason is because that is His name. Y'shua is the name that our Lord, after taking on flesh, was given. In Mattityahu (Matthew) 1:25 it says, "*And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son; and he called his name JESUS*". (Darby Bible) The word "Jesus" is a transliteration of the Greek word, *Iesous* which is a transliteration of his given name in Hebrew, Y'SHUA (pronounced, Yahshua). The name "Jesus" is only 400 years old and the "J" sound is only 400 years old. But, at the time He was named, Y'shua is what His name was.

In much the same way, the English word "James" is from the Greek word *Iakobos*, which is from his Hebrew name *Ya'akov*. So, one might ask, what difference does it make what we call Him? Well, if you are well acquainted with what His real name means (Salvation), then it probably makes a big difference. Let me explain why.

When you read and study the *Tenach* (Old Covenant) you will soon notice a verse that contains the name of someone. It also gives you the reason they called the person by that name in the same verse. Sometimes it is the verse before or the verse after, but it is usually there. YHWH has a reason for recording this. Many times it helps you to understand the immediate text—such as Adam's name meaning man, red, or ruddy. In *B'reshith* (Genesis) 2:7, "*Elohiym* (one of the names of God) forms man (Adam) out of the dust of the ground (adamah)".

This naming gives us much insight into the relationship that man has with the earth and the ground. You see in this verse a wonderful play on this word. Adam was taken from the *adamah*. Then in Chapter 3, verse 19 we are told that because of Adam's sin, he will return to the *adamah*. There is a very real relationship that man has with the ground. The *adamah* also has many of the same commandments as the man. It is

commanded to tithe of the fruit of the ground. The Bible tells to rest the land on the seventh year. In the *Brit Chadashah* (New Covenant), we are told in Rom 8:20-22 that the creation itself is groaning to be delivered. We are told in 1 Cor 5:17 that we are a new (actually the word is renewed) creation. In the book of *Hitgalut* (Revelation) we are told that there is also a new heaven and a new earth to come. I could go on and on, for YHWH paints many pictures in what He chooses to name things.

These pictures cannot be understood in English or Greek. They must be taken back to their Hebrew original. The same applies to the *Brit Chadashah*.

Let me give you a mind-blowing (idiom!) example of how important it is to know the meaning behind a particular word in Hebrew. Many who read or study the Scriptures tend to skip over the dozens of genealogies, but YHWH has chosen them to reveal the names of Adam and his children, from Adam to *Noach* (Noah) for good reason. As you read *B'reshith* (Gen) chapter 5 in the English, you would never be able to pick up the purpose of these names; but YHWH has a definite purpose, and the various transliterations from the original lose this purpose. In the 5th Chapter beginning at verse 4, it reads in the English transliteration that Adam begot *Seth* who begot *Enosh* who begot *Kenan* who begot *Mahal'alel* who begot *Jared* who begot *Enoch* who begot *Methu'selah* who begot *Lamech* who begot *Noah*. Now, what do these Hebrew names mean?

- Well, Adam means “man”,
- Seth means “appointed”,
- Enosh means “mortal”,
- Kenan means “sorrow”,
- Mahal'alel means “the blessed God”,
- Jared means “to come down” or “shall come down”,
- Enoch means “teaching”,
- Methu'selah means “his death shall bring”,
- Lamech means “the despairing”, and
- Noah means “comfort or rest”.

Now, YHWH also chose to reveal these names in this particular order as well. Let's put it all together. MAN APPOINTED MORTAL SORROW (but the) BLESSED GOD SHALL COME DOWN TEACHING (that) HIS DEATH SHALL BRING THE DESPAIRING COMFORT! WOW!! The Gospel really was preached to Avraham (Abraham) and way before Avraham. Is this just coincidence? Not at all, interesting, there is no word in Hebrew for “coincidence”.

The reality that we must face is that YHWH's name in the flesh is Y'shua. The word Jesus and Jesus is a western attempt to transliterate His given name. Scriptural translators should be in the business of translating and not transliterating. There is no reason to transliterate His given name, especially when the translation or meaning must come from the given name. Transliterations most generally confuse and pervert the original meaning. This can be seen in many foreign cultures today. When Coca Cola is introduced to Japan, they do not attempt to transliterate the word into their language. Coca Cola, in Japan, is pronounced Coca Cola! Our Saviour's name is Y'shua, so why not call Him Y'shua?!

WILL THE REAL Y'SHUA PLEASE STAND UP

We will be using the Hebrew name Y'shua, and we will refer to Him as the Messiah (*Mashiach* in Hebrew) rather than as Jesus Christ. The reason is twofold. First of all, I wish to maintain a Hebrew flavour in this study so that you, the student, begin to get the feel of the Hebrewness of our Saviour and of the Scriptures. Second, we have all heard the words “Jesus Christ” used so often as a name that many probably believe that ‘Christ’ is a surname rather than a title.

The Jewishness of Y'shua

Y'shua grew up in a Jewish home. Both His stepfather, *Yoseif* (Yoh-safe = Joseph) and His mother *Miriam* (Meer-ree-ahm = Mary) were Jewish by birth. This is evident from the genealogical lists for *Yoseif* (found in Matthew 1:1-17) and *Miriam* (found in Luke 3:23-38). In addition, the Scriptures speak plainly about which tribe Y'shua was from:

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

His birthplace was prophesied to be in Bethlehem, which is in the territory that was assigned to Judah:

"But you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, Though you are little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of you shall come forth to Me The One to be ruler in Israel, Whose goings forth have been from of old, From everlasting". (Mic 5:2 NKJV)

As the promised Messiah, Y'shua was a direct descendant of King David:

"There shall come forth a Rod from the stem of Jesse, And a Branch shall grow out of his roots. The Spirit of the LORD shall rest upon Him, The Spirit of wisdom and understanding, The Spirit of counsel and might, The Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD". (Isaiah 11:1-2 NKJV)

A check of the genealogical lists in Matthew and Luke shows that both *Yoseif* and *Miriam* were descended from King David and his father Jesse. Also, the term "*Branch*" (Isaiah 11:1) is recognised by Jewish and Christian scholars alike to be a reference to the Messiah.

It is this same Y'shua from *Yehudah* (Judah) who qualified to open the heavenly scroll and loose its seven seals:

"But one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals'". (Rev. 5:5 NKJV)

Thus we see that both the Hebrew and the Greek Scriptures agree that the Messiah was to come from the tribe of Judah.

The Son of YHWH

It is important for Messianic Believers to understand that Y'shua is the Son of YHWH. He was not from the seed Adam, rather He was conceived by the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Roo-ach Hah-Koh-desh = Holy Spirit):

"Then the angel said to her, 'Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name Jesus (Y'shua in Hebrew). He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end'". (Luke 1:30-33 NKJV)

Y'shua's primary mission during His first coming was to perform the role of the 'Suffering Servant' by making atonement for our sins, thereby granting Faith Righteousness to all who believe in Him:

"Surely He has borne our griefs And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; We have turned, every one, to his own way; And the LORD has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. ... By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, For He shall bear their iniquities". (Isaiah 53:4-6, 11b)

The fact that Y'shua is the Son of YHWH does not detract from the fact that His *Abba* (Father) chose to send Him to this earth as a member of the Jewish community. At that time, only the Jewish people were still holding to the covenant YHWH had given to all the children of Israel at Mount Sinai, for the house of Israel (northern ten tribes) had long before abandoned *Torah* observance, was divorced by YHWH, and sent away. (See Jer 3:8.)

Y'shua HaYehudi (Y'shua the Jew)

Y'shua HaYehudi is the betrothed Husband of Believers and, according to the ancient Hebrew laws of marriage, because we are already betrothed to Him—we are also already legally married to Him. The only way in which our marriage can be dissolved is through a written bill of divorce from Y'shua Himself.

As the betrothed bride of Messiah, it is our calling to prepare ourselves for our full marriage to Him. Part of the process of preparing for this marriage is to learn as much as possible about our Husband, Y'shua HaYehudi, so that we can learn to please Him in every way. One of the first steps in accomplishing this task

is to learn as much as we can about *Y'shua*'s religious beliefs, traditions, and customs, all of which were deeply instilled within the Judaism of the First Century.

In addition to *Y'shua*'s primary commission of providing salvation for His people, there were other things that He was commissioned to do during His visit with us on earth. These might be termed secondary missions:

- To announce the Good News (Gospel) of the coming Kingdom of YHWH (Mark 1:14 NKJV).
- "*To heal the brokenhearted*" (Luke 4:18 NKJV).
- "*To preach deliverance to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind*" (Luke 4:18 NKJV).
- "*To set at liberty those who are oppressed*" (Luke 4:18 NKJV).
- "*To preach the acceptable year of the LORD*". (Luke 4:18 NKJV).

One of *Y'shua*'s main purposes was to teach His disciples (the Bride) how to correctly observe the *Torah*. It was for this reason that His disciples referred to Him as the 'Living *Torah*', for He lived it perfectly:

"For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathise with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin". (Heb 4:15 NKJV)

CHAPTER 8

WHY THE NEED TO UNDERSTAND THE HEBREW DAY, WEEK AND CALENDAR?

The aim of this section is to make the reader aware that the Almighty God of Israel uses His own calendar as the basis of His 'diary' to organise His work on earth; and that He has already appointed certain days, seasons and years in it during which He will perform His mightiest deeds in the Programme of Salvation.

- 1) That the Almighty is about to draw universal attention to those **appointed times** by displaying signs in the sun, moon and stars.
- 2) That the nation of Israel is still the chosen people of YHWH; and that believing Gentiles, by virtue of their faith in *Y'shua HaMashiach*, are grafted into the 'Olive of Israel' (Rom 11) and are thereafter expected to express their faith in YHWH God of Israel by keeping His commandments.

This section contains rare information concerning the appointed days on which divinely predicted signs in the sun, moon and stars are expected; signs which will not only confirm the Holy Bible as the Word of YHWH, but will cause all humanity to prepare for the Day of Judgment. With these opening thoughts in mind, let us proceed.

Why the Need for a Calendar?

Pause a while and consider the civil calendar hanging on your living room or office wall and ask yourself these questions. Why is it there? What is its true purpose? Where and how did the calendar originate? Is a calendar essential?

Your response would probably go something like this. The calendar is there to help me, my family and my fellow-workers keep track of time. Its purpose is to keep us in touch with appointments and events at home, in the office and abroad. No, I have little knowledge of where and how it originated.

Before answering the next question, Is it essential? Try to imagine a world without a calendar, a world without pre-numbered days, months and years. Could society operate in a world without a calendar? I suppose it could - after a fashion, but it would be a crippled society at best. Why? Because planning further than a few days ahead would not be possible. All official, social, religious and sporting appointments would be extremely difficult to make; for no one would know on which day to meet. The entire legal profession, with its millions of carefully dated documents, would also be thrown into a state of total chaos. The activities of travel agents, airlines, hospital/dental surgeries and countless business organisations and clubs would slow to a snail's pace; for no one would be able to organise events more than a few days ahead. Without a calendar there would be no diaries, no long-term business, social or personal planning. Without question, a world without a calendar would be a world of frustrating confusion. Yes, you may be sure that a calendar of some sort is absolutely essential.

Currently there are several calendars in use throughout the world. Most are religious calendars used mainly to identify the dates of religious festivals celebrated by the faithful of the world's many religions. Amongst these is the **sacred calendar of the YHWH of Israel**, the calendar this section is about. The sacred calendar is based on the movements of the sun and the moon. It is also linked directly to many Bible prophecies which describe world-encompassing events shortly to take place. Bible prophecy clearly tells us that there is coming a "*great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be*". After the tribulation there will be "*signs in the heavens*".

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken".
(Matt 24:29)

The Gregorian Calendar

Besides the various religious calendars being used by mankind, there is the popular civil or Gregorian calendar. This is the calendar that hangs on the wall of almost every office in the civilised world. The Gregorian calendar takes its name from Pope Gregory XIII, who reformed the Roman calendar in the year 1582. Before that time the civil calendar was called the Julian calendar, after the Roman Emperor Julius Caesar, who had also made some alterations to the calendar in the year 46 B.C. One of Caesar's amendments was to pattern the civil calendar on the calendar of ancient Egypt, which was at that time the only calendar in which the lengths of the months and years were fixed by definite rules. In other words, the

civil calendar which hangs on your office wall is similar in structure to the calendar that was used in ancient Egypt. Like its Egyptian ancestor, the civil calendar is governed **by the sun alone**, and its months (January to December) are in **no way influenced by the moon**. In the civil calendar, a new moon can occur on any day in the month; days begin in the middle of the night (0.00 hour) and years (in the Northern Hemisphere) begin in the middle of winter on January 1st.

The “Sacred” Calendar

By comparison, the sacred calendar is strikingly different.

- In it the days **begin and end at sunset** when three stars appear in the sky.
- Months begin **at the sighting of a new moon**.
- Years begin **in Israel's spring**, when nature awakens from its winter sleep (Northern Hemisphere).

Not surprisingly, therefore, many creatures from tiny birds keeping to their 14, 21 or 28 day cycles, right through to the complex human body (i.e., ladies' menstruation), are designed to keep in step with the weekly and monthly periods of the **Creator's calendar**.

Interesting though these points may be, they are, nevertheless, of small account when compared with these two all-encompassing facts:

- That YHWH's main objective in designing the sacred calendar was **to enable His worshippers to identify and keep their spiritual appointments with Him on the sacred days of His choosing**.
- That the Almighty would never do anything which concerns the human race without first telling His servants the prophets.

“Surely the LORD GOD will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets”.
(Amos 3:7)

The Most High not only reveals His plans to His servants the prophets; but, like every good managing director, His plans are carried out on schedule - at “appointed times”. And those appointed times are all linked to the **sacred calendar**, which has been in existence since the creation of the world. We read of the sacred calendar's use in the account of Noah's flood which was over 800 years before Israel came out of Egypt.

“In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened”.
(Gen 7:11)

“And the ark rested in the seventh month, on the seventeenth day of the month, upon the mountains of Ararat”. (Gen 8:4)

“And it came to pass in the six hundredth and first year, in the first month, the first day of the month, the waters were dried up from off the earth: and Noah removed the covering of the ark, and looked, and, behold, the face of the ground was dry”. (Gen 8:13)

Here we can see that the sacred calendar was in use many hundreds of years before the first Jew (Judah) was born. The sacred calendar is, in fact, the oldest calendar known to man; and, if I may put it thus, is the only one that is linked to the “diary” of YHWH God of Israel. I therefore consider it an inestimable privilege to tell you about it, to briefly explain its structure and above all, to help you to understand the Book of Matthew better; and to help you keep your weekly and annual appointments with the Creator of the mighty universe. With these thoughts in mind, let us begin by defining some of the basic terms used in this section.

What is a Hebrew day and when does it start?

In the sacred calendar, a 24 hour day is the period of time between one sunset and the next. According to the Scriptures, days begin and end at sunset when three stars appear in the heavens.

Why does the Jewish day start at sundown? Think about it, what makes more sense: for a new day to begin when the old day ends, or in the middle of the night? That's basically why the Jewish day begins at sundown – it follows the laws of nature. But a fuller understanding of why the Jewish day starts at sundown requires a quick examination of time.

When YHWH created the universe, He created time, space and matter simultaneously. At the very beginning of Creation, the clock began ticking at 00:00 at the precise moment space and matter burst into being.

Twenty-four hours later, Day One was complete. What does the Bible say? "*It was evening and it was morning, one day*". That first 24-hour day began with night and ended with day, and it's been that way ever since. The Hebrew still today honours this commandment of YHWH.

Later, on Day Four, YHWH assigned the sun and the moon as day and night markers, setting up the solar system the way it is today; but the Jewish day begins with night, because that's how time began.

The day is divided into two parts, evening and morning.

Evening: when the sun is down. Mark 1:32: "*And at even, when the sun did set...*" For further proof that days start and end at evening, **sunset**, at the going down of the sun, see Joshua 8:29, Joshua 10:26-27, 1 Kings 22:35-36, 2 Chron 18:34, 2 Sam 3:35.

Morning: when the sun is up. Thus in Genesis chapter 1 we read *how "the evening and the morning were the first day", "the evening and the morning were the second day", "the evening and the morning were the third day"* and so on.

What is a Hebrew month and when does it start?

A month in the sacred calendar is measured by the moon. A month is the period of time between one new moon and the next. A month begins when the new moon is sighted with the naked eye. The moon orbits the earth in about 29.5 days. Months in the sacred calendar may, therefore, be either 29 or 30 days in length: they cannot be 28 or 31 days in length. Note that the new moon mentioned here is not the astronomical new moon (conjunction), which is invisible; but the **visible new moon as it is first sighted with the naked eye by an observer at Jerusalem**.

Months in the sacred calendar are usually, though not always, referred to in Scripture by their numbers, not by their names: i.e. 1st month, 2nd month, 3rd month, 7th month, etc. Unlike most weekdays, however, months in the sacred calendar do have proper names, most of which are found in the Bible. But let's also look at the Babylonian versus the Biblical Calendar.

This table is divided into two sections because of the changes made in the calendar as a result of the Babylonian exile. After the Jews were exiled from Judah to Babylonia in 586 B.C., they adopted Babylonian names for the months of the year. Nevertheless, they still have important meanings in the whole scheme of things. Not only do most of the names of the Babylonian months have appropriate meanings, but there is also an important theme that applies to these months (Babylonian or Biblical).

Please view the chart on the next page.

Mo. #	Babylonian Calendar	Meaning of Babylonian Months	Theme of Month (Babylonian & Biblical)	Biblical Calendar	Meaning of Biblical Months (Harvesting Schedule)	Biblical Feasts
1	Nisan	Their flight	Redemption, Miracles	Abib	Ripening of grain [Barley, Wheat]	Passover, Unleavened Bread, Firstfruits
2	Iyyar	(Natural) healing	Introspection, Self improvement	Ziv	Splendor or Radiance [Flowers] (Barley harvest)	
3	Sivan	Bright - their covering	Giving of Torah	3rd	(Wheat harvest)	Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)
4	Tammuz	Hidden - giver of the vine (A Phoenician deity)	Sin of the Golden Calf, guarding of the eyes	4th	Name not in Bible	
5	Av	Father	Av the Comforter	5th	Name not in Bible	
6	Elul	A vain thing - nothingness	Repentance	6th	(Fruit harvest)	
7	Tishri	Beginning (from reishit)	Month of the Strong or Month of the Ancients	Ethanim	Ever-flowing streams	Rosh HaShannah, Yom Kippur, Succoth
8	Kheshvan	Eighth	The Flood (of Noach)	Bul	Produce (in the sense of rain)	
9	Kislev	Security, trust	(Restful) Sleep	9th		
10	Tevet	Good (from "Tov")	Divine Grace	10th		
11	Shevat	meaning unknown	Tree of Life	11th		
12	Adar	Strength	Good Fortune	12th		
13	* Adar II					

Note: A 13th month is periodically added to keep the sacred Feasts 'in their seasons', (agricultural seasons). This is about every 3rd year, called a leap year. There are 7 leap years in a 19-year cycle. When this happens, then the 12th month is called *Adar* one, and the 13th month is called *Veadar* or *Adar* two. I usually do refer to months by number because of two reasons:

- Because Bible writers mostly did so.
- In order that believers will remember that the **religious year** starts with the month of *Abib* (*Nisan*) and not *Ethanim* (*Tishri*). Using numbers helps keep the position of a month in focus, and believers will know exactly how far into the year they have progressed. Using names alone does not guarantee this.

Once again, here we can see that the names of the months are associated with certain gods or personalities; and others come from Latin origins to indicate the order (number) in which it appeared in the old Roman calendar. Abbreviations of various languages follow.

Arm. - Armoric, Corn. - Cornish, Eng. - English, Fr. - French, Ir. - Irish, Hiberno-Celtic and Gaelic, It. - Italian
L. - Latin, Port. - Portuguese, Russ. - Russian, Sax. - Saxon or Anglo-Saxon, Sp. - Spanish, W. - Welsh.

The information in the "Origins of Name" column comes from Noah Webster's original 1828 American Dictionary of the English Language.

Month	Name of God or Personality	Origins of Name
January	Roman god Janus	Ir. <i>gionbhar</i> or <i>gionvar</i> ; Russ. <i>genvar</i> ; Fr. <i>janvier</i> ; It. <i>gennaio</i> ; Sp. <i>enero</i> ; Port. <i>janeiro</i> ; L. <i>januarius</i> . It is evident from the Irish and Russian words, that the first syllable of <i>January</i> is from the root of L. <i>geno</i> , to beget, Eng. to <i>begin</i> , Sax. <i>aginnan</i> . <i>Var</i> is said to signify a revolution. <i>January</i> then signifies the <i>beginning</i> , or first month. <i>Janus</i> is probably from the same root. The first month of the year, according to the present computation. At the foundation of Rome, March was considered the first month. January and February were introduced by Numa Pompilius.
February		L. <i>Februarius</i> ; Fr. <i>Fevrier</i> ; It. <i>Febbraio</i> ; Sp. <i>Febrero</i> ; Arm. <i>Fevrer</i> ; Port. <i>Fevereiro</i> ; Ir. <i>Feabhra</i> ; Russ. <i>Phebral</i> . The Latin word is said to be named from <i>februo</i> , to purify by sacrifice, and thus to signify the month of purification; as the people were, in this month, purified by sacrifices and oblations. The word <i>februo</i> is said to be a Sabine word, connected with <i>ferveo</i> , <i>ferbeo</i> , to boil, as boiling was used in purifications. This practice bears a resemblance to that of making atonement among the Jews; but the connection between <i>ferveo</i> and <i>February</i> is doubtful. The name of the second month of the year.
March	Roman god Mars	L. <i>Mars</i> , the god of war. The third month of the year.
April		L. <i>aprilis</i> ; Fr. <i>avril</i> ; Sp. <i>abril</i> ; Ir. <i>abrai</i> ; Corn. <i>ebrit</i> ; W. <i>ebrill</i> . The fourth month of the year.
May	Greek goddess Maia	L. <i>Maius</i> ; Fr. <i>Mai</i> ; It. <i>Maggio</i> ; Sp. <i>Mayo</i> . The fifth month of the year, beginning with January, but the third beginning with March, as was the ancient practice of the Romans.
June	Roman god Juno	L. <i>junius</i> ; Fr. <i>juin</i> ; It. <i>giugno</i> ; Sp. <i>junio</i> . The sixth month of the year, when the sun enters the sign Cancer.
July	Roman emperor Julius Caesar	The seventh month of the year, during which the sun enters the sign Leo. It is so called from <i>Julius</i> , the surname of Caius Cesar, who was born in this month. Before that time, this month was called <i>Quintilis</i> , or the fifth month, according to the old Roman calendar, in which March was the first month of the year.
August	Roman emperor Augustus Caesar	L. <i>augustus</i> . The first syllable of this word is probably from the root of <i>augeo</i> , or of awe. The eighth month of the year, containing thirty-one days. The old Roman name was <i>Sextilis</i> , the <i>sixth</i> month from March, the month in which the primitive Romans, as well as Jews, began the year. The name was changed to <i>August</i> in honor of the Emperor Octavius Augustus, on account of his victories, and his entering on his first consulate in that month.
September		L. from <i>septem</i> , seven; Fr. <i>septembre</i> ; It. <i>settembre</i> ; Sp. <i>septiembre</i> . The seventh month from March, which was formerly the first month of the year. September is now the ninth month of the year.
October		L. from <i>octo</i> , eighth; the eighth month of the primitive Roman year which began in March. The tenth month of the year in our calendar, which follows that of Numa and Julius Cesar.
November		L. from <i>novem</i> , nine; the ninth month, according to the ancient Roman year, beginning in March. The eleventh month of the year.
December		L. <i>december</i> , from <i>decem</i> , ten; this being the tenth month among the early Romans, who began the year in March. The last month in the year, in which the sun enters the tropic of Capricorn, and makes the winter solstice.

What is a Hebrew year and when does it start?

A year in the sacred calendar begins in Israel's spring (March/April in the Northern Hemisphere) and is the time between one spring season and the next. When the sacred calendar is printed in advance, the **new**

moon nearest the spring equinox (equinox is the two times a year when day and night are equal in length) is chosen to begin the year; that is, the new moon which normally coincides with the natural conditions in Israel which the ancient *Sanhedrin* looked for when they selected *Abib*'s new moon.

Most years in the sacred calendar consist of 12 months, each of 29 or 30 days. Thus, assuming six months at 29 days and six months at 30 days, a normal year would contain about 354 days. This figure is about 11.25 days short of a 365.25 day solar year, which is the time the earth takes to complete one orbit of the sun. In order to ensure that the Feasts of the Most High occur at their **appointed seasons** (Passover in the Spring, First Fruits in the summer and Tabernacles in the Autumn) it is necessary for this 11 day annual loss to be made good every two or three years. This is done by intercalating (adding) an extra month after the twelfth month to make the calendar harmonise with the solar year and the agricultural seasons. This extra month (*Adar* two) results in a leap year - which has 13 months.

To summarise the foregoing, we may say that in the sacred calendar:

- A day begins and ends at sunset, at the going down of the sun.
- A month begins and ends when the new moon is sighted by an observer at Jerusalem. Months are either 29 or 30 days in length.
- A year begins in Israel's spring with the new moon nearest (before or after) the spring equinox. Ordinary years have 12 months and leap years have 13 months.

Note: In the popular Jewish calendar, the year begins in autumn with the month of *Ethanim* (*Tishri*). Strictly, this is the start of the **agricultural year**. The **religious year** begins in the spring with the Passover month of *Abib* (*Nisan*).

"And the LORD spake unto Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginning of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you". (Exod 12:1)

"This day came ye out in the month Abib". (Exod 13:4)

"The feast of unleavened bread shalt thou keep. Seven days thou shalt eat unleavened bread, as I commanded thee, in the time of the month Abib: for in the month Abib thou camest out from Egypt". (Exod 34:18)

In ancient times, years were usually numbered from important events such as a ruler's birth, coronation or death. Examples are:

"In the six hundredth year of Noah's life, in the second month, the seventeenth day of the month, the same day were all the fountains of the great deep broken up, and the windows of heaven were opened". (Gen 7:11)

"In the year that king Uzziah died..." (Isaiah 6:1)

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee..." (Luke 3:1)

What is a Hebrew week and when does it start?

The week is another important cycle operating within the sacred calendar. It was designed by the Most High to regulate the physical, mental and spiritual welfare of the human race. Peoples of all religions have a seven day week; a fact which is strong proof that all nations came from a common ancestor who received the seven-day week from the Creator. At first glance, the week appears to have no connection whatsoever with the movements of the earth, the moon and the sun. The week, however, forms the basis of an important **spiritual cycle of sevens**, which we refer to as the **Sabbatical cycle**. The sabbatical cycle figures extensively in Bible prophecy. The **Sabbatical/Jubilee** cycles mentioned in Leviticus chapter 25 are briefly described later in this section.

In the sacred calendar, the days of the week are not named, but numbered: first day, second day, third day, etc.

Secular Weekday Name	Hebrew "Name"	Hebrew Meaning
Sunday	Yom Reeshone	First day
Monday	Yom Shaynee	Second day
Tuesday	Yom Shlee'shee	Third day
Wednesday	Yom Revee'ee	Fourth day
Thursday	Yom Khah'mee'shee	Fifth day
Friday	Yom Ha'shee'shee	Sixth day
Saturday	Shabbat	Rest

The main exception is the seventh day of the week, which is called the **Sabbath** (*Shabbat* in Hebrew). In the Roman civil calendar, the one currently used by virtually all the world, the days of the week are named after various pagan or planetary gods. Please see from where the day names originated from. Abbreviations of various languages follow.

Dan. - Danish, D. - Dutch or Belgic, Fr. - French, G. - German, Ir. - Irish, Hiberno-Celtic, and Gaelic, It. - Italian, L. - Latin, Sax. - Saxon or Anglo-Saxon, Sp. – Spanish, Sw. – Swedish, W. – Welsh.

- 1st day of the week, **Sunday** (**Sun** – the Sun god): Sax. *sunna-dæg*; G. *sonntag*; D. *zondag*; Dan. *söndag*; Sw. *sondag*; so called because this day was anciently dedicated to the sun, or to its worship, the worship of Sun god. It was always the first day of the week.
- 2nd day of the week, **Monday** (**Moon** – the Moon god): named after the Moon god. Sax. *monandæg*; D. *maandag*; G. *nontag*; *moon* and *day*; being formerly sacred to that planet.
- 3rd day of the week, **Tuesday** (**Mars** - Tiw): named after Tiu, an ancient Teutonic deity. Sw. *Tisdag*; Dan. *Tirsdag*; D. *Dingsdag*; G. *Dingstag*; Sax. *Tiwæsðæg* or *Tuesdæg*, from *Tig*, *Tiig*, or *Tuisco*, the Mars of our ancestors, the deity that presided over combats, strife and litigation. Hence, *Tuesday* is court day, assize day; the day for combat or commencing litigation.
- 4th day of the week, **Wednesday** (**Mercury** - Woden): named after Woden, a god in Norse mythology, associated with the Roman god (and planet) Mercury. Sax. *Wodensdæg*; Woden's day; Sw. *Odenstag* or *Onsdag*; from *Wodin* or *Odin*, a deity or chief among the northern nations of Europe.
- 5th day of the week, **Thursday** (**Jupiter** - Thor): named after Thor, the supreme god in Norse mythology, associated with the Roman god (and planet) Jupiter. Dan. *Torsdag*, that is, *Thor's day*, the day consecrated to *Thor*, the god of thunder answering to the Jove of the Greeks and Romans, L. *dies Jovis*; It. *Giovedì*; Sp. *Jueves*; Fr. *Jeudi*. So in G. *donnerstag*, D. *donderdag*, thunderday. This *Thor* is from the root of W. *taran*, thunder; *taraw*, to strike, hit or produce a shock; Gaelic, Ir. *tóirn*, a great noise; *tóirneas*, thunder. The root of the word signifies to drive, to fush, to strike. In Sw. *thorndon* is thunder.
- 6th day of the week, **Friday** (**Venus** - goddess Frigg or Freia): named after Friga, wife of the god Odin, or Wodin another god in Norse mythology. Sax. *frig-dæg*; G. *freitag*; D. *vrydag*; from *Frigga*, the Venus of the north; D. *vrouw*, G. *frau*, Ir. *frag*, a woman. The sixth day of the week, formerly consecrated to Frigga.
- 7th day of the week, **Saturday** (**Saturn**- Roman god Saturn): named after the planet Saturn. Sax. *Sæter-dag*; D. *Saturday*; Saturn's day.

When conversing with the peoples of this world, it is necessary to use these popular names (Sunday, Monday, Tuesday, etc.); else few would know what we were talking about if only the Biblical numbering system were used. But it should be remembered that these popular weekday names have pagan roots and are **not found** in the Bible.

What and when is the Sabbath?

In the Scriptures the seventh day of the week is called the Sabbath. The word Sabbath is synonymous with rest, repose, restoration, refreshment, calm, tranquility, freedom, peace, harmony, holiness and sanctification. It is, therefore, a fitting sign of the Creator's character and aims. The divine record of the creation is brief; but it leaves one with no doubt that the **Creator rested on, blessed and sanctified** the seventh day of the week at the creation of the world. Notice what His Word says on this matter:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made". (Gen 2:1-3)

Many people will be surprised to learn that the true Sabbath day is not Sunday but Saturday. Sunday is the first day of the week. Saturday is the seventh and in Scripture is called the **Sabbath of YHWH**. In other words, Saturday is the true Rest Day of YHWH. The Sabbath starts at sunset on Friday evening and ends 24 hours later at sunset on Saturday evening. Lev 23:32 “*From evening unto evening shall you celebrate your Sabbath*”. The Sabbath commandment is part of the **Ten Commandments**, which were written with the **finger of God!**

“*And the LORD said unto Moses, Come up to me into the mount, and be there: and I will give thee tables of stone, and a law, and commandments which I have written; that thou mayest teach them*”. (Exod 24:12)

“*And he gave unto Moses, when he had made an end of communing with him upon mount Sinai, two tables of testimony, tables of stone, written with the finger of God*”. (Exod 31:18, see also Deut 9:10)

“*Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy. Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day is the sabbath of the LORD thy God: in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates: For in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them is, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the LORD blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it*”. (Exod 20:8-11)

You may read the Bible from cover to cover and you will not find a single verse, which cancels or amends the Sabbath commandment. That is a fact. You will, instead, find many texts which call for the observance of Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, commonly called Saturday. Most Christians strive to adhere to nine of the Ten Commandments but reject the fourth one—is it not strange?

What and when is YHWH's Sabbath Day?

In view of the above facts, it is a mistake to refer to the Sabbath as the Jewish Sabbath, or that it is only to be observed by Jews. The Sabbath is YHWH's Sabbath; or, as the Scriptures put it: “**the Sabbath of the LORD thy God!**” Surely, it is kept by Israel and the Jews; but it is not for Israel alone, any more than the Ten Commandments are for the Jews alone. According to the fourth commandment, even ‘strangers’ (Gentiles) are expected to keep the Sabbath day. If they obey this royal command, Gentiles will also be greatly blessed. Notice the word ‘stranger’ in the following texts:

Exod 20:8-10: “*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy...in it thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that is within thy gates.*”

Isaiah 56:6-7: “*Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer...*”

Yes, the Sabbath belongs to the LORD and, like all the other nine commandments; He made it to be remembered and kept holy by all nations. In obedience to this commandment, the seventh day Sabbath was kept by all the great and holy personalities mentioned in the Bible:

- By all the Old Covenant Prophets of YHWH God of Israel.
- Yes, by the early Believers long after the death and resurrection of the Saviour.
- By all the early Apostles, including the Apostle Paul.
- By **Y'shua the Messiah**.
- And by **God (YHWH)** Himself.

Neither is there any evidence in the New Covenant to suggest that the Saviour or his Apostles changed the Ten Commandments and transferred the sanctity of the Sabbath from the seventh to the first day of the week. Instead, Y'shua kept his Father's commandments (John 15:10). If he hadn't done so, he would have been classified as '**a sinner!**' But we read that the Saviour kept the Sabbath day as it was meant to be kept, much to the irritation of the Scribes and Pharisees **who had burdened the day with many petty, man-made restrictions**. These the Master brushed aside. Commenting on the eternal nature of his Father's Law the Saviour said these words:

Matt 5:17-18: “*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled*”.

Moreover the Master advised his followers, who were mostly Jews at that time, to pray to YHWH that He might allow their followers to keep the Sabbath in the end times during the invasion and destruction of Jerusalem in the tribulation period by the Antichrist.

Matt 24:20: "**But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day**".

Pause and consider this text and see how pointless it would have been for the Saviour to have given this advice to his predominantly Jewish followers if the Sabbath commandment was going to be abolished at Calvary. The truth is, the Saviour had absolutely no intention whatsoever of doing away with or changing the Sabbath commandment. He had an extremely high regard for his Father's Law; which he was instrumental in giving to Israel in the first place. (James 4:12) In short, the true Sabbath day is still the seventh day of the week, the day commonly known as Saturday! Please take note that I am not attempting to promote any synagogue or denomination, but merely doing my best to tell the truth from the Scriptures.

This clear fact means that those who break the Sabbath commandment are guilty of sin, whether they realise it or not; for "...**sin is the transgression of the law**". (1 John 3:4).

What is YHWH's appointed time?

Stemming from the Sabbath commandment in the law of the Almighty are the seven annual Sabbaths of YHWH the God of Abraham, Isaac and Israel. Unlike the popular holidays of Christmas, Easter, Halloween, etc., which have absolutely no scriptural basis whatsoever, the Feasts of the Almighty are the sacred memorials of the Creator's mightiest acts in the Plan of Salvation; each and every one of them being an **appointed anniversary** of a distinct, decisive achievement in His plan. YHWH's Feasts are the **high days** in His Diary. He looks forward to them in much the same way as we would some special anniversary or event. At this moment in time, most of them point to realities that are still future. But all through eternity the redeemed host will look back at these days and will then, year by year, commemorate the mighty deeds the Most High and His Son performed for the salvation of the human race.

"What", you may well ask, "are the Almighty's Annual Sabbaths?" There are seven additional Sabbath's over and above the normal weekly Sabbath days. These Sabbaths can fall on any day of the week, depending on the calendar. These seven Sabbaths consist of six Feast days and one Fast day. I list them as follows:

- 1) The **First Day of Unleavened Bread**, which falls on 15th day of *Abib/Nisan*, the first month in the sacred calendar (during Passover (Hebrew: *Pasach*) – in March/April).
- 2) The **Last (7th) Day of Unleavened Bread**, which falls on 21st day of *Abib/Nisan*.
- 3) The **Feast of Weeks**, which occurs 50 days after the First Fruit offering (the Pentecost (Greek for "fifty") Feast (Hebrew: *Shavuot*) – in May/June).
- 4) The **Feast of Trumpets**, which falls on the 1st *Ethanim*, the 7th month (Hebrew: *Rosh HaShannah* – in September).
- 5) The **Fast of Atonement**, which falls on the 10th *Ethanim* (Hebrew: *Yom Kippur* – in October).
- 6) The **Feast of Tabernacles**, which falls on the 15th *Ethanim* (Hebrew: *Sukkoth* – in October).
- 7) The **Last Great Day (8th)**, which falls on the 22nd *Ethanim* (Hebrew: *Shemini Atzeret / Simchat Torah* – in October).

These are the seven annual **memorial Sabbaths** of the Almighty in which all peoples, Jew and Gentile alike, are commanded to observe. These days do not belong to any particular race or religion. They are not Jewish festivals. They are the Almighty's '**appointment times**' and all nations are required to keep them. The Most High refers to them as '**My Feasts, My Sabbaths**'. Why? Because it is YHWH's redemptive plan for man locked up in these seven feasts. They must be repeated year after year to burn into man's mind and heart with deep understanding. It is YHWH's plan locked up in the ages.

"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying, Speak unto the children of Israel, and say unto them, Concerning the feasts of the LORD, which ye shall proclaim to be holy convocations, even these are my feasts". (Lev 23:1-2)

For further information about these divinely appointed times, please see my product list at the end of this study – 7 Feasts of YHWH.

Are the Sun, Moon and Stars for us as Signs, and for Seasons, Days and Years?

The sun, moon and stars were originally created by the Almighty to draw universal attention to the spectacular deeds He planned to perform on the appointed Feast days, seasons and sabbatical years in the sacred calendar. This astonishing fact is mentioned in the very first chapter of the Bible. Gen 1:14 which says:

*"And God said, Let there be lights in the firmament of the heaen to divide the day from the night; and let them be for **signs**, and for **seasons**, and for days, and years:"*

According to Strong's Bible Dictionary:

- The Hebrew word "owth" (oth) translated "sign" in this verse means: a "signal, distinguishing mark, banner, remembrance, miraculous sign, omen, or warning".
- And the Hebrew word "mow`ed" (mo-ade) translated "seasons" in this verse means: "appointed place, appointed time, appointed meeting, sacred season, set feast or tent of meeting".

In other words, the sun and moon were set in the heavens to signal the **appointed sacred seasons, the set feasts, when Israel was to gather in worship at the Creator's tent of meeting**. Surely the sun and the moon determine the literal days, nights, seasons and years and they directly influence the climate. But the language of Gen 1:14 goes far beyond these natural events. It tells of the **spiritual reasons** why the sun and moon were created. They were "created", I repeat:

- To serve as celestial warning signs and omens to signal the **sacred seasons, feast days and years of the Almighty God!**
- They were placed in the sky by the Most High to alert the universe to His **appointed meeting times** when the human race is called to worship Him.

Several Bible prophecies confirm the message of Gen 1:14 by telling us that just before Y'shua HaMashiach's return to earth, there will be 'signs in the sun and the moon'. Consider these verses:

"The sun and the moon shall be darkened, and the stars shall withdraw their shining". (Joel 2:10)

"The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before the great and the terrible day of the LORD come. And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the LORD shall be delivered". (Joel 2:30-32)

"And it shall come to pass in that day, saith the LORD GOD, that I will cause the sun to go down at noon, and I will darken the earth in the clear day." (Amos 8:9)

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:" (Mat 24:29)

These predicted signs in the heavens are scheduled to happen **shortly before** Y'shua HaMashiach returns to earth—and happen they will. When they occur, they will provide unmistakable evidence that one of the Almighty's **appointed seasons** has begun and that the **end of this age** has arrived. World-shattering events will occur at that time and all mankind will then become aware of YHWH's requirements and His anger at the refusal of many to obey His law.

*"And said to the mountains and rocks, Fall on us, and hide us from the face of him that sitteth on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb: **For the great day of his wrath is come; and who shall be able to stand?**" (Rev 6:16-17)*

If you believe the message of Gen 1:14, then at each sacred festival you should be on the watch for celestial signs in the sun, moon and stars. Failure to keep the Almighty's appointments could mean that when those signs occur, as they surely will, the spiritual significance of the feasts and the prophecies to which they relate will be lost to you. Certainly you will marvel at those celestial signs, as all humanity will; but you will not realise their spiritual significance and will be completely oblivious to what they mean and, more importantly, what you are expected to do.

Note: Astrology is the study of the supposed influence of the stars on human affairs. A horoscope is an astrologer's forecast of future events, based on the position of stars and peoples' birthdays. The study of astrology and the daily reading of horoscopes are strongly condemned in the Scriptures. (Deut 4:19, 2 Kings 23:5) The signs in the sun, moon and stars mentioned in this section have nothing to do with the study of astrology or the reading of horoscopes. The celestial signs prophesied in the Scriptures will occur at the Almighty's appointed time. When they appear, it will be too late to rush about improving your understanding of YHWH's Word. That must be done now, before it is too late. If, on the other hand, you are a believer, then do not be terrified when those signs appear; because they spell out Good News to the obedient.

"Thus saith the LORD, Learn not the way of the heathen, and be not dismayed at the signs of heaven; for the heathen are dismayed at them". (Jer 10:2)

What and when is a Hebrew Year of Jubilee?

- Why does YHWH divide up His time into cycles of seven?
- What benefits did Israel receive during YHWH's bonus Year of Jubilee?
- How did YHWH protect His people and His land, Israel?
- Why was the Year of Jubilee a time for rejoicing?
- What is the message YHWH is conveying to His people through the Jubilee?

There are very few Christians or Jews who have not heard about "The Year of Jubilee". The word "jubilee" has become synonymous with something very good, something that is worth celebrating. In fact, modern dictionaries give as synonyms for jubilee: celebration, anniversary, season of rejoicing, festival. A 50th anniversary is called a Golden Jubilee.

Nevertheless, most people don't know exactly what the biblical "Year of Jubilee" is all about and what it means to you and me today. Part of the reason for a lack of understanding is that very little is mentioned in the Bible about the Year of Jubilee or its subsequent practice in the life of Israel. So, before we can determine if this biblical precept has any meaning for us today, let's look together at the great blessing YHWH provided for His people and His land, Israel.

YHWH's Sabbatical - His Cycle of Sevens

The term "sabbatical", defined in the modern dictionary as "a year or half-year of absence for study, rest or travel, given every seven years to teachers in some colleges and universities" is an ancient concept that comes right out of the pages of the Bible.

YHWH divides His time into cycles of seven days (one week) and seven years. From YHWH's first rest on the seventh day of creation, to Jacob's working seven years each for his wives, to Daniel's prophetic "weeks", we can see this theme of seven throughout the Bible. Every seven days is a Sabbath. The biblical holiday seven weeks and a day (50th day) after Passover is *Shavuot* or Pentecost. There are seven biblical feasts in the year (Lev 23), and the seventh Hebrew month, *Ethanim (Tishri)*, is a very sacred month. Seven is the number of perfection and completion, a connotation derived from its use in Scripture.

The Sabbath Day (*Shabbat*):

As said earlier, the seventh day of each week is the Sabbath which YHWH set aside as a day of rest and communion with Him (Exod 20:8-11). Actually, even before this precept was given in the Law of Moses, we read that back in the days of the Garden of Eden, "*on the seventh day He (God) rested from all His work. And God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it He rested from all the work of creating that He had done*" (Gen 2:2-3).

The Sabbatical Year (*Shmitta*):

Next, we find YHWH instituting the sabbatical year, which occurs every seventh year. More than just a year off for college professors, Lev 25:1-7 tells us that the seventh year was a special year for the people and land of Israel. Just as the people were to work six days and then rest on the Sabbath, so the land on which they lived was to be worked for six years (verse 3) and then allowed to rest in the seventh year.

In Hebrew, this sabbatical year is known as *shmitta*. During this year, there is no sowing of the fields, no pruning, reaping or harvesting. Any spontaneous yield of the land could be consumed for food by anyone (not just the landowner); but there was to be no organised harvest and no selling of the produce to others (verses 6-7). Thus, the sabbatical year brought a cessation of all normal agricultural activity, and the landowner and the landless were on an equal footing in living off the land.

In the days of the Bible, as well as in Israel today, we see *shmitta* practiced by those who honour the Bible as the living Word of YHWH. YHWH promised that if they followed His decree on this matter, He would cause the land to yield a double portion in the sixth year to carry them over during the sabbatical year.

Let's think about this for a minute...YHWH was literally shutting down all agricultural activity for an entire year. This meant Israel would have to live for that period without any visible means of support. They would have to put their lives completely in YHWH's hands, trusting Him for all their supplies. Of course, this would

require a lot of faith. Like us, I am sure the Israelites wondered, "What are we going to do for food this year? How will we feed our families and our children? What will the livestock eat? Am I supposed to just sit idly by and watch those around me go hungry?" Well, the answer lay in the fact that YHWH did provide, and the people of Israel learned a very important lesson: YHWH always provides for those who trust and obey Him.

During the *shmitta* year, there was another benefit which is not practiced today. This was the canceling of all debts and the freeing of slaves (Deut 15:1-18). If a person fell into debt and was unable to complete loan payments within six years, their debts were to be released and forgiven during the seventh year. Certainly, the forgiveness of debt was not an excuse to default on one's loans, which is dishonorable. But if circumstances left you in difficulties that you could not avoid, YHWH gave you another chance.

During both the Sabbatical and Jubilee years, this kind of agricultural activity was not permitted. There was no sowing of the fields, no pruning, reaping or harvesting. Everyone, landowner and poor beggar alike, was allowed to eat of the spontaneous increase of the fields.

Because the land lay unplanted and there was no income, taxes were also exempted during this sabbatical year.

From both the Sabbath day and sabbatical year (*shmitta*) precept, we can see that YHWH set aside one-seventh of all time, both in days and years, for rest and restoration for His people and His land.

The Year of Jubilee (Yovel)

Something special happened after Israel completed "seven cycles" of "seven years" (49 years). A special bonus year, the 50th year, was introduced by YHWH: "The Year of Jubilee".

The Hebrew word translated "jubilee" is *yovel*, whose original meaning is "ram" or "ram's horn" and commemorates the *shofar* blown to announce the beginning of the Jubilee year. *Yovel* became associated with the Latin term, "jubilum" (from jubilaire - to rejoice, to exalt) and so entered our Bible as "jubilee". In all other years, the *shofar* is blown on the 1st of the Hebrew month of *Tishri* on the feast of *Rosh HaShanah* - New Year's Day. But for the Jubilee year, the *shofar* was blown on the 10th of *Tishri*, which is *Yom Kippur* - The Day of Atonement (Lev 25:9). We will see how significant this is as we read on.

And what did the sounding of the *shofar* proclaim in this special year? The principal message of the Jubilee year is freedom and release, "*proclaiming liberty throughout the land*" (Lev 25:10).

Josephus, a Jewish historian of the first century, stated that "Jubilee means freedom". The Hebrew word for liberty is *deror* which comes from a root word which means "to live"—not just exist, but to live a full and fulfilled life. To proclaim this "throughout the land" is only possible by canceling oppression and restoring the freedom and heritage of the people.

The three main purposes of the Jubilee year were:

- 1) The return of the land to its original owners.
- 2) Rest for the land.
- 3) The freeing of all Hebrew slaves to return to their families and the family property.

It was a time set aside by YHWH when justice would be restored. Those that had been depressed into poverty for any reason were commanded to return home to their family and repossess their inheritance. It was thus a year of new beginnings, an economic recovery for everyone in the land. Jubilee was a time in which YHWH would set right what had gone wrong throughout the previous years.

There was also a spiritual significance to the Jubilee cancellation of debt and freeing of slaves at the sounding of the trumpet on the Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement was the one day in the year when the High Priest entered the "Holy of Holies" to make the sacrificial atonement for the sins of the people. During the Year of Jubilee, those who had lost their physical liberty or property were to have them restored on the same day that YHWH forgave the spiritual debts of His people and restored them to fellowship with Himself. In the year of Jubilee, the sounding of the *shofar* must have been like sweet music in the ears of the hearers. What rejoicing must have taken place. At that moment when the high priest was making atonement and the *shofar* was sounded, every bondservant was set free. Every person who had lost property regained it. Families were reunited. Homes were restored. Yes, it was a time of liberty, freedom and deliverance: a celebration of celebrations!

Jewish sources reflect that the Year of Jubilee was observed in the land of Israel during the First Temple period until exile from the land in 586 B.C. Maimonides writes that though the Jubilee year was not observed during the Second Temple Period, they were nevertheless counted by the people so as to observe the sabbatical (*shmitta*) year.

That is also the situation today in Israel where the *shmitta* year is counted and observed, but not the Jubilee. This is because the date of the Year of Jubilee was lost since the Second Temple period, and there is much debate as to when it is. Meanwhile, 1998 was Israel's 50th anniversary since the founding of the modern state in 1948. While it is not a biblical jubilee, it is certainly a chronological jubilee and a time of great celebration.

"The Land Is Mine"

On every 50 year Jubilee, all property (except in walled cities) was returned to its original owners. The Land of Israel belongs to YHWH, and the Jubilee year was a reminder to everyone that He owned it. In Lev 25:23, YHWH says, "*The land must not be sold permanently, because the land is Mine and you are but aliens and My tenants*". YHWH did not want anyone to amass a vast portion of land and think they were the masters of YHWH's land. The law also adjusted the distribution of wealth in the various classes of the community, helping to equalise society as much as possible. The rich and the powerful in society tend to exploit the poor and the weak. So, the Year of Jubilee allowed the land allocated to each family to return to that family, no matter what their misfortune during the years prior to the Jubilee.

Even the land rested under YHWH's comprehensive justice system. During the year of Jubilee and on every seventh year, the land was not to be sown nor reaped. YHWH provided abundantly the year before these fallow years to supply His people through the rest period.

If the Jubilee provisions concerning land were respected, it was impossible to sell a piece of land permanently. The selling of land was not YHWH's ideal. However, sometimes it was necessary. Since YHWH expected that it would be returned in the Jubilee year, its price was to be calculated fairly for all concerned (Lev 25:14-17). The valuation was based on the number of years since the last Jubilee year, and the number of harvests until the next Jubilee. What one was really selling was not the land, but the value of the number of crops until the next Jubilee. Thus, it was really a limited lease on the land paid in full, in advance. This way, when the land reverted to its original owner, it was truly a just deal for all parties.

"Do Not Sow, and Do Not Reap"

During the Year of Jubilee, YHWH told His people not to sow seed or reap, but let the land rest. As during the preceding sabbatical (*shmitta*) year, the land was to enjoy a second consecutive year of rest (Lev 25:11-12). This was also a blessing of rest for one's animals.

Since the land would lie unplanted for two years in a row, you might wonder how the people were to eat. YHWH made a promise to the people that if they obeyed His law to the letter, He would provide a triple portion in the 48th year to carry them over the two years of fallow. He would also give them a life of safety, protecting them from war (Lev 25:18-22).

This was not a time for planting or harvesting. YHWH was making the provision. Instead, it was a time of rejoicing in YHWH. It was like having a year of *Shabbats* to bask in YHWH's presence and blessing.

I am sure it was hard to trust YHWH for two years in a row. Yet the Israelites would have remembered that there had been seven cycles of sabbatical years when YHWH did provide. Now, Jubilee took a little more faith, and it was probably a bit frightening to believe that YHWH would really come through. For those who trusted YHWH, the reward was sweet. But, they had to believe YHWH and act upon His Word to claim the blessings of Jubilee. There is a message in this for us: no matter what the circumstances look like in the natural, if we trust and obey YHWH and act upon His Word found in the Bible, He will provide for us and meet our needs.

Nevertheless, I am sure there were those who did not have the faith and trust for YHWH's provision. They probably set about to sow and reap, and just do it themselves. Their harvests were probably diseased and bore little fruit and these farmers fell deeper into debt, having to borrow from their neighbours. Remember the Israelites who did not trust YHWH to provide the manna each day? Just as YHWH said, that which they stored, showing their lack of trust in YHWH's ability to provide for each new day, grew worms overnight.

When we trust in YHWH, He never fails us. We only have to trust and obey and He will deliver us and provide for us. He so much wanted His people to learn this lesson and receive the blessing of a righteous relationship with Him.

"They Must Not Be Sold As Slaves"

Though slavery was permitted under the Mosaic Law with certain restrictions, even Gentile slaves were given some protection and rights not given to slaves elsewhere in the world. All slaves were given rest on the Sabbath (Exod 20:10; Deut 5:14), and YHWH prohibited any mistreatment of slaves (Exod 21:20-21; Deut 23:15-16).

As YHWH's servants, the Israelites were not to be enslaved to any other master. As with the land, YHWH says of His covenant people, "*the Israelites belong to Me as servants*" (Lev 25:55). Yet, many Israelites fell into debt: whether through mismanagement, disobedience, illness, laziness or some kind of disaster that prevented them from prospering. Since there were no provisions for bankruptcy, such a person would have no other recourse than to sell off his assets, his farm and ultimately sell his family and himself into slavery. How tragic for the family that found themselves in such circumstances. However, under biblical law, slavery for Israelites within Israel was not intended to be a permanent arrangement, although one could choose to remain in the household of his master.

Fortunately for the Hebrew slave, this arrangement was more humane than the 19th century debtor's prisons. Hebrew slaves had broader rights than Gentile slaves. The power of a master over his Hebrew slave was much more restricted (Lev 25:39-43). This is in keeping with the Hebrew slave's status as a servant of YHWH, first and foremost.

A Hebrew slave was to be treated as a hired worker rather than as a slave. Both he and his children who were born in the master's household were to be released in the Year of Jubilee. They were not to be sold as slaves to others. Hebrew slaves had the option of release during each sabbatical (*shmitta*) year, and received certain release during the Year of Jubilee. Gentile slaves were not accorded these rights, and thus were slaves for life and could even be willed as inherited property (Lev 25:44-46).

Whether purchased by a fellow Israelite or a resident alien, a Hebrew slave could be redeemed by laws similar to the redemption of property; i.e., his redemption price was proportional, based on the number of years left until the next Jubilee. Ideally, a relative would free him by paying off the debt which forced him into slavery in the first place; or if he prospered, he could pay for his own freedom.

There was a spiritual significance to the Jubilee cancellation of debt and the freeing of slaves when the trumpet sounded on the Day of Atonement.

If neither of these options were possible, then came the Year of Jubilee. When the *shofar* sounded that year, every debt was wiped out and all property and possessions reverted back to their original owners. This meant that the slave was freed; he received his land back and was reunited with his family. What a day to thank YHWH, for His mercies abound forever.

He Is Our Jubilee

Hallelujah, the Year of Jubilee really was a time of rejoicing for YHWH's release, freedom and liberty. It was YHWH's purpose to give His people and His land, Israel, an opportunity to start over and have a second chance. How compassionate of YHWH to do this. Many of us would certainly like to have a second chance to start over, even if it were only once every fifty years. In spiritual terms, however, we don't have to wait for a Year of Jubilee to receive our release. We can have it today!

Because evil and sin plague each of our lives, we all need a second chance to right the wrongs of life - especially those we have perpetrated against YHWH and others. Haven't you ever wished you could turn the clock back and relive parts of your life and do it differently, to do it YHWH's way? Well, YHWH is a God of second chances and has given us the provision for this. He redeems and releases us into a new life. The very moment we confess our inadequacy and express our need of Him, we are forgiven and, with His help, begin to see our past mistakes corrected. He is waiting for us to invite Him to come into our lives so He can give us the redemption and release we need, including the forgiveness we need in our heart towards others who have wronged us.

For the believer, this redemption comes through *Y'shua* who came as the Messiah of Israel and shed His blood for our sins. Just as the Israelites received their Jubilee on the Day of Atonement when YHWH forgave their sins and restored them to fellowship with Himself, we can receive our Jubilee of release from our

shortcomings and sin by recognising the atonement and forgiveness provided for us at the crucifixion stake. Just like the Israelite debtor whose debt was forgiven in the sabbatical year, YHWH has made a way to pay the price for our spiritual debts that we cannot pay ourselves.

There is a connection between the message of Jubilee and the coming of the Messiah. Y'shua announced His Messiahship in Luke 4:14-22, when He opened the *Torah* scroll in the synagogue one Sabbath in Nazareth and read Isaiah 61:1-2, a well-understood messianic passage:

"The Spirit of the Lord is on Me, because He has anointed Me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent Me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to release the oppressed, to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor". Y'shua then said, "**Today this Scripture is fulfilled in your hearing**".

During Y'shua's ministry, He demonstrated the messianic attributes promised in this passage, which are the same characteristics of the Year of Jubilee, and more. He came to "preach good news (the Gospel) to the poor - proclaim freedom for the prisoners - release to the oppressed (those who are downtrodden, bruised, crushed and broken down by calamity) - and the year of the Lord's favor".

Y'shua understood this passage as referring to Himself, and He joined together the two concepts of the coming of Messiah and Jubilee. By proclaiming "*the year of the Lord's favor*", Y'shua was proclaiming the Jubilee; that is, the year which most pleases YHWH because it is the year of release for all people. Y'shua understood that both had been fulfilled in His own coming.

Y'shua is our Jubilee. We don't have to wait 50 years to find our freedom, release, restoration, and redemption. The year of YHWH's favour is now, if we want to accept it. Through Messiah Y'shua, a perpetual Jubilee has been provided and this blessing can become a pattern of daily life and practice for those who believe; not only receiving this Jubilee for ourselves, but by being a part of expressing YHWH's Jubilee to others.

YHWH has made the first move and provided the way. All we have to do is call upon Him through prayer, confess our sin and need of YHWH's Jubilee (release) in our lives, and then accept His redemption and the benefits YHWH releases in all areas of our life. We need to believe YHWH and step out and claim it.

Summary

- 1) Though there are many man-made calendars in existence today, the one that has gained the attention of the world is the **Gregorian Calendar**. It is the one used in every office of the civilised world.
- 2) The oldest calendar, however, is the **Sacred Calendar of the God of Israel**. It was in existence before Noah's flood—before the Babylonian, Egyptian, Persian, Grecian and Roman empires came on the scene.
- 3) There are certain **Sabbaths** mentioned in the sacred calendar. They belong to **Yahweh** the Almighty God of Israel. They are not Jewish feasts, they are the feasts of YHWH thy God.
- 4) The **Feasts of YHWH are Memorials of Salvation**; each and every one being a reminder of some great act in the programme of salvation.
- 5) **These weekly and annual Sabbaths were all kept holy by the Saviour**, the Apostles (including Paul) and the early church. They should be kept by all true believers in YHWH God of the Bible.
- 6) **Pagan festivals** were introduced into the church in the 2nd, 3rd and 4th centuries when multitudes of semi-converted Gentiles began to profess "Christ". The festivals of **Christmas, Ash Wednesday, Easter, Hallowe'en** and **Sunday** worship are all adopted from paganism. These have no Scriptural basis whatsoever.
- 7) The **Sabbaths of YHWH constitute His Sign, His signature** on the human mind.
- 8) **Pagan festivals constitute the Mark of the Beast**, the Signature of Satan. In an end-time spiritual election, all mankind will be required to choose between YHWH's Sign and the Beast's Mark.
- 9) **The Time prophecies of Daniel and Revelation** slot into periods of time between the Feast Days in a correct calendar.
- 10) The Sabbaths of the Almighty are rest days on which **holy convocations** (commanded assemblies) are held. Failure to keep the Sabbaths of YHWH is a dangerous and sinful thing. The only work permitted is the preparation of food for the Feasts and life-saving activity. No **servile work** (physical labour and business activity) is allowed.

CHAPTER 9

INTRODUCTION TO THE GOSPEL AS SEEN BY MATTHEW

For as long as the four Gospels of the New Testament have been collected together, the Gospel of Matthew has been the first Gospel. Even before there was a New Testament, there was a collection of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John. That was usually the order and Matthew was always first. There have been several explanations as to why. The most common explanation throughout church history was simply that Matthew was the first Gospel to be written. This view is no longer widely accepted as true. It is more likely that Matthew appeared first in the collection of the Gospels for two reasons.

First is that Matthew is structured as a **teaching** Gospel. Matthew presents the great blocks of teaching by Y'shua collected and organised in a way that could be easily learned and remembered, more so than the other three Gospels.

Second, and most important once the New Testament was formed, Matthew provides a **bridge** from the Old Testament to the New Testament.

Matthew has always exerted great influence in the Christian church as the first Gospel in the New Testament. Much of the traditional view of Christ and his ethical teachings have come from Matthew's presentation of Y'shua and his message. The story of the wise men who visited Y'shua at his birth is found only in Matthew. The Sermon on the Mount is a collection of teaching in Matthew 5-7. The Great Commission forms the climax of this Gospel. The only Gospel to use the word "church" is Matthew, and twice the power of binding interpretation is given in this Gospel. In the history of the medieval church, Matthew was especially important; for it provided the scriptural foundation for those who taught the alleged supremacy of the pope as Peter's successor as bishop of the church at Rome. In the area of Y'shua's teaching, no other Gospel has been as influential as Matthew has.

With the rise of modern understandings of history in the last two hundred years, certain questions have become important for the study of biblical books. These questions include: Who wrote the book? When? Where? Why? What kind of literature is the writing? Knowing the answers to these questions can increase our understanding and appreciation of the message of each book of the Bible. Unfortunately the answers to such questions are not always clear or easy to discover. Scholars often disagree about the answers and some are ready to give up the search. However, what we can learn will be helpful.

WHO WROTE MATTHEW?

As far as we know, the original copy of Matthew had no indication of who the author was. Sometime during the second century A.D. the ascription, "According to Matthew", began to appear at the beginning of the Gospel. However, nothing in the body of the Gospel tells us who the author was.

The earliest reported claim that Matthew was an author was that of Papias, an early church leader who died around A.D. 130. We do not have the writings of Papias, but the church leader Eusebius from the fourth century quotes Papias. This quotation states that Matthew compiled the sayings in the Hebrew dialect and everyone translated them as best they could. Whether the "sayings" Papias was talking about were the Gospel of Matthew as we now know it is debated. Some scholars believe that Papias' "sayings" were a collection of teaching by Y'shua that was used by the author of the first Gospel.

WHEN WAS MATTHEW WRITTEN?

Two centuries ago, when people began asking about the date biblical books were written, the question often had implications about the reliability of the information in the book. People assumed that the closer to Y'shua's own life that a Gospel was written the more likely it was to be historically accurate. The longer the time between Y'shua's life and the Gospel, the less accurate the story would be. With such thinking, people who argued that Matthew was written in A.D. 90, say, were seen as attacking the reliability of Matthew's portrait of Y'shua by those who thought Matthew was written in A.D. 50.

Such a concern no longer dominates the discussion about the date of the Gospels. We now recognise that an author writing in A.D. 90 who had correct information could easily be "more correct" than an author writing in A.D. 50 who had poor information or who wanted to distort the picture of Y'shua. As a result, the effort to establish the date of Matthew is now built on historical evidence, rather than on theological bias.

The most common view of the date of the writing of Matthew is that it was written between A.D. 75 and 90. This conclusion is based on the evidence of interest in Jewish issues in the Gospel. There are many aspects of Matthew that indicate it was written in the context of Jewish people, mentioned below. It appears that the author wants to address Jewish believers in Christ who were finding it hard to maintain their faith in Christ and their own Jewishness. That would not have been a problem early in Christian history. Up until at least A.D. 60 or 65, the majority of Christians were Jews rather than Gentiles and all the leaders of the church were Jewish. "Persecution" of Christians by Jews was a matter of one group of Jews persecuting another group of Jews (which happened frequently in that period of history). At least four major religious groups co-existed in Judaism at that time. Sadducees, Pharisees, Essenes, and Nazarenes (as the Jewish followers of Y'shua were called) all considered themselves to be the true Jews, but they to an extent tolerated the existence of the other groups.

In A.D. 66, Jewish revolutionaries in Galilee revolted against the Roman Empire. The war spread throughout Palestine. The evidence is not clear, but it appears that the [Jewish] followers of Y'shua in Palestine refused to join the uprising against Rome and that they moved out of Jerusalem and Judea to an area east or northeast of Palestine. By A.D. 70, Jerusalem had been burned to the ground and the Temple had been totally destroyed. The Roman Empire nearly destroyed Judaism as it had been known. The only survivors in terms of religion were the remnants of the Pharisees and the Jewish followers of Y'shua.

Banned from Jerusalem by the Romans, the remaining Pharisees moved to Galilee to rebuild Judaism. These Pharisees concluded that the lack of Jewish unity before the war had caused their problems. They determined to rebuild Judaism without the diversity of religious views that had existed before. Since the followers of Y'shua had not supported the war and since that group had accepted so many Gentiles into it that they (the Gentiles) were fast becoming the majority, the Pharisees decided to exclude "Nazarenes" from their synagogues.

They used a variety of methods to accomplish this goal. The most notorious was a re-writing of the synagogue worship liturgy to include a curse on the heretics (which meant the followers of Y'shua). Obviously this turn of events between A.D. 70 and 90 made it increasingly difficult to remain both a Jew and a follower of Y'shua. There was pressure on Jewish believers in Christ to abandon their faith in Him. It is the match between the historical developments in Judaism in A.D. 70 to 90 and the concern of Matthew to show the Jewish connections to Y'shua that lead most New Testament scholars to date Matthew between A.D. 75 and 90.

There is also a minority of scholars who argue that Matthew was written in the 60's (usually they opt for the early 60's). Recently a small portion of a manuscript has been discovered that two scholars studying it claim to be a fragment of Matthew's Gospel. They also claim that it can be dated in the A.D. 50's. There is presently considerable debate in the community of New Testament scholars as to whether the methods used by these two were valid methods and whether their conclusions were correct. Should further investigation support their conclusions, the argument presented above could not be true and another explanation for the picture Matthew presents of his readers would need to be developed.

The debate about the date of Matthew is not a debate over the historical reliability of the Gospel. It is an effort to best understand the circumstances in the early church that this Gospel addressed. The better we understand those circumstances, the better we will understand the logic of the Book, and the better we will be able to hear and apply its message to our own circumstances.

WHERE WAS MATTHEW WRITTEN?

The discussion about the place where Matthew was written is much more subdued than that about authorship and date. For one thing, no one has questioned the spirituality of another based on that person's view of the place where Matthew was written. Such questions have arisen over interpretations of authorship and date. More importantly, there is less evidence internally (within the book itself where the date evidence arises) or externally (outside the book as in Papias' comments) about the place of writing.

It is generally assumed that Matthew was writing for people who lived near where he wrote. Because the "Nazarenes" who fled Jerusalem and Judea as the Jewish war broke out moved northeast into Syria; and because Antioch in Syria was an early center of Jewish Christian faith, Syria is the most commonly suggested place for the writing (and audience) of Matthew. Some scholars argue for Antioch specifically, but most feel "somewhere" in Syria is as precise as we can ever determine. There have been scholars who argued that Alexandria in Egypt was the place of the writing of Matthew, but this view has never been widely accepted.

The lack of clear evidence about the place of writing is disappointing. However, as is the case with the uncertainty about authorship, there is plenty of material that we do know about this Gospel to keep us occupied with serious study. We will have to do so without certainty about the place of writing.

WHY WAS MATTHEW WRITTEN?

The question of the kind of literature and the structure of Matthew has led to several understandings of the Gospel's purpose. Many have argued that Matthew was written to supply lectionary readings about Y'shua's life and teachings for the worship services of Jewish followers of Christ. The carefully organised paragraphs of Matthew and a pattern that fits the Jewish festivals provide the support for this view.

Also popular is the view that Matthew was written to provide a "proceeding by question and answer" manual. This way of describing Matthew as a discipleship teaching manual is based on the emphasis on teaching and the large blocks of the teachings of Y'shua.

The most common view is that Matthew was written **to provide correctives to a church in danger of loosing either its Jewishness or its connection to Christ**. Problems with false prophets with how to view the law and with hypocrisy are seen as the reason Matthew wrote. Matthew was written to a church that was struggling to find and maintain its Hebraic roots' identity.

WHO WAS MATTHEW?

Matthew was the son of *Alphæus*, as we learn from Luke, who also calls him *Levi* (Luke 5:27-29). He calls himself "*Matthew the publican*", refusing to conceal in his own history the despised calling that had engaged him before he entered the service of Christ. He was a Jew, but had so far lost the national feeling that he was a collector of the hateful Roman tribute at Capernaum, and was sitting at the receipt of custom when called by our Lord to leave all and to follow him. His history of the Saviour shows, however, that he was more dominated by Jewish ideas than the writers of the other three Gospels.

Of the life of Matthew (after the death of the Saviour) we have no information; for no reliance can be placed upon the whereabouts concerning his later history.

WAS MATTHEW WRITTEN MORE UPON A JEWISH VIEW OF MATTERS?

The Gospel of Matthew shows the methodical habits of a businessman, for of all the writers he is most systematic in his arrangement. He gives by far the fullest accounts of the Sermon on the Mount, the charge to the Apostles (Matt 10), the Discourse on Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit, the Arraignment of the Scribes and Pharisees, of the Parables, and of the Prophecies concerning the Overthrow of the Jewish State.

It has always been held that Matthew wrote especially for Jewish Christians. It is therefore supposed that he wrote first either in the common language of Judea at that time (Aramaic) which was spoken by the Saviour and his Apostles; or else in the pure Hebrew, which was then generally understood. Whether written originally in Hebrew or not, it can hardly be doubted that Matthew wrote for Jewish readers. He takes for granted a familiarity with Jewish customs, laws, and localities to a far greater extent than the other writers do.

The whole narrative prefaces more upon a Jewish view of matters, and is concerned more to establish that point, which to a Jewish convert would be most important; namely, *that Y'shua is the Messiah prophesied in the Old Testament*. Also the commencement of his genealogy from Abraham and David and the frequent notice of the necessity of this or that event happening, *because it was foretold by the prophets*.

IS MATTHEW A JEWISH GOSPEL?

It is generally agreed that Matthew's Gospel is the most Jewish of all the Gospels. In Matthew, Y'shua insists that he has been "*sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matt 15:24), and commands his disciples to "*go nowhere among the Gentiles... but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (10:5). Matthew makes frequent and explicit appeal to the Old Testament as he tells the story of Y'shua more than the other evangelists. In the first two chapters alone, he quotes from the Jewish Scriptures on five occasions. In the case of four of these quotations, he introduces them with the formula, "*This was to fulfil what had been spoken through the prophet...*" or a variation of that formula.

There are ten occurrences of these fulfilment quotations throughout the Gospel, suggesting that it was a priority for Matthew to establish that *Y'shua* was the fulfilment of the promises contained in the Jewish Scriptures. The Jewishness of this Gospel is also evident in its concern to establish the relationship between *Y'shua* and the Jewish Law. Matthew insists that *Y'shua*, not the Law, is the authentic interpreter of God's will. Closely related to this is the Gospel's emphasis on the relationship between *Y'shua* and the Jewish guardians of the law. The conflict between *Y'shua* and the Jewish authorities is more prominent in Matthew's Gospel than in Mark. *Y'shua* regards the leaders of the Jewish people here with much more hostility than in the other Gospels. It is only in Matthew that *Y'shua* says to the leaders: "*Therefore, I tell you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you and given to a people that produces the fruits of the kingdom*" (Matt 21:43). This anti-Jewish orientation is itself part of the Jewishness of the Gospel. It indicates that, for the evangelist, the Jewish question was important.

TO WHOM ARE THE VARIOUS GOSPELS AIMED?

The whole world was populated from Noah's three sons—Shem, Ham and Japhet. These are the three main population groups that descended from Noah: the Semitic people (Middle East), Hametic people (Northern Africa) and Japhetic people (Northern countries – Europe and Russia).

Matthew is aimed at the Semitic people as confirmed by the fact that there are about sixty references to the Hebrew prophecies and about forty quotations from the Old Testament.

Mark is the Gospel of *Y'shua*, the tireless Servant of YHWH and man Whose Life is crowded with benevolent deeds in the practical nature of the Hamitic mind. The keyword, "*straightway*", indicating immediate action, repeated throughout the Book reflects the practical nature of its intended readership, Ham. It contains few references to Old Testament prophecy but ample explanation of Hebrew words and customs.

Luke is clearly aimed at the Greek or Japhetic mind. This is inferred from the fact that the writer is at pains to explain Hebrew customs, and sometimes substitutes Greek names for Hebrew. Luke has clearly written for the Gentiles, so in his Gospel the genealogy quite properly goes back to Adam.

DO CHRISTIANS MISINTERPRET MATTHEW'S GOSPEL AND JUDAISM?

The issue of Matthew's Gospel and Judaism is a complex one, and the picture that emerges is ambiguous and not easy to interpret. In the context of Jewish-Christian dialogue, the basic question is whether or not Matthew's Gospel is itself anti-Semitic. Whether or not such anti-Semitism exists in the text of the Gospel, it is undeniable that Matthew has been interpreted in many Christian quarters in an anti-Semitic way. Sometimes such interpretations have been unconscious—as when Christians assume that 'Pharisee' is synonymous with self-righteousness and hypocrisy.

WHAT ARE THE PRO-JEWISH FEATURES OF MATTHEW'S GOSPEL?

There are at least five features of the Gospel which present Jews and Judaism.

First, and most obviously, the major characters, the heroes of the Gospel, are Jews. The most important of these is *Y'shua*, but the same is true for the twelve apostles, particularly Peter who plays an important role in Matthew's story. The crowds are Jews; the other disciples, wider than just the twelve, are also Jews—including the Galilean women disciples. In other words, almost all the positive characters, with one or two notable exceptions, are Jewish people who never deny their Jewishness; indeed, it is part of their identity for Matthew.

Secondly, Matthew's theology is grounded in his interpretation of the Old Testament. These are the Scriptures of his community, and a major source of revelation. Matthew quotes regularly from the Old Testament. In the birth narratives, there are five quotations; mostly from the prophetic writings, with which Matthew punctuates his narrative of *Y'shua*'s birth and infancy (Matt 1:23; 2:6, 15, 18, 23). His interpretative principle is one of promise and fulfillment: that which is promised in the Scriptures is fulfilled in the advent of *Y'shua* of Nazareth. But behind this view is the belief that the Old Testament is the source-book for Christian teaching; it is the lens by which Matthew develops his teaching of *Y'shua* and the Church.

Thirdly, we find a strong focus on the concept of 'Israel' in Matthew's Gospel. For example, after a summary statement of *Y'shua*'s healings, the narrator tells us that the crowds "*praised the God of Israel*" (Matt 15:31). For Matthew, YHWH is fundamentally the YHWH of Israel. Similarly, in the great mission discourse, *Y'shua*'s and the apostles' mission is directed to "*the lost sheep of the house of Israel*"; the

disciples are not to enter into Gentile or Samaritan territory but to go only to Israel (Matt 10:5-6). Matthew's *Y'shua* uses the same phrase in response to the Canaanite woman: "*I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matt 15:24). Only in Matthew's Gospel do we find such a focus on the mission to Israel (John 4:1-42, 12:20-26).

But what about the Gentiles who are also important in Matthew's understanding of mission (Matt 28:16-20)? Certainly there is openness to Gentiles in Matthew's community, but we ought not to assume Matthew shares a Pauline perspective on Gentile Christians. The priority of mission for Matthew — the ordering of divine salvation — begins foundationally with Israel because YHWH is, first and foremost, the YHWH of Israel. The inclusion of the Gentiles does not deny the foundations on which the Good News is built; the Gentile entry into the kingdom of heaven, for Matthew — and we do not know on what terms they entered the community — is predicated on the rejection of Israel's leaders, a rejection that intensifies throughout the narrative of the Gospel.

Fourthly, there are significant elements of Jewish theology throughout Matthew's Gospel; that is, a theology that derives both from the Old Testament and from the Judaism of *Y'shua*'s and Matthew's day. Take, for example, Matthew's understanding of the *Torah* (revelation or instruction from God = Law). We know that the early Church had long and sometimes harsh debates on the place of *Torah* within Christian experience. But we find a direct positive view of the Law in Matthew in comparison from how, or better—the way denominations interpret Paul's sayings concerning the Law.

Matthew's community is clearly a community that keeps the Law. Indeed, Matthew believes it is only possible to be a Christian if one adheres, in both heart and lifestyle, to Law (5:1 7-20). In chapter 23, Matthew is not in the least critical of those who carefully tithe the smallest herbs from their garden; rather he is concerned with the corresponding neglect of those values — "*justice and mercy and faithfulness*" — that lie at the heart of the Law (Matt 23:23). Matthew admires a love of the Law that incorporates the small things as well as the great. So, for him, it is not a question of Law or letter versus spirit (2 Cor 3:6); but rather an authentic adherence to the Law that is internal and external: merciful and compassionate as well as scrupulous, sincere and heartfelt as well as ethical. On this, Matthew is probably reacting as much against Christian anti-nomianism (which believes the Law is irrelevant) as to forms of Jewish or Christian legalism. *Y'shua*, as Matthew presents him, is the definitive interpreter of the Law, giving the Law for Christians its true and abiding value.

The Jewish texture of Matthew's theology also becomes apparent in his picture of *Y'shua*. The basic titles for *Y'shua* are thoroughly Jewish in their understanding: Messiah, Son of God, King, Son of David. Matthew develops these and other titles in specifically Christian ways, but their setting is Jewish and can only be understood within a Jewish-Christian framework.

Another Jewish aspect of Matthew's theology is his use of apocalyptic imagery. Increasingly, New Testament scholarship perceives how central apocalyptic thinking is too much New Testament, if not biblical, theology. Matthew understands *Y'shua*, particularly his death and resurrection, as an apocalyptic event; signifying the turn of the ages. The Book of Daniel particularly influences this perspective. The Church sits on a volcano, caught in the tension between the old and the new, already experiencing the final sufferings, already waging the final battle, waiting in hope for the final triumph of YHWH at the end of history. Matthew's final discourse (chapters 24-25), which is an expansion of Mark's apocalyptic discourse (Mark 13), culminates in the apocalyptic vision of the glorious Son of Man on his throne (Dan 7:13) judging the nations of the world. Here, and elsewhere, Matthew intensifies the apocalyptic worldview already established in the Gospel of Mark.

Fifthly, there is evidence that Matthew used material in common with the Judaism of his own day—perhaps directly influenced by it, or perhaps sharing the same worldview. Texts such as Hosea 6:6, "*I desire mercy and not sacrifice*", are also found in Rabbinic writings (Matt 9:13). Also important in Matthew is the community's power of 'binding and loosing', a perplexing phrase that is also found in Rabbinic texts (Matt 16:19, 18:18). It is interesting that Matthew speaks in one place of sages, scribes and prophets (Matt 23:34)—three categories of leadership within the community also recognised in Rabbinic sources. What is revealed more and more is the coherence of thought between Matthew and his Rabbinic 'opponents'.

The evidence of the pro-Jewish dimensions of Matthew's Gospel suggests that 'Matthew' himself may have been a Christian scribe (Matt 13:52). It also suggests that Matthew's is a Jewish-Christian community. The openness to the Gentiles, and the obvious presence of Gentile Christians within the community, seems to entail no significant loss of Jewish identity. Despite its complexity, the perspective of this Gospel is fundamentally Jewish-Christian.

FOUR PORTRAITS BUT ONE Y'SHUA

So what portrait of *Y'shua* is obtained from Matthew's Gospel? He certainly is human. As the teacher of Israel, He repeats some of the great experiences of Israel itself. During His earthly life He leaves Egypt, goes into the wilderness, is tempted on a mountain, is baptised in the Jordan and crosses it. Matthew plays down some aspects of *Y'shua*'s humanity when compared to Mark. In Matthew, non-believers call *Y'shua* '**Rabbi**' or 'Teacher', a title with a human emphasis. But the disciples call him '**Lord**', the divine title. Peter confesses Him to be '**Son of God**' as well as '**Messiah**'. This is a lofty portrait, indeed.

Matthew has *Y'shua* as the manifest presence of YHWH in their midst and much more clearly divine.

CONCLUSION

Matthew's Gospel presents us with a complex situation. On the one hand, we find strongly pro-Jewish elements, essential to the identity of both Gospel and community. On the other hand, students **read into** the Scriptures of Matthew's Gospel anti-Jewish elements, particularly the extraordinary invective of Chapter 23, which is unfounded and in which I will explain in the exegesis. From Matthew's context: a small community, recently separated from the synagogue, living in fear of persecution, struggling to forge identity from a ruptured past, trying to hold to its Jewishness while affirming its Christian commitment and openness to Gentiles.

We need to become more sensitive to the historical and sociological context out of which this text and other New Testament texts have come. YHWH is not revealed in a vacuum but in the context of human experience and struggle. We need also to broaden our understanding of the Judaism of *Y'shua*'s and Matthew's day, and to realise how varied and changing the emerging picture is. We need to re-appropriate the Jewishness, both of *Y'shua* himself and of Matthew and Matthew's community: their reverence for *Torah*, their indebtedness to Judaism, and their hope and love for Israel. We need to be more sensitive to how we use the term '*Pharisee*', expunging it from our vocabulary of insults and understanding the limitations of its metaphorical use in Matthew's Gospel.

I would argue that in the final analysis, Matthew's Gospel is not anti-Semitic—certainly not as we would understand that term today. Sometimes we have interpreted Matthew in an anti-Semitic way, and continue to do so unthinkingly. But Matthew's Gospel is not racially prejudiced against Jews. Its anti-Jewish sentiments arise from a very specific context that cannot be universalised and ought not to be imitated. In the end, the message of the Gospel challenges any kind of prejudice, hatred or fear of others—even, perhaps especially, of those to whom our lives are most closely bound.

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CHAPTER 11

A 21ST CENTURY EXEGESIS ON THE HEBREW SCRIPTURES OF THE BOOK OF MATTHEW

Please take note that this exegesis is focused on the Gospel as seen by Matthew, but I will make use of the other three Gospels to explain some areas which are not mentioned in Matthew, or which is not clear in Matthew.

The **King James Version Bible** will be the primary text presented in this study for no other reason than it is popular and well-recognised. If another version is used, it will be cited.

In each section, the text of the chapter will be shown in full, followed by commentary on selected verses.

In some cases, there may be multiple verses that are not discussed. In others, a single verse (or even a single word) may merit a great deal of study.

SECTION I INTRODUCTION TO MESSIAH MATTHEW 1: —

Text:

- (1) "The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham.
(2) Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren;
(3) And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar; and Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram;
(4) And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon;
(5) And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab; and Booz begat Obed of Ruth; and Obed begat Jesse;
(6) And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias;
(7) And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa;
(8) And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias;
(9) And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias;
(10) And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias;
(11) And Josias begat Jechonias and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon:
(12) And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel;
(13) And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor;
(14) And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud;
(15) And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob;
(16) And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary, of whom was born Jesus, who is called Christ.
(17) So all the generations from Abraham to David are fourteen generations; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are fourteen generations; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are fourteen generations.
(18) Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
(19) Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily.
(20) But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.
(21) And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.
(22) Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,
(23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.
(24) Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:
(25) And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS".

1:1 Titles & Names

"The book of the genealogy of **Jesus Christ** (Messiah Y'shua), the **son of David**, the **son of Abraham**".

From the Hebrew Scriptures (*Tanach* – Old Covenant):

"The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until **Shiloh** (a description of the Messiah) come; and unto him shall the gathering of the people be". (Gen 49:10)

(5) "Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto **David** a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth.

(6) In his days Judah shall be saved, and Israel shall dwell safely: and this is his name whereby he shall be called, **THE LORD OUR RIGHTEOUSNESS**". (Jer 23:5-6)

"And in thy (Abraham's) seed shall all the nations of the earth be blessed; because thou hast obeyed my voice". (Gen 22:18)

From the Rabbinic Writings:

"UNTIL **SHILOH** COMETH; this alludes to the royal Messiah. AND UNTO HIM SHALL THE OBEDIENCE (YIKHATH) OF THE PEOPLE BE: he [the Messiah] will come and set on edge (maketh) the teeth of the nations of the world". (Midrash Rabbah, Genesis 98. 8)

"Behold the days come, saith the Lord, that I will raise up to **David** the **MESSIAH**, who is righteous, and he will reign a King, and shall prosper, and execute the judgement of truth and justice in the earth". (Targum Jonathan)

"And they shall worship before the Lord their God, and they shall hearken to **MESSIAH**, the Son Of David, their King, whom I will raise up unto them". (Targum Jonathan on Jeremiah 30:9, 21)

"The germ of the idea underlying the fuller conception of the messianic Age was in existence from the time of the founders of the race of Israel. In thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed, was the promise given both to **Abraham** and Isaac. It was a promise that reached far beyond the lifetime of each, farther than the limits of the temporal kingdom their descendants founded". (R. Samuel Singer, quoted in *The Pentateuch and Haftorahs*, ed. J.H. Hertz)

The Exegesis:

"The book of the genealogy of **Jesus Christ**". To be aware of one's past was essential for establishing confidence about the future. This is a verification of Y'shua's lineage. The *Mishnah* speaks of how important this is as it lists 10 classes of definite genealogy that came from Babylon (Kiddushin 4:1-6).

Since the beginning, the people of YHWH have stressed the importance of understanding their uniqueness, of knowing from whom they have come. Roots were always important for Israel's faith and were deeply imbedded in history. Thus knowledge of beginnings is central to biblical thought. To a Jewish person in the time of Y'shua, reading the Holy Scriptures was like reading a family album. This is one of the reasons why the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 was so traumatic. All of the genealogy records were stored there and were burnt up in that fire, losing all of that precious information forever.

The name "Jesus" is an English transliteration of the Greek *Iesous*, which is a transliteration of the Hebrew Y'shua. Greek has no "sh" sound and the custom at the time was for men's names to end in "-us" or "-os" or "-es" (i.e., "Apollos").

"Y'shua" is from the Hebrew Y'shuao. The Greek equivalent for that is Christos which is from the root chrio, meaning "anointed". The word *Christ*, which is now used as though it were a surname, is actually a title; derived as said from the Greek *Christos*, meaning **anointed** (*creamy* or *greased* would be more cognate as translations). This is tied to the Hebrew word **Mashiach** (Messiah)—also meaning anointed, having to do with being the "Anointed One", given YHWH's priestly and kingly authority. It should be noted that Cyrus (Koresh) in the book of Isaiah, was also called YHWH's "messiah"—as He was anointed to do YHWH's work in smiting Babylon. The Messiah's proper name, Y'shua (Yeshua as some write it), is a contraction of Y'hoshua (Joshua) meaning "YHVH (Elohim) saves"; having a similar root to "Yoshia", meaning "He (Elohim) will save". This is key to understanding verse 21 (see below).

That Y'shua was born Jewish is one of the least contested truths of the Bible. The very first verse of the New Covenant reads: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Messiah Y'shua), the **son of David**, the **son of Abraham**". Who were Abraham and David?

Abraham was the first Hebrew. YHWH changed his name from Abram (Gen 17:5). In Gen 14:13, he is called "Abram the Hebrew". So we can see that Y'shua is descended from "Abram the Hebrew". Even to this day, Jews are also called "Hebrews", and the language of the Jews is "Hebrew".

Abraham and his descendants were given the unconditional covenant of the Promised Land (Gen 17:8) and the covenant of circumcision (Gen 17:10). Abraham is the father of the Hebrews (Acts 3:12-25). Isaac was his son and Jacob was his grandson (Mat 1:2). Thus, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob are known as the Patriarchs, the fathers of the Jews.

Jacob's name was changed by YHWH to "Israel" (Gen 35:10-12) and he had twelve sons (Gen 35:23-26) from whom come the Twelve Tribes of Israel. All of their descendants are known collectively throughout the Bible as the Children of Israel (Exod 1:6-7).

One of those twelve sons was Judah (Gen 35:23, Matt 1:2) and it is from his name that we get the word 'Jew'. Although *Yehudah* (Judah) was only one of the twelve, by 700 B.C., because of the course of Israel's history, the word *Yehudee* (Jew) came to mean any person descended from Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Jer 34:9). So, for instance, *Saul haShaliach* (the Apostle Paul) was of the tribe of Benjamin (Rom 11:1); yet he self-identified as a Jew (Acts 22:3).

Nevertheless, according to the Bible, the Messiah must be descended from the tribe of Judah (Gen 49:10) as King David was (1Sam 17:12, 1Chron 28:4) and descended from King David himself (2 Sam 7:12-13, Isaiah 9:6-7, Jer 23:5-6). That is why the Messiah is called "Son of David" (also in Matt 21:9).

Y'shua is from the Tribe of Judah (Heb 7:14). His earthly father was descended from David (Matt 1:6-16) and His mother was as well ([Luke 1:27, 32-34, 3:23-31](#)).

The term, "Son of David", is therefore a Messianic title found throughout Jewish literature. Davidic references are found throughout the *Tenach* (Old Testament); i.e.: 2 Sam 7:12-13,16; Isaiah: 11:1; Jer 23:5-6; Zech 3:8; Ezek 37:24; Amos: 9:11-12; Psalms 89: 4-5, 36-37; 132:11.

Supplementary Information:

"Now to **Abraham** and his seed were the promises made. He saith not, And to seeds, as of many; but as of one, And to thy seed, which is Christ". (Gal 3:16)

"Of this man's (**David**) seed hath God according to his promise raised unto Israel a Saviour, Jesus:" (Act 13:23)

(8) "But unto the **Son** he saith, Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: **a sceptre of righteousness is the sceptre of thy kingdom.**

(9) Thou hast loved righteousness, and hated iniquity; therefore God, even thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows". (Heb 1:8-9)

(4) "And I wept much, because no man was found worthy to open and to read the book, neither to look thereon.

(5) And one of the elders saith unto me, Weep not: behold, the **Lion of the tribe of Juda, the Root of David**, hath prevailed to open the book, and to loose the seven seals thereof". (Rev 5:4-5)

"For it is **evident that our Lord sprang out of Juda**; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood". (Heb 7:14)

1:1-16 Genealogy

Only two of the four Gospel writers give us anything about the early life of Y'shua and that is Matthew and Luke. Mark and *Yochanan* (John) skip this whole segment. Now, while both Matthew and Luke record it, they give us a different perspective. Matthew tells the story of the birth of Y'shua and the circumstances surrounding it from Joseph's perspective, and so he also gives us Joseph's genealogy. *Miriam* (Mary) plays a very passive role in Matthew's account. Luke, however, tells us the story from *Miriam*'s perspective, and so it is *Miriam*'s genealogy that is given. Joseph then plays a very passive role in Luke's account.

Now we have two genealogies and there is a reason why we have the two. In the O.T., there were two main requirements for kingship. One was applicable to the Southern Kingdom of Judah with its capital in Jerusalem. This requirement for kingship is that the individual had to be of Davidic descent. No one that was not of Davidic descent could sit upon the throne in Israel. The second requirement for kingship was applicable to the Northern Kingdom of Israel, and that was Divine appointment or prophetic sanction. These two requirements together would ensure that only one individual would sit upon the throne and rule the nation of Israel.

One of the two main purposes of Matthew's genealogy is to show how that if Joseph was *Y'shua*'s father, then He could not be the King of Israel. Matthew traces His genealogy beginning with Abraham, then to David, and then on to David's son Solomon. He then continues to a man named Jechonias, which is very significant and explained further on.

But the genealogies presented in Matthew and Luke presents numerous difficulties that, unfortunately, are often "glossed over" (for lack of an explanation.) There are a number of issues that critics raise including: The "problem" with *Y'shua* not being Joseph's actual son.

The lineage in Luke's account passing through David's son Nathan, and not Solomon as Scripture said it had to (for the Kingship of Messiah).

The inclusion of a lineage through *Jehoiachin* (see #5's explanation below) being invalid, as he was cursed by YHWH.

The last segment of the "14 generations" in Matthew only having 13 generations listed.

Verse 11 stating that *Josiah* (*Josias*) begat *Jeconiah* (*Jechonias*), which he did not.

Regarding #1, According to Jewish law, *Y'shua* was Joseph's son if Joseph claimed him as such—which he did. Therefore, legitimately, Joseph's genealogy can be considered *Y'shua*'s. Note that Joseph is called "husband of Mary (*Miryam*)" regarding *Y'shua*'s relationship to him.

Regarding #2, many Christian commentaries try to get around the problem of the cursed *Jehoiachin* (see #3, below) by simply using Luke's genealogy as the one for the Messianic lineage. There are two serious problems with this:

First is the issue of the genealogy passing through Nathan rather than Solomon (in Luke's genealogy). This is unacceptable. The promise of Messiah being a "son of David" went specifically through Solomon and not Nathan.

Secondly, lineage was passed through the father's side in First Century Judaism (and prior). The idea of tracing Jewishness through the mother's side developed later. **Matthew's genealogy seems to be that of Joseph, and Luke's genealogy that of Miriam's** (Mary's). Matthew's is the one that "counts", however, as it passes through Solomon.

Regarding #3, the curse on *Jehoiachin* (*Zerubbabel*) was reversed by YHWH Himself in Haggai 2:20-23, when He chose *Zerubbabel* as His signet ring; thus re-establishing that lineage and giving validity to Matthew's genealogy.

Regarding #4, this is clearly an error in transcribing (more evidence of someone translating the book from an original Hebrew into the Greek). Fortunately, there is a version of Matthew that does not include this error and shows the (missing) 14th generation. **The "DuTillet" Hebrew Matthew** (available on the Internet at <http://www.nazarene.net/>) corrects "*Abiud begat Eliakim*", showing that Abiud actually begat *Av'her* (*Abner*), who in turn begat *Eliakim*.

Regarding #5, this is evidently another error due to translation (KJV incorrect, LITV, MKJV and NLT Bibles are correct), as 1 Chron 3:15-16 clearly says that *Josiah* (*Jonias*) was the father of *Jehoiakim* (*Jehoiachim*), who in turn was the father of *Jeconiah* (*Jechonias*). However, if we were to simply **include** the missing *Jehoiakim*, we would then have **fifteen** generations, which would cause verse 17 to be in error. The most reasonable explanation may be that, although the curse was lifted on *Jeconiah*'s lineage, his name was still to be "blotted out". A careless scribe deleted *Jehoiakim* by mistake. **By replacing the reference to *Jeconiah* (*Jechonias*) with one to *Jehoiakim* (*Jehoiachin*), we would correct the error, offer a reasonable explanation for *Jeconiah*'s (*Jechonias*) omission, and maintain the number of generations at fourteen.** Please view the layout below:

From Matt 1:11 (KJV)

- 1) Josias 1) Josiah (same as Josias)
- 2) (Jehoiachim not mentioned – incorrect)
- 3) Jechonias (cursed but left in – not correct)
- 4) Salathiel 4) Shealtiel

From Matt 1:11 (LITV)

- 2) Jehoiachin (mentioned – correct translation)
- 3) (Jechonias cursed and left out – correct)

Both the KJV and LITV confirm this in 1 Chron 3:15-16!

From 1 Chron 3:15-16 (KJV)

- 1) Josiah (same as Josias)
- 2) Jehoiakim (now mentioned in OT)
- 3) Jeconiah 3) Jeconiah
- 4) Salathiel 4) Shealtiel

From 1 Chron 3:15-16 (LITV)

- 1) Josiah
- 2) Jehoiakim (same as Jehoiachin)

From the above we can clearly see the mistake made in the “King James Version” Bible, and how it is corrected in the “*Literal Translation of the Holy Bible*” Bible. It is worth noting that a good student will always have a couple of Bibles available when studying the Word.

It should also be noted that incomplete genealogies are not alien to the *Tenach*. For instance, Ezra 7:1-5, gives a genealogy found also in 1 Chron 6:4-15.

Comparing the two:

1 Chron 6:4-14	Ezra 7:1-5
Eleazar	Eleazar
Phinehas	Phinehas
Abishua	Abishua
Bukki	Bukki
Uzzi	Uzzi
Zerahiah	Zerhiah
Meraioth	Meraioth
Amariah	*
Ahitub	*
Zadok	*
Ahimaaz	*
Azariah	*
Johanan	*
Azariah	Azariah
Amariah	Amariah
Ahitub	Ahitub
Zadok	Zadok
Shallum (Meshullam)	Shallum
Hilkiah	Hilkiah
Azariah	Azraiah
Seraiah	Seraiah
Jehozadak	Ezra

Y'shua's genealogy represents a key facet of the necessary credentials for His Messianic claim. One might expect impeccable ancestral credentials from the Messiah - a high sense of "yichus" (Yiddish for "pedigree"). After all, if He's a king, there had better be some impressive family history there. Let's consider *Y'shua's* genealogical record presented by Matt 1:1-16 again.

Now, be honest... how fast did you go through it? Granted, such a reading doesn't always inspire. But remember that Matthew composed his book during a time of severe opposition to the legitimacy of this fledgling Messianic movement. There were plenty of Jewish religious zealots bent on discrediting *Y'shua*. If *Y'shua's* Israeli, and specifically, Judean ancestry were not both verifiable and credible, that alone would have been sufficient grounds to dismiss both the Man and His Movement. Let's examine this genealogy again (a little more slowly and attentively this time)—a genealogy spanning nearly 2,200 years.

“*The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ (Y'shua the Messiah), the son of David, the son of Abraham*”. These are very first words of the New Covenant yet, amazingly, there are still those who refuse to acknowledge the Jewishness of the Book! What we have at the outset is the assertion of the legal and tribal basis for the claim that *Y'shua* is the Messiah. In this one verse we have three remarkable claims: the first being the confident assertion that *Y'shua* was, and is, the Messiah; the second claim, that He is legally and rightfully heir to the throne of David and the fulfillment of the prophecies of 2 Samuel 7 and Isaiah 9; and third, that He is a descendant of Abraham, the progenitor of our people. That might seem insignificant to some, but in accordance with the **Torah (Negative Law 362, Deut 17:15 – Not appointing a king who is not of the seed of Israel)** the king of Israel must be an Israeli.

“**Abraham begat Isaac; and Isaac begat Jacob; and Jacob begat Judas and his brethren**”. That seems straightforward enough, and certainly would have been elementary to any First Century Jew. It would also have been easy to gloss over, save the fact that in this one verse we've just covered 270 years of ancestral history—not to mention 49 of the 50 chapters of Genesis! But of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Judah we have no problems. Well... almost none. There is the matter of Abraham lying (twice!) about his wife; Isaac playing favourites with his children, Jacob deceiving his father; Judah conspiring with his brothers to rid themselves of Joseph (it was Judah who suggested they sell Joseph to the Midianites). Remember, though, that this is a

very real, very human genealogy. Matthew is setting out to establish, not the impeccable moral quality of, but the undeniable Israeli identity of Messiah's human ancestors. And to that extent, there's no problem here.

"And Judas begat Phares and Zara of Thamar (woman A); and **Phares begat Esrom; and Esrom begat Aram".** Any problem here? Yes. A big problem! ...and to Judah were born Perez and Zerah by Tamar (woman A). For those who have never studied Genesis (or for those who have forgotten), let me point out that *Tamar* was not Judah's wife. She was his daughter-in-law! The whole distasteful affair is found in Genesis 38. Granted, Judah didn't know it was his daughter-in-law; he thought she was a prostitute. That doesn't make me feel a whole lot better about it. Already, we have in Y'shua's genealogical record at least one ancestor (*Perez* (*Phares*) – whose name means "breach") born of an incestuous relationship (a relationship too closely related to marry). But this, too, would have been common knowledge to any First Century Jew; though perhaps not so well-known among Jewish people today, owing largely to our biblical illiteracy. You may be relieved to know that of *Hezron* (*Esrom*, whose name means "enclosure", perhaps signifying that the breach had been healed and the damage contained) and *Ram* (*Aram* – whose name means "exalted") we find no particular problems. The biblical record says very little about their lives, and perhaps it's just as well.

"And Aram begat Aminadab; and Aminadab begat Naasson; and Naasson begat Salmon". There are no problems with any of these individuals, and we're still on track as pertains to the thoroughly Israeli ancestry of Messiah Y'shua. The same cannot be said, however, of the next group. We will need to consider the next verse a section at a time.

"And Salmon begat Booz of Rachab (woman B)". Yes, that *Rahab*! The *Rahab* (Rachab) described in Joshua 2. Does that really mean Y'shua's ancestry included a former Gentile prostitute? Yes, it does. Of course, that also means that at some point *Rahab* must have married within Israel. Can you imagine the scene from a Jewish perspective..? "Mom, I'd like you to meet my fiancee, *Rahab*. She used to be a prostitute, and... well... she isn't an Israeli, mom. Wait, Mom, listen - she's given up that way of life and has become one of us. In fact, she was our point-person at Jericho and even saved the lives of our two spies. Yes, mom, that *Rahab*!" The Scriptures not only commend *Rahab* for her role in the Jericho encounter; but in both Old and New Covenants, she is shown to be an example of how non-Jews might join themselves to the community of Israel. Still, did she have to be included in Y'shua's genealogical record? Wouldn't it have been a lot less controversial if Matthew had simply omitted her name? This is admittedly not the world's most pristine family line, but it is the family line of YHWH's choosing, and the theme running through it will become increasingly evident. For now, let's consider other names in this section.

"...and Booz begat Obed of Ruth (woman C)". Many people are familiar with the story of Ruth, but it has special meaning for Gentiles (non-Jews) within the Messianic movement. In Ruth we read of a Moabite woman who is drawn to, and ultimately attaches herself to the people and the YHWH of Israel. It is evident that both *Boaz* and *Ruth* were righteous individuals. Nevertheless, the fact remains that *Ruth* was a Moabite woman: part of a people who were specifically excluded, for eternity, from the assembly of Israel (see Deut 23:3-6) for their part when the Midianites attempted to have Israel cursed by Balaam. Solomon married Moabite women and was condemned by the writer of 1 Kings for it. In Ezra 9 and Nehemiah 13, the Jewish men who had married foreign wives (including Moabite wives) were rebuked and urged to break off those marriages. How is it that this particular union between an Israeli and a Moabitess becomes the exception? How can we deem acceptable an ancestry which includes a Moabite woman? Wouldn't this alone negate the genealogy and thus disqualify Y'shua as Messiah?

The answer is "no" for two important reasons: first, *Ruth* joined herself to Israel and to Israel's YHWH (thus forsaking Moabite culture and Moabite religion). She is considered, both by biblical writers and in Jewish tradition, as having become a proselyte (a convert to Judaism) and a full-fledged member of the Jewish community. The barring of intermarriage and Moabite participation in Israel's assembly didn't have as much to do with ethnicity as with the issue of maintaining the purity of Israel's doctrine and practice. *Ruth* was clearly a singular person of proper faith. Second, *Ruth* was a direct ancestor of King David. Consequently, if anyone would disqualify Y'shua on the basis of having a non-Israeli in the genealogy, they would also have to disqualify King David! And who would dream of doing that? Clearly, YHWH is trying to communicate something to us through Y'shua's genealogy. Let's wait a little longer before taking up the "grand theme".

"And Jesse begat David the king; and David the king begat Solomon of her that had been the wife of Urias (woman D)". Clearly there is no problem with *Jesse* or *David* as pertains to their national origin. They were a Judean family from Bethlehem. The problem is that *Solomon* was born to *David* by "*her who had been the wife of Urias*", *Uriah* in Hebrew. Her name was *Bat-sheva*, and she was a married woman when *David* first set eyes on her. *David* committed adultery with *Bat-sheva*, got her pregnant; and then conspired to have her husband killed to cover up their affair and to create the illusion that she was a war widow and

eligible for him to marry. David committed adultery with *Bat-sheva*, and yet she is named in the genealogy of Messiah. Well, not exactly "named"—she is referred to as her who had been the wife of Uriah. Does this genealogy seem to be going from bad to worse? As we pointed out earlier, this is a very human genealogy!

Consider the implications: thus far we've seen in *Y'shua*'s genealogy one ancestor born of an incestuous relationship, two foreign women, one of whom had been a prostitute and the other part of an enemy people forever excluded from the Israeli community. Now we have an adulterous man and woman becoming the parents of Solomon! How can this be? One might justifiably ask, "Why would YHWH allow such sinful people to be part of Messiah's lineage?"

David might have fooled the people, but he hadn't fooled YHWH. When confronted by Nathan the prophet, David acknowledged that he had sinned against the Lord, to which Nathan replies, "*The Lord has also taken away your sin; you shall not die*". Sin? Yes; but also, and more importantly, redemption. In each of these representative members of *Y'shua*'s genealogy, we witness the theme of **redemption**. The situations themselves may have been difficult, even disastrous; but not one individual, no circumstance, was beyond YHWH's power to redeem, to restore and from which to create good! The YHWH of Israel can, and does, use imperfect people: people like you and me, to accomplish His will. Though in some cases these individuals suffered the earthly consequences of their actions, it does not diminish the fact that YHWH redeemed their lives and situations, using them for good; and He can turn your life around for good, too.

Next comes a list of Israel's kings: "*And Solomon begat Roboam; and Roboam begat Abia; and Abia begat Asa; And Asa begat Josaphat; and Josaphat begat Joram; and Joram begat Ozias; And Ozias begat Joatham; and Joatham begat Achaz; and Achaz begat Ezekias; And Ezekias begat Manasses; and Manasses begat Amon; and Amon begat Josias; And Josias begat Jechonias*" (it must actually be Jehoiakim (Jehoiachim) mentioned in Jechonias' (Coniah) place—Jechonias was cursed as explained at #5 above and in the text below), *and his brethren, about the time they were carried away to Babylon.*" Do you see the problem? It's Jeconiah (Joconias who was supposed to be omitted), a wicked king who lived during the Babylonian invasion; a contemptible man who sold his people out, and was cursed by Elohim to the end that not one of his descendants would ever rule on the throne of David! "*As I live*", declares the Lord, "*even though Coniah (Jechonias) the son of Jehoiakim king of Judah were a signet ring on My right hand, yet I would pull you off...*" O land, land, hear the word of the Lord! Thus says the Lord, '*Write this man down childless, a man who will not prosper in his days; for no man of his descendants will prosper, sitting on the throne of David or ruling again in Judah*" (Jer 22:24, 29-30 NASB).

Matthew declares what anyone investigating *Y'shua*'s genealogy would have eventually come upon Jeconiah. Didn't Matthew know about this curse? Of course he did! How then does he reconcile a curse upon the line of this wicked king with the fact that *Y'shua* is descended from him? The answer comes to us from a prophecy in Haggai 2:20-23:

(20) "And again the word of the LORD came unto Haggai in the four and twentieth day of the month, saying,

(21) Speak to Zerubbabel, governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth;

(22) And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the heathen; and I will overthrow the chariots, and those that ride in them; and the horses and their riders shall come down, every one by the sword of his brother.

(23) In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, **will I take thee, O Zerubbabel, my servant, the son of Shealtiel, saith the LORD, and will make thee as a signet: for I have chosen thee**, saith the LORD of hosts".

YHWH had described Jechonias' (Coniah) as a signet ring He would pull off His hand to Zerubbabel, his descendant. The Lord promised to treat **Zerubbabel** as a treasured signet ring!

How is this possible? The answer is found in the forgiving and redeeming nature of YHWH. True, *Coniah* (Jechonias) was cursed and YHWH's word fulfilled; but YHWH, in His time and by His rightful authority, reversed the curse on His family-line that described Zerubbabel as a chosen servant! The same Lord of righteousness is also the YHWH of mercy, who graciously restored the line of David.

Here is the last section of Messiah's genealogy: "*And after they were brought to Babylon, Jechonias (who should have been left out, and Jehohoiakim should have been included here) begat Salathiel; and Salathiel begat Zorobabel; And Zorobabel begat Abiud; and Abiud begat Eliakim; and Eliakim begat Azor; And Azor begat Sadoc; and Sadoc begat Achim; and Achim begat Eliud; And Eliud begat Eleazar; and Eleazar begat Matthan; and Matthan begat Jacob; And Jacob begat Joseph the husband of Mary (woman E), of whom was born Jesus (Y'shua), who is called Christ (Messiah)*". In this list of kings and their descendants, there are several about whom we know very little, other than their mention here. One

thing that does stand out is that it does not say "to Joseph was born Y'shua". Later in his book, Matthew will make the case for the Divine origin and virgin birth of the Messiah. Nevertheless, Y'shua is the legal heir of Joseph, and therefore entitled to sit on David's throne. In conclusion, several main points come out in Y'shua's genealogy recorded by in Matthew:

First, Matthew makes abundantly clear that Y'shua is the Divine, virgin-born, prophetically announced Messiah who is legally entitled to sit on David's throne.

Second, there is universality to the Good News about Y'shua - it is Good News for Jew and Gentile alike. Both Jews and Gentiles were ancestors of the Messiah, and YHWH continues to redeem people from all nations.

Third, our Redeemer Y'shua can use imperfect people like you and me to accomplish His purposes. Y'shua can redeem even the most troubled, questionable circumstances; and turn them around for good and to His glory. Ordinary, even flawed human beings, who are so prone to err, can be used by YHWH to do wonderful things. If anyone imagines himself beyond the scope of Y'shua's redemptive power, I encourage you to take the message of this otherwise scandalous genealogy to heart.

Consider those whose lives the Lord turned around, and who ultimately were privileged to be part of Messiah's ancestry. Whoever you are, and whatever you have been, you are within YHWH's reach. You have only to turn to Him and be embraced in His love and forgiveness.

About the Women & the Gentiles:

Matthew breaks Jewish custom in that he adds the names of women which was forbidden by Jewish custom for genealogies. In verse 3, he mentions Tamar, in verse 5 Rachab, in verse 6 Ruth, and also in verse 6, not by name, but the pronoun "her" refers to *Bat-sheva*.

Three of the women were Gentiles in Matthew's genealogy. As said, this is highly unusual in texts of that era. Tamar (A – Thamar), Rachab (B – Rachav) and Ruth (C) were born Gentile, but considered to be Jewish through conversion. *Bat-sheva* (D – wife of Urias (*Uriah*)) was born Jewish.

Miryam (E – Mary), the mother of Y'shua, is, of course, Jewish. It is interesting to note that *Miriam* is also the name of Moses' sister. Christian Bibles refer to the latter by her Hebrew name, but call Y'shua's mother, "Mary". This was done to make the "New Testament" sound less Jewish (similar to calling Y'shua, "Jesus" and His brother Ya'acov "James", - though the latter is quite absurd as the English should be "Jacob".)

Matthew is saying by including Gentile women, that although Y'shua's primary mission is to the Jews, Gentiles will also benefit from His coming.

Another point that he brings out by the mention of these names in violation of Jewish custom is that He came to save sinners. Three of these four women (A, B, C & D) were guilty of sexual sins. One was a prostitute, one was guilty of incest and one was guilty of adultery.

About Who Was and Is Y'shua?

He would have been known as Y'shua ben Yoseph (Jesus son of Joseph). His mother's name was *Miriam* or *Miryam* (Meer-ee-ahm'), known as Mary in English. Y'shua was born of a fleshly mother, but Yoseff (Yo-safe') was actually his stepfather.

You all know the story, so it needs to not be recounted here. Just let it be said that He was the Son of Man **and** the Son of YHWH. Of this we must not doubt if we wish to be counted among His Believers.

1:17 The Generation and the deeper meaning

"So all the generations from Abraham to David are **fourteen generations**; and from David until the carrying away into Babylon are **fourteen generations**; and from the carrying away into Babylon unto Christ are **fourteen generations**". The mention of 42 generations (3 x 14) is very interesting. Fourteen (14) are the numerical value of "David", and 42 are the numerical value of Eloah (God) in the Hebrew—let me explain.

Matthew uses the numerical equivalent of names to identify Y'shua with King David. The numerical value of the three Hebrew letters of the name David (DVD) is fourteen. The letter "dalet" (D) has a value of four. The letter "vav" has a value of six. The final letter in David's name is another "dalet" (D) with the value of four.

Matthew records in detail that fourteen generations elapsed between Abraham and David, fourteen generations between David and the Babylonian Captivity, and fourteen generations between the Exile and Y'shua. This was a Jewish method of connecting Y'shua with King David, the anointed king who was prototype of the Messiah to come. The same principal applies of 42, which is the numerical value of Eloah.

1:18 Yoseph & Miriam's relationship

"Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother **Mary was espoused to Joseph**, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost." Engagement/Betrothal was considered as good as being married in Jewish culture. In fact, any children conceived during this time were considered legitimate.

To dissolve the betrothal, it was necessary to acquire a "get" - a bill of divorce. The penalty for fornication with a betrothed woman was more serious than that for fornication with a fully married woman. (This is found in *Talmud Sanhedrin 7:4 and 11:1*.)

From the Hebrew Scriptures (*Tanach* – Old Covenant):

"And I will put enmity between thee and **the woman**, and between thy seed and **her seed** (Y'shua); it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel". (Gen 3:15)

From the Rabbinic Writings and Rabbis:

"And I will put enmity between thee and **the woman**, and between the seed of thy sons, and between the seed of her sons; and it shall be when the sons of the woman keep the commandments of the Law, they will be prepared to smite thee on thy head; but if they forsake the commandments of the Law, thou wilt be prepared to wound them in the heel. Nevertheless **for them** there shall be a medicine; and they shall make a remedy for the heel in the days of **the King Meshiha (Messiah)**". (Jerusalem Targum.)

"As the incarnation of evil Satan is the arch-enemy of **the Messiah** he is anti-Christ. **God hid the light, which was created before the world**, beneath His throne; and to the question of Satan in regard to it God answered: "**This light** is kept for him who shall bring thee to shame". At his request God showed Satan **the Messiah**; and when he saw him, he trembled, fell upon his face, and cried: "**Verily this is the Messiah, who shall hurl (bruise) me**, and all the princes of the angels of the people" down even into hell. (Pesikta Rabbati. 3:6. ed. Friedmann, p. 161, b.)

The Exegesis from the New Covenant explained:

"But when the fullness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, **made** (born) **of a woman**, made under the law". (Gal 4:4)

"Now the **birth of Jesus Christ** was on this wise: When as **his mother Mary was espoused** (engagement / betrothal) **to Joseph**, before they came together, **she was found with child** of the Holy Ghost". (Mat 1:18)

"And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: **therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God**". (Luke 1:35)

"Holy Ghost/Spirit" (Ruach Ha Kodesh)

Similar to "Spirit of YHWH" (*Ruach YHWH*) in Gen 1:2. Also, Gen 3:8, is typically translated, "And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day:" Here, "cool of the day" is actually "ruach" in the Hebrew text, suggesting the translation, "in the Spirit of the day". See also; Isaiah 48:16, 51:13, 63:10-11.

1:21 You shall call His name "Jesus"

"And she shall bring forth a son, and **thou shalt call his name JESUS**: for he shall save his people from their sins" The old spiritual hymn says, "Jesus, the sweetest name I know". And, to countless millions of Christians through the centuries, the name of "Jesus" is indeed the most treasured name ever known. Unfortunately, most Christians do not realise that "Jesus" is a translation. In fact, it is a translation of yet another translation. In fact, once we trace the name back to its origins (i.e. Jesus' original given name), we will find that it has a much richer meaning than the one we have come to know and love so well.

The English "Jesus", as well as the Greek *Iesous* are not the proper name for the Messiah; and as such, cause the text to lose some of its meaning. To say; "For you shall call his name "Jesus" for He will save His people from their sins" carries as much meaning as, "You shall call His name 'Frank' or 'Ralph'". However, the Hebrew name "Y'shua" actually means "YHWH will save", thus making sense of the text.

Regarding the "name" of Y'shua, it should also be noted that elsewhere in the "New Testament" we are instructed to pray or ask for things "in His name". This is teaching that our prayers, asking for things "in someone's name", means "in their authority"—in this case, in the authority of Y'shua. What a privilege.

Going back to the origin of the name ... For the earliest church, to think "Christianly" was to think "Hebraicly". This becomes very significant to us when we realise the name, Jesus, is the western, Anglican rendering of the Hebrew name Y'shua. It is unfortunate that the people of the church never thought to wonder if the name "Jesus" might have been derived from another, more appropriate, name or if He may indeed be unlike the man we see depicted in paintings hanging in our homes and churches.

So, how do we get "Jesus", the name we see in our Bibles? As stated, His Hebrew name is Y'shua (English transliteration). In the Galilee where He lived, the 'a' at the end was left silent—so the pronunciation would have been Y'shu in that region. Of course, the Hebrew story of the life of Y'shua, was very soon after His death and resurrection translated into Greek. In the translation, Y'shu(a) became IesuS. In Greek, there is no 'sh' sound; thus the 's' in the middle. In the Classical period, it was typical to add an 's' to the end of male names; thus we get the Greek pronunciation easoos (IesuS). From there it is easy to see how we get "Jesus" as a transliteration of IesuS. The 'J' corresponds to the 'Y' in Hebrew and the 'I' in Greek. For example, the Hebrew name Yermeyahu becomes Jeremiah in English or YHWH becomes Jehovah. So, Jesus is the name Christians have come to know, but His given and accurate name is actually Y'shua. It is this latter name on which we should focus.

This is important for us because Hebrew is the key to becoming more authentically Biblical. In Hebrew, the phrase, "*and she shall call his name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins*", is actually a play on words. "...*and she shall call His name Y'shua for He will yoshea His people...*" (Mat1:21). Both are derived from the root "y'sha", to save. So Y'shua means saviour, the implications of which are astounding.

To grasp the full depth of meaning, we must research the Biblical text from the beginning and what we will find is the redemptive plan of a loving and gracious YHWH. Let us have a look by asking the Scriptural question:

*"Who hath ascended up in to heaven, or descended? who hath gathered the wind in His fists? who hath bound the waters in a garment? who hath established all the ends of the earth? **What is His name, and what is His Son's name, if thou canst tell?**"* (Prov 30:4)

The Answer: His (YHWH's) name is יהוה, a "Yod", "Hay", "Vav", and "Hay" in Hebrew; and in English it is represented by the four letters **YHVH**, the unpronounceable name of Elohim. The translators of the Scriptures added the vowels in-between the letters, and from this we got YaHoVaH or YaHoWaH, as the "V" and "W" sound in Hebrew is represented by the same sound "Vaw". Because there is no "J" in Hebrew, the "Y", "Yod" was replaced with the English "J", which incorrectly led to Jehovah - JoHoVaH. Y'shua His Son name followed the same route. Let's look at the following passages referring to Y'shua's name.

"Thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins". As said, the Hebrew word for salvation is "Y'shua" and this calls to mind the Saviour's main purpose for coming to this earth - to save mankind from sin and disobedience. (Mat 1:21)

"Baptised in his Name". (Acts 2:38, see also Acts 8:16, 22:16)

"In the name of Jesus of Nazareth rise up and walk". (Acts 3:6)

"And his name and through faith in his name hath made this man strong". (Acts 3:16)

"Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men whereby we must be saved". (Acts 4:12)

"Wherefore God also hath highly exalted him, and given him a name which is above every name: That at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, of things in heaven, and things in earth, and things under the earth". (Phil 2:9)

"If ye be reproached for the name of Christ, happy are ye; for the spirit of glory and of God resteth upon you, on their part he is evil spoken of, but on your part he is glorified". (1 Peter 4:14)

"...Ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake". (Mat 24:9)

We can see from the above passages that the name of our Saviour, "Y'shua" (written alternatively by many as Yeshua, Yahshua, or Yahoshua) is important. I am sure you will not appreciate it if your name is Peter, and your friends call you Gary continuously. Ever wondered why Coca-Cola remains Coca-Cola in Japan and not some other name, because the name sells as there is "marketing" power in Coca-Cola's brand name. Should we not call Jesus by his real name, Y'shua?

Why is this Name so powerful—was Y'shua there from the beginning or only from his birth?

Though the Father was the architect of the universe, the builder was His Son—the Word, the Logos.

- (1) "In the beginning was the Word (Logos), and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
(2) The same was in the beginning with God.
(3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men". (John 1:1-3)

(15) "Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:
(16) For by him were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by him, and for him:
(17) And he is before all things, and by him all things consist.
(18) And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.
(19) For it pleased the Father that in him should all fulness dwell". (Col 1:15-19)
"Let us make man in our image". (Gen 1:26)

Note that word “us”. It implies that there was another person with the Almighty when the universe was being created. That other person was the Son: the Word, the Logos, and the Spokesman—the actual builder who implemented the Father’s plans. This fact is repeated in the book of Hebrews.

- (1) "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spake in time past unto the fathers by the prophets,
(2) Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, **whom he hath appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds**". (Heb 1:1-2)

What is Y'shua's Objective?

- (3) "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:
(4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". (Rom 8:3-4)

The Saviour came to earth not merely to pay the price for our past sins (extremely important, though, that step in our salvation is), but to condemn and conquer sin in the flesh. In other words, to slay sin in us—to utterly demolish in the human mind and body the very urge to sin and in its place to put a hunger and a thirst for righteousness (obedience). The Saviour's ultimate objective is '*that the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us*'. Believers must, therefore, constantly examine themselves to see whether or not this purpose is being fulfilled in their lives. Is sin being replaced by righteousness? In other words, He came to produce holy and obedient believers.

Who is Y'shua?

The Only True Elohim (Rev 1:7-8).

The Elohim of Israel, and of the Universe (Ezek 37:28; Isaiah 45:18-19; Zech 12:10 - 11:1; Ezek 20:5-7, 39; with Isaiah 45:23 and Phil 2:10-11).

YHWH the Father before His Incarnation (Isaiah 9:6; Isaiah 45:2b-23; Phil 2:10-11; John 14:8-9; John 10:30).

The Holy Spirit in His Omnipresence (John 17:26; John 14:18, 20; John 14:26 with 17:11).

The Coming Judge of mankind at His Return (Psalm 96:13; Ezek 20:35-37; Rev 20:11; Mat 16:27).

The Coming King of the Earth (Zech 14:1-9; Rev 19:11-17).

The Eternal Ruler of the Universe (Rev 21:1-4; Rev 11:15).

The Creator (John 1:1-3; Isaiah 44:24; 45:12, 21b).

Y'shua is the Creator God Himself - an omnipresent Spirit Being Who manifested Himself as a Human Being, born from an Israelite woman 2,000 years ago in Israel to become **Y'shua** the Messiah.

When this world erupts in chaos and Armageddon dawns, YHWH will come as Y'shua the King of the Universe to judge the world, to save Israel from nuclear or biochemical annihilation and to rule from Jerusalem over all the earth in a Dispensation of Peace! (Matt 24:21-25 & 29-31; Dan 12:1)

How come His name is never mentioned in the *Tanach* (Old Covenant)?

Many Jewish people would always ask this challenging question, "If Y'shua is our Messiah, and the whole Old Covenant is about Him, how come His name is never mentioned in it even once?"

I could never answer it satisfactorily to their way of thinking, and I admit I often wondered why His name was not actually written in the Old Covenant Bible. Oh, yes, I could show them His divine titles in Isaiah 7:14, 9:6 and Jer 23:5,6, and even the word Messiah in several places; but the Hebrew name that would be equal to Y'shua, that I could not show. Then one day the Holy Spirit opened my eyes. There was the very NAME, Y'shua, found in the Old Covenant about 100 times all the way from Genesis to Habakkuk! Yes, the very word - the very NAME - which the angel Gabriel used in Luke 1:31 when he told Mary about the Son she was to have.

Every time the Old Covenant uses the word SALVATION (especially with the Hebrew suffix meaning "my", "thy", or "his"), with very few exceptions (when the word is impersonal), it is the very same word, Y'shua (Jesus), used in Matt 1:21. Let us remember that the angel who spoke to Mary and the angel who spoke to Joseph in his dream did not speak in English, Latin, or Greek, but in Hebrew; and neither were Mary or Joseph slow to grasp the meaning and significance of the NAME of this divine Son and its relation to His character and His work of salvation. For in the Old Covenant, all great characters were given names with a specific and significant meaning. For example:

Gen 5:29, Lamech called his son "Noah (Comfort), saying, *This same shall comfort us concerning our work and tell of our hands*".

In Gen 10:25, Eber calls his firstborn son, "Peleg (Division); *for in his days was the earth divided*".

The same is true of Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Jacob (changed to Israel-God's Prince), and all of Jacob's sons (see Genesis, chapters 29-32).

In Exod 2:10, Pharaoh's daughter called the baby rescued from the Nile, "*Moses (Drawn-Forth): and she said, Because I drew him out of the water*". And so we can go on and on to show the deep significance of Hebrew names.

Now then, when the angel spoke to Joseph, husband of Mary, the mother of our Lord, this is what he really said and what Joseph actually understood: "*And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name Jesus (Y'SHUA - SALVATION): for he shall save (or salvage) his people from their sins*". This text was a revelation to my soul that I saw the whole plan of YHWH in the Old Covenant, all in that one ineffable and blessed NAME. So let us proceed to show clearly the Hebrew name, Y'shua, in the Old Covenant.

When the great Patriarch Jacob was ready to depart from this world, he by the Holy Spirit was blessing his sons and prophetically foretelling their future experiences in those blessings. In verse 18 of Gen 49 he exclaims, "*I have waited for thy salvation, O Lord!*" What he really said and meant was, "To thy Y'shua I am looking, O Lord"; or, "In thy Y'shua I am hoping (trusting), Lord!" That makes much better sense.

Of course, Y'shua was the One in Whom Jacob was trusting to carry him safely over the chilly waters of the river of death. Jacob was a saved man and did not wait until his dying moments to start trusting in the Lord. He just reminded YHWH that he was at the same time comforting his own soul.

In Psalms 9:14, David bursts forth, "*I will rejoice in thy salvation*". What he actually said and meant was, "*I will rejoice in (with) thy Y'shua*".

In Psalm 91:14-16, YHWH says, "*Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him: I will set him on high (raise him above circumstances), because he hath known my name. He shall call upon me, and I will answer him: I will be with him in trouble; I will deliver him and honor him. With long life [eternal life] will I satisfy him, and show him my (Y'shua) salvation*". Of course, that promise is realised in Rev 22:3, 4: "*And there shall be no more curse: but the throne of God and of the Lamb shall be in it: and his servants shall serve him: And they shall see HIS face*".

In Isaiah 12:2-3, we have something wonderful. Here, SALVATION is mentioned three times. The reader will be much blessed by reading these glorious verses in his Bible, but let me give them as they actually read in the original Hebrew with Y'shua as the embodiment and personification of the word SALVATION:

(2) "*Behold, might (or, God the mighty One) is my Y'SHUA (in His pre-incarnation and eternal existence); I will trust and not be afraid: for JAH-JAHOOVAH is my strength and my song; He also is become my Y'SHUA (Salvation).... And the WORD (Y'shua incarnate) became flesh, and dwelt among us*".

(3) "*Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of Y'SHUA (John 1:14). (Y'shua - waters of salvation flowing forth from Golgotha)*".

If you translate from the Hebrew Bible, Isaiah 62:11: "*Behold, YHWH has proclaimed unto the end of the world. Say ye to the daughter of Zion, Behold thy Y'SHUA (Salvation) cometh; behold, His reward is with Him, and His work before Him*". SALVATION is a Person and not a thing or an event? "HE Comes, HIS reward is with HIM, and His work before him".

Then skipping on to Habakkuk, we have the greatest demonstration of the NAME "Y'shua" in the Old Covenant; for here we have both the Name as well as the Title of the Saviour. In 3:13, we read literally from the original Hebrew: "*Thou wentest forth with the YESHA* (variant of ESHUA) *of (or for) thy people; with Y'SHUA thy MESSIAH* (thine Anointed One) *thou woundest the head of the house of the wicked one* (Satan)". Here you have it! The very NAME given to our Lord in the New Covenant.

So don't let anyone - Jew or Gentile - tell you that the Name Y'shua is not found in the Old Covenant. And so when the aged Simeon came to the Temple, led there by the Holy Spirit, and took the baby Y'shua in his arms, he said, "*Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word: For mine eyes have seen thy salvation (Y'SHUA)*" (Luke 2:29-30). Certainly! Not only did his eyes see YHWH's Salvation - YHWH's Y'shua - but he felt Him and touched Him. His believing heart beat with joy and assurance as he felt the loving heart of YHWH throbbing in the heart of the holy infant Y'shua.

***"And thou shalt call his name Jesus (SALVATION = Y'SHUA)
for he shall save (salvage) his people from their sins!"***

May YHWH grant us His Spirit so that we may live lives that do justice to the message of salvation. Please read the entire Isaiah 53 to see Y'shua's work of salvation.

1:22 Spoken of the Lord

"Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord (Adonai) by the prophet, saying".

The name Adonai, translated "Lord" (only the "L" capitalised), occurs approximately 300 times in the *Tanach* (Old Covenant). It's interesting to note that it is almost always used in the plural possessive form, meaning "My Lords". This, once again, confirms the concept of The Godhead as found in the name "Elohim". Also consider the fact that this same word is used of men approximately 215 times in the *Tanach* and is predominantly translated as "master". Note, however, when used of men, it is always used in the singular form.

The implication of The Godhead in this name is obvious in Psalms 110:1: "*The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool*". More accurately translated, this verse would read "YHWH said unto my Adonai, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool".

The true meaning of this name in the Hebrew language indicates "mastership" or "ownership". From this, we can clearly see God's outright ownership of all things in Heaven and Earth. This also clearly defines our role as servants to our Adonai.

The first use of this name occurs in Gen 15:2. Let's examine this portion of Scripture beginning with verse 1. Gen 15:1-2 *"After these things the word of the LORD (YHWH – note entire word is spelled with capital letters) came unto Abram in a vision, saying, Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield (implicating the name Elohim), and thy exceeding great reward (implicating the name El-Shaddai). (2) And Abram said, Lord GOD (Adonai-YHWH), what wilt thou give me, seeing I go childless, and the steward of my house is this Eliezer of Damascus?"*

Consider, for a moment, the true depth of meaning in Abram's reply. He said "Righteous and loving **Master** (Adonai-YHWH), what will you give me..." It's a well established fact that Abram was master (*adonia* - in the singular form) over a considerable number of people and as such, he very well understood the role of each in the relationship. The master exercised complete and total authority on the one hand, while the servant demonstrated absolute submission on the other. In addressing God as Adonai-YHWH, Abram acknowledged YHWH's complete and perfect right of possession to all that he was and had.

Throughout the *Brit Chadasha* (New Covenant), this same concept of YHWH being master and owner of all prevails. Numerous times it is said that we are not our own because we have been "bought with a price". The precious blood of Y'shua paid a debt He did not owe to ransom us from bondage to sin. For that reason, YHWH commands us to present our bodies as a living sacrifice.

That it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet

Verse 22 is the first *Brit Chadasha* (New Covenant) reference to prophesy. There have been over fifty people claiming to be Messiah (or having their followers make the claim) since Y'shua's time. Two of the more

famous would be Simon Bar Kokba (early 2nd century), who lead the failed Jewish revolt against Rome; and the Hassidic leader, Rabbi Menachem Schneerson of Brooklyn New York, who passed away just a few years ago. What is interesting in the case of Schneerson is that his followers believed he would resurrect three days after his death, citing Hosea 6:2, "After two days he will revive us, On the third day He will raise us up".

Matthew focuses on *Tenach* prophecy at great length, as we will see later in this exegesis. This is important, because for *Y'shua* to be the promised Jewish Messiah, He must fulfill the conditions set forth by the Jewish prophets and cannot violate any of them. To make a claim that He is the Messiah, separate and apart from what the *Tenach* says, would give Him no more validity than any other person making such a claim. *Y'shua* Himself said, "*Salvation is of the Jews*" (John 4:22)—claiming legitimacy for Himself as well as the Jewish Scriptures, and the proper Jewish interpretation of those Scriptures.

1:23 A virgin shall be with child

"Behold, **a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son**, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us".

The verse says that it was prophesied by a prophet that the virgin birth of the Messiah would take place; namely, the prophet Isaiah: "*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*". (Isaiah 7:14)

This is a controversial verse due to the use of the Hebrew terms, "*almah*" in Isaiah as opposed to "*b'tulah*" used here in verse 23.

Understand the Biblical Root

Before I attempt an answer, let me call your attention to an important feature of the Hebrew language: the *shoresh* or "root" or "stem" which consists mostly of three consonants on which the meaning depends. These three basic consonants are like the prime root of meaning buried beneath the surface, but always there. Sprouting from this root are the verbs and nouns that pertain to that root and that retain the flavour and colouring of that root.

So let us now dig beneath and expose the root of the word *almah*. The classical or Biblical Hebrew and Aramaic give the root meaning as 'to enwrap', 'to veil', 'to hide', 'to conceal'; thus implying something hidden, something concealed, something unexposed—similarly with Modern Hebrew. And incidentally, in Arabic, which is closely related to Hebrew, the same root means 'ripe and marriageable'.

Now we are better equipped to answer our question. There may be truth in the contention that *almah* does not specifically mean virginity. But when applied to a human being, the root conveys the thought of one whose conjugal nuptial rights or attributes have remained potential only. Thus it is unexpressed, hidden, concealed and virgin. Hence the feminine word, *almah*, receives justification from its root for the word 'virgin'.

Then, too, in Modern Hebrew, one of the dictionary meanings of *almah* is 'girl'; which does not specifically mean a virgin, but to what else could it apply? Obviously a maiden, who is or should certainly be a moral virgin! The same applies to the term *b'tulah*.

The Hebrew term "*almah*" in Isaiah as opposed to the Hebrew term "*b'tulah*" used here in verse 23 can be explained this way. Arguments can be made for either term meaning, "**virgin**" or "**young woman**". Matthew may be quoting from the Septuagint. This is the Greek version of the *Tenach*, written in 200 B.C. by 70 rabbis. It is also called the LXX after the "seventy" who worked on it. The Jewish writers of the LXX chose the Greek word "*parthenos*" which is normally used for "virgin", the word now found in our New Covenants. *Y'shua* was born of a young girl who was morally pure, a "virgin", period!

And they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us

Here is another significant title. *Immanuel* means "**EI(ohim) (is) with us**", in Hebrew.

IM = with **ANU** = us **EL** = Elohim (God)

Y'shua was never actually called this, however. This is an example of a "remez" (a hint at who He is) as explained in chapter 6. Other Messianic names in the *Tenach* are; *Shiloh, Branch, Sprout, Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace*.

YHWH has many names

Below are some of the many names and titles of YHWH the Father and Y'shua HaMashiach and the meanings of these names, which show the true character of these two immortal beings.

Hebrew NamesGreek Names

<i>Elohim</i>	God (male and plural)	<i>Kuros</i>	Supremacy
<i>EL</i>	A Mighty One	<i>Theos</i>	Lord, God, Deity
<i>El-Elyon</i>	Exalted One; Most High God	<i>Logos</i>	The Word
<i>El-Shaddai</i>	God Almighty		
<i>El-Olam</i>	God the Everlasting One		
<i>El-Roi</i>	God Who Sees Me		
<i>El-Berith</i>	God of the Covenant		
<i>El-Elohe</i>	God of Israel		
Immanuel	God With Us (Hebrew)	Emmanuel	God With Us (transliterated)

Names and titles applied to YHWH the Father and Y'shua help describe their individual attributes, character, and authority. When one studies the attributes and character of YHWH the Father and his Son, it becomes clear that it is impossible for any one name or number of names to fully describe the Father and his Son.

Because very little is said of Y'shua's birth and early years in Matthew (which is absolutely imperative), I deemed it necessary to make use of the other writers of the Gospel to explain the sequence of events; as well as Y'shua's Jewish family customs, roots and traditions during His upbringing. For that, let's start with:

Birth of Yochanan (John) foretold

Luke 1:5-25:

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth.

(6) *And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.*

(7) *And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.*

(8) *And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,*

(9) *According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.*

(10) *And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.*

(11) *And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense.*

(12) *And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.*

(13) *But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.*

(14) *And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.*

(15) *For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.*

(16) *And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.*

(17) *And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.*

(18) *And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.*

(19) *And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.*

(20) *And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.*

(21) *And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.*

(22) *And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless.*

(23) *And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.*

(24) *And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months, saying,*

(25) *Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men".*

"(5) There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias (Zachar'yah), of **the course of Abia** (Abiyah): and his **wife was of the daughters of Aaron** (Aharon), and her name was **Elisabeth** (Elisheva)". Three very important pieces of information are given to us in this verse.

- 1) Zacharias was a priest,
- 2) He performed Temple service according to the course of "Abia", and
- 3) Zacharias' wife was from the daughters of Aaron, the priestly family.

The principal duties of the priest were those connected with the sacrificial service of the Temple in Jerusalem, as well as teaching the people the instructions of *Torah*. In the course of time, the number of priests increased to such an extent that it was necessary to divide them into twenty-four divisions (1 Chron 24:1-18) who served in the Temple in rotation, each for a week at a time. According to the *Mishnah*, the cycle begins on the first *Shabbat* (Sabbath) of *Abib* (Nisan), and each division (*mishmar*) was subdivided into several families of priests who served one day a week. This gave every priest an opportunity to fulfill his duties. During the three great annual festivals known as Pilgrimage Festivals (Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles), all twenty-four divisions are said to have officiated simultaneously (*Sukkot* 5:7).

Interesting: What are "ma'amados"?

The *Halacha* is that whenever a *korban* (sacrifice) was offered in the *Bais Hamikdosh* (Temple), the owner(s) had to be present. The problem is that every day the *kohanim* (priests) offered the *Tamid* sacrifice which was offered on behalf of all the Jews; but, obviously, it is impossible for all the Jews to be constantly present in the *Bais Hamikdosh* (Temple).

The solution to this problem is "mamados":

There were 24 shifts of *mamados*. Each *mamad* (which was comprised of devout Jews who were emissaries of *Klal Yisroel*) would go to the *Bais Hamikdosh* for one week shifts and would say special prayers, representing all of the Jews by the offering of the sacrifices.

Getting back to Zacharias and Elizabeth, the name Zacharias means "YaH remembers". The name Elizabeth means "oath or covenant of God". Together they suggest "El remembers His covenant". Aaron was a common ancestor of both Zacharias and Elizabeth, meaning they were both from a priestly lineage.

"(6) And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless". As said earlier in chapter 5, according to Jewish teachings, there are 613 commandments (348 positive, 265 negative) in the *Torah*. This verse does not mean that Zacharias and Elizabeth were absolutely perfect, but they were in perfect obedience to those 613 commandments.

"(7) And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years". In Israel, being childless was a reproach. Jewish people to this day regard barrenness as a major tragedy. In fact, sterility was an acceptable reason for divorce; for raising a family is one of the main reasons for marrying. The wife who did not have children was thought to either not be loved by her husband or not looked upon with favour by YHWH (Gen 30:1-2). Barrenness was often considered the result of Divine judgment (1 Sam 1:6-7). There was a constant hope for the appearing of the Messiah and every woman cherished the hope of being the mother of the Promised Seed.

The story of *Y'shua*'s birth is preceded in Luke's Gospel by the account of *Yochanan* (John) the Immerser's family and is miraculous birth. He also had a role to play. The episode in the Gospel of Luke indicates the manner in which YHWH used the longing of an ordinary family like Elizabeth and Zacharias to fulfill Divine strategy. They wanted a baby. When they prayed, YHWH supernaturally intervened. *Yochanan*'s mission was to prepare the way for *Y'shua*. Amazingly, the personal anguish of a barren family for the birth of a child would be used for a higher purpose in YHWH's Divine plan to prepare the way for *Y'shua*. It can be seen in the light of a miracle upon a miracle.

"(8) And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, (9) According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord". The Bible records the practice of casting lots as a means of arriving at a decision on a variety of problems. These may be grouped into two main categories: (1) the selection of one or more members from a group; and (2) the division of goods among the members of a group. This lot was used extensively during the Second Temple Period, and particularly in the Temple itself, in order to determine the allocation of duties among the priests. The *Mishnah* records it being done this way: "When the captain of the president of the Temple came in the morning to the priests of the Higher Chamber, he knocked. And upon receiving admittance, said, 'Let those who have washed cast lots for the cleansing of the altar'. He on whom the lot fell discharged that service. This was the First Lot."

The Second Lot was for slaughtering the lamb, sprinkling the blood, removing the ashes, and trimming the lamps of the *menorah* (seven branched candelabra).

The Third Lot was for the burning of incense at the Golden Altar right in front of the veil where the Holy of Holies was.

"The manner in which the lots were drawn, the priests stood around the president of the Temple in a circle, and he fixing upon a certain number began to count it starting with the priest whose cap he took off. And he who the number terminated with was the person to attend to the service in question" (Tammid 6:3).

"(10) And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense". The scene described here could have occurred in the morning or evening. The Jews regularly gathered for prayer in the Temple court when the incense was burned, at the third hour (9:00 a.m.) and at the ninth hour (3:00 p.m.). Zacharias evidently had been signaled by a superior priest to begin burning the incense. As soon as the people saw the ascending smoke of the incense offering, which was a symbol of true consecration to God, they fell down before YHWH and spread out their hands in silent prayer. The *Mishnah* says that after the president had given the signal to burn the incense, the people withdrew to either the Court of the Israelites or the Court for the Women (the first court you enter from the Eastern Gate entrance).

"(11) And there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense. (12) And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him". While serving as priest, Zacharias saw an angel of YHWH standing on the right side of the Golden Incense Altar. Why is this so important, the right hand side?

Jewish history tells us that they took the '*tallit*' (prayer shawl) and leather girdle (priestly clothing) of Elisha (which were passed down from Elijah to Elisha) and put it on the right hand side of the Golden Incense Altar inside the Temple. A special place was made to put it on the right side of the altar, and they said... "It will stay here until he whose it is, returns to use it". Judaism, even today, firmly believes that Elijah will return to usher in the Messiah. Year after year they wait for Elijah to arrive at the Passover. A chair, plate and cup is specially prepared for Elijah at every Passover meal, and at every Passover a door is left slightly open and a child must go and see if Elijah is at the door. A few years ago they started for the first time to fill Elijah's cup!

Well, in 606 B.C. the Babylonians came; and in 578 B.C. they burnt Solomon's Temple down, and the story breaks off there of Jewish history as nobody knows what happened to Elijah's '*tallit*'. It is amazing that YHWH's angel appears at the exact place where Elijah's mantel was left, at the right hand side.

Now listen to this: when Zacharias saw the angel standing on the right hand side of the Golden Incense Altar, he was troubled and fear fell upon him. The Rabbinic tradition says that going into the Holy Place always carried with it a sense of danger; and to show the relief of making it out alive, the priest would prepare a feast for his friends the hour he came forth (Yoma 7:4). The tradition further says that if a priest was going to die during his work inside the Holy Place that an angel would be standing on the right side of the altar of incense. Seeing the angel there did not help Zachariah much; in fact, it brought much more fear. Knowing this makes it a little easier to understand why Zacharias was trembling with fear.

"(13) But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John". The promise that Elizabeth would bear a son required a supernatural act of YHWH. The baby was to be named *Yochanan*, which means "YHWH is gracious". Not only would YHWH be gracious about removing the stigma of childlessness from the elderly couple, but He would also set in motion His plan of redemption through the Messiah. That the angel knew his name should have been enough to quiet Zacharias' fears. To hear that they would have a son was the answer to prayers that had been offered for many years.

"(14) And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth. (15) For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb". These two verses are very rich and give us much information. Firstly, *Yochanan* is the only person known that was filled with the Holy Spirit before birth; as the Scripture says, "*he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb*". And secondly, verse 15 says, "*shall drink neither wine nor strong drink*", referring to the Hebrew term "*Nazir*" and signifies to one who is dedicated to YHWH by a vow involving abstinence from intoxicants and cutting one's hair.

The person who took the *Nazarite Vow* for a certain specified period of time (30 days was the minimum) did not become a loner. He continued to live in human society without being necessarily an ascetic (a person who practices painstaking self-denial as a religious discipline). He was under an obligation to abstain from wine and all other products of the vine, and to let his hair grow long. During the period of the vow, he was forbidden to touch a dead body.

From the time of the nomadic ancestors, the vine was the symbol of the settled life and a culture removed from the ancient simplicity of manners, though quite right in themselves. The free growth of hair represented the Nazarite's consecration to YHWH in the visible form. The hair was the glory (*nezer*) of the head. If the period of the vow was not specified, Rabbinic law fixed it at thirty days. At the end of the period, the *Nazarite* appeared at the Temple before a priest, made certain prescribed offerings, shaved off his hair and burned it. Following this, he was again permitted to drink wine and to return to ordinary life. *Yochanan the Immerser* was a Nazarite.

"(19) *And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel* (Gavri-El), *that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings*". Gabriel is highly regarded in Jewish theology as a messenger from YHWH. He is pictured in rabbinic writings as standing before YHWH's throne. For Gabriel to be sent specifically to Zacharias means that he was major topic of discussion in the portals of heaven. This is an incredible thought.

"(20) *And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.* (21) *And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple*".

"(22) *And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless*". The Tanach contains descriptions of many visions, especially those of YHWH and His angels. The idea developed at a very ancient period of Judaism was that YHWH had no shape, and therefore the appearance of YHWH to the prophets was evidently understood by them as visions. At the beginning of the Second Temple Period, visions were often interpreted to the prophets by an angel.

To put this in proper perspective, we must remember that no one in Israel had had a vision from YHWH for about 400 years. This was the time from the last visions to Prophet Malachi to the time of Y'shua's first coming.

For the crowd to learn that YHWH was once again communicating with His people after so long a period of time must have been a source of great excitement and encouragement to them. Couple this with the Messianic Expectancy during this time; this had to be a tremendous event for them. It should have been a sign to the people that YHWH was once again about to move through His people.

"(23) *And it came to pass, that, as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished, he departed to his own house.* (24) *And after those days his wife Elisabeth conceived, and hid herself five months*, saying, (25) *Thus hath the Lord dealt with me in the days wherein he looked on me, to take away my reproach among men*". Once again there is critical information given to us:

"...as soon as the days of his ministration were accomplished", meaning after he has done his Temple duty.

"...his wife Elisabeth conceived" – that is, after Zacharias completed his Temple duty, Elizabeth became pregnant.

"...hid herself five months" – It is a Jewish custom not to tell anyone other than immediate family about your pregnancy until you enter your fifth month.

Birth of Y'shua foretold (we continue to read from Luke chapter 1)

(26) "And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth,
(27) To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary.

(28) And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.

(29) And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be.

(30) And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God.

(31) And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS.

(32) He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:

(33) And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end.

(34) Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?

(35) And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God.

(36) And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.

(37) For with God nothing shall be impossible.

(38) And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her".

"(26) **And in the sixth month the angel Gabriel** (Gavri-El) was sent from God unto a city of Galilee, named Nazareth, (27) To a virgin espoused to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David; and the virgin's name was Mary". This is one of the most valuable clues given of Y'shua's foretold timing of his birth. It is said that Gabriel visited in the sixth month. Please note, not according to the Christian's Gregorian calendar, but six months from Elisheva's conception! Six months from Sivan takes us to Kislev; that is, when Y'shua was conceived in Miriam's womb, meaning late in December. For that we will look at the calendar and the chronological events of Yochanan (John) and Y'shua's dates of birth under the section, "**The Visitations**".

The meaning of the name *Miriam* (Mary) is obscure. The name was given, not because of its meaning, but because of the person it recalled: "Miriam", Moses' sister. A Jewish tradition says that *Miriam* means "bitterness" since the *Miriam* of the book of Exodus was born at the time the Egyptians began to persecute the children of Israel.

At the time of Gabriel's visit to *Miriam*, we read that she was a "virgin" espoused to a man whose name was *Yoseph* (Joseph). This was sealed by the use of a wedding contract (*ketubah*). Under Jewish law, a young man was considered ready for marriage at age 18 (some say 13), and a girl at age 12 and a day. The espousal or engagement was considered so binding that it was practically equivalent to marriage. An engagement could be broken only by means of a bill of divorcement (*get*).

"(28) **And the angel came in unto her, and said, Hail, thou that art highly favoured, the Lord is with thee: blessed art thou among women.** (29) And when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and cast in her mind what manner of salutation this should be. (30) And the angel said unto her, Fear not, Mary: for thou hast found favour with God. (31) And, behold, thou shalt conceive in thy womb, and bring forth a son, and shalt call his name JESUS. (32) **He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give unto him the throne of his father David:** (33) And he shall reign over the house of Jacob (Israel) for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end". King David had been promised the throne rights, or rulership, to Israel's kingdom forever. This promise assured David that members of his family would be kings of Israel. After Israel had been without a king for over 500 years, *Miriam* was told that YHWH would fulfill His promise to David through her.

We know that Y'shua did fulfill the first *Tanach* (Old Covenant) requirement for kingship in that He was a member of the house of David (apart from Jechonias who was cursed.) The problem is that He is not the only one, and that there were a good number of Jews living at this time who were descendants of David (apart from Jechonias who was cursed). And on that grounds alone any one of them had the right to claim David's throne. Now we have the second element: that of Divine appointment. It is to this particular One that is given the Divine appointment: "*and the Lord shall give unto Him the throne of His father David*".

Gabriel informs *Miriam* that she is to give birth to a Son and she is to call His name "Y'shua". It should be remembered that when Gabriel was speaking to *Miriam* he was not speaking in English or Greek, but Hebrew. As said earlier, in Hebrew the name Jesus is pronounced "Y'shua", which has for its root meaning "to save".

Gabriel then points out several things concerning the Son of *Miriam*, which can be summarised in five points. First, the Incarnation would be in man. YHWH is going to become man in the person of Y'shua.

Secondly, as to his name, it was Y'shua (Salvation).

Thirdly, as to His essential nature, He is to be great.

Fourthly, He would be the Son of YHWH by virtue of His unique relationship to YHWH the Father.

Fifthly, He would fulfil the Davidic covenant. YHWH promised David four eternal things: an eternal house, an eternal throne, an eternal kingdom, and an eternal descendant. All four areas are demonstrated in this passage.

"(34) **Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?**" *Miriam* also raises a question; but unlike Zacharias, her question does not arise out of unbelief, but is merely a question of how.

"(35) **And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee:** therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be

called the Son of God". Gabriel gave the explanation that Y'shua would not have a natural father. He would be supernaturally conceived through the Holy Spirit. Only pure, untainted blood could be shed for the sins of man. Blood of the baby comes from the genes of the father and there was only one Father who was without sin.

The way this was going to be accomplished was by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. Ultimately, it is not the birth of Y'shua that is a miracle, since He was born like any other baby. The miracle was the conception, and by the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit she was going to conceive. Because the conception came by means of the Holy Spirit, two things resulted: (1) the Child would be sinless; He would be Holy, and (2) Deity, He shall be called the Son of YHWH.

A very common misconception has been made because of what is said here and needs to be dispelled. It was propagated in some circles that the reason for the necessity of the virgin birth was that this was the only possible way of keeping Y'shua from inheriting the sin nature. They go on to teach that the sin nature was transmitted through the male only. Since Y'shua did not have a human father, He was sinless. He only had a human mother and the sin nature is not transmitted through the mother. Actually, nowhere in the Bible does it say that the sin nature is transmitted through the male only. Sometimes, in fact, the Bible emphasises the female side of it more than the male side.

What kept Y'shua from inheriting the sin nature was not the absence of the male seed, but the overshadowing of the Holy Spirit. We should remember that YHWH, being YHWH, was not suddenly stuck with only one way of doing things. If YHWH wanted to, He could have produced a sinless being using both the male seed and the female egg. The reason for the virgin birth is that this is the way that YHWH chose to do it, not because this was the only way. He chose to do it this way, and in doing so fulfilled prophecies that He stated in the *Tanach*.

"(36) *And, behold, thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren.* (37) *For with God nothing shall be impossible".* A sign of confirmation was given to *Miriam* - the pregnancy of Elizabeth. Beyond the childbearing age, Elizabeth was now in her sixth month when *Miriam* conceived. In other words, Y'shua would be born nine months from this time. See the chronological events of *Yochanan* (John) and Y'shua's dates of birth under the section "**The Visitations**".

"(38) *And Mary said, Behold the handmaid of the Lord; be it unto me according to thy word. And the angel departed from her.*" The angel's message and sign satisfied *Miriam*. But, she must have been very much aware of the ridicule she was going to open herself up to. It is to her credit that serving YHWH was far more important than the accusations of men. At this point, *Miriam* totally submits herself to the will and care of YHWH. And well she might in the light of three things.

First, the *Tanach* penalty for a betrothed virgin suddenly found with child was execution by being stoned to death. *Miriam* had to trust YHWH that when it became more and more apparent that she was with child and not yet married to *Yoseph* that YHWH would protect her so that she would not be executed.

Secondly, she had to trust YHWH for the reaction of the community. She had to believe YHWH would protect her from being totally shunned from the community; and, therefore, her child being forever labelled illegitimate.

Thirdly, she needed to trust YHWH for her relationship with *Yoseph*. This was truly a great concern because he was in the process of divorcing *Miriam* from the betrothal relationship.

Miriam visits Elisheva (Elizabeth) (we continue to read from Luke chapter 1)

(39) "And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;

(40) And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.

(41) And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:

(42) And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb.

(43) And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?

(44) For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy.

(45) And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord".

"(39) *And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda;* (40) *And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth*". *Miriam* lived in Nazareth in Galilee and

traveled to Judah ±113 km south as the crow flies. YHWH allocated the area in and around Jerusalem to the tribe of Judah. This is the area where the priests lived—close enough to the Temple to do their Temple service, and Zacharias was one of these priests.

Now we have the visit of *Miriam* to Elizabeth. Why? Because the angel Gabriel (in the previous segment) also told *Miriam* that her cousin, Elizabeth, was pregnant. And for that reason *Miriam* now makes the journey from Galilee down to Judea to visit her cousin.

“(41) *And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, the babe leaped in her womb; and Elisabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost:* (42) *And she spake out with a loud voice, and said, Blessed art thou among women, and blessed is the fruit of thy womb*”. Already then, the baby in the womb of Elizabeth is performing the function for which he is going to be born, that of being the herald of the King. With the leaping of the babe in the womb, we are told next that Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. She is now controlled by the Holy Spirit and she gives forth a prophetic utterance in the subsequent verses.

“(43) *And whence is this to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?* (44) *For, lo, as soon as the voice of thy salutation sounded in mine ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy*”. The degree of revelation that Elizabeth received in this prophetic utterance is seen in what she calls *Miriam* - “the mother of my Lord”.

“(45) *And blessed is she that believed: for there shall be a performance of those things which were told her from the Lord*”. Also in this prophetic utterance of Elizabeth’s is a word of confirmation to *Miriam*. In it we are told the extent of her faith. She believed the message of the angel, and having believed, Elizabeth goes on to tell her that the promise of the angel will find its fulfilment.

The song of *Miriam* (we continue to read from Luke chapter 1)

- (46) “*And Mary said, My soul doth magnify the Lord,*
- (47) “*And my spirit hath rejoiced in God my Saviour.*
- (48) “*For he hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden: for, behold, from henceforth all generations shall call me blessed.*
- (49) “*For he that is mighty hath done to me great things; and holy is his name.*
- (50) “*And his mercy is on them that fear him from generation to generation.*
- (51) “*He hath shewed strength with his arm; he hath scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts.*
- (52) “*He hath put down the mighty from their seats, and exalted them of low degree.*
- (53) “*He hath filled the hungry with good things; and the rich he hath sent empty away.*
- (54) “*He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy;*
- (55) “*As he spake to our fathers, to Abraham, and to his seed for ever”.*

The “song of *Miriam*” is her response to the message YHWH had given her. *Miriam*’s song can be divided into two main sections. In verses 46-50, she talks about what YHWH did for her. In verses 51-55, she talks about what YHWH will do for Israel. The song of *Miriam* shows the extent of her spirituality and her knowledge of Scripture. This is because many things stated here are very similar to Hannah’s Song in the book of 1 Samuel.

She makes two main points in her song:

First, YHWH is her Messiah. The kinds of people that need a Messiah are sinners. By her own words, she contradicts the teaching of the Immaculate Conception that states that *Miriam* was born sinless. She is a sinner and needed a Messiah.

Secondly, the One coming will fulfil the promises made to Abraham.

(56) *And Mary abode with her about three months, and returned to her own house*”. Elizabeth was already six months pregnant before *Miriam* arrived. *Miriam* stayed another three months with her to help her in her final days of pregnancy. When *Miriam* left to go back to Nazareth, *Miriam* was three months pregnant. See the chronological events of *Yochanan* (John) and *Y’shua*’s dates of birth under the section “The Visitations”.

Birth of *Yochanan* (John) (we continue to read from Luke chapter 1)

- (57) “*Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son.*
- (58) “*And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her.*
- (59) “*And it came to pass, that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father.*

- (60) And his mother answered and said, Not so; but he shall be called John.
 (61) And they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name.
 (62) And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called.
 (63) And he asked for a writing table, and wrote, saying, His name is John. And they marvelled all.
 (64) And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God.
 (65) And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea.
 (66) And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him.
 (67) And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying,
 (68) Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people,
 (69) And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David;
 (70) As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began:
 (71) That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us;
 (72) To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant;
 (73) The oath which he sware to our father Abraham,
 (74) That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear,
 (75) In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life.
 (76) And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways;
 (77) To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins,
 (78) Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the day-spring from on high hath visited us,
 (79) To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace.
 (80) And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel".

"(57) Now Elisabeth's full time came that she should be delivered; and she brought forth a son. (58) And her neighbours and her cousins heard how the Lord had shewed great mercy upon her; and they rejoiced with her. (59) And it came to pass, **that on the eighth day they came to circumcise the child; and they called him Zacharias, after the name of his father**". Yochanan the Immerser is born and it is time to name him. Of course, the angel had already instructed what the name would be. However, that raises a problem with the community. It was a Jewish custom to name a child on the day of his circumcision (on the eighth day after birth) and to use the name of a relative. There is a Hebrew folk saying, recorded in the Bible, to indicate that a person's name can illustrate his or her character: *kishmo ken hu* "Like his name, so is he" (1 Sam 25:25). If, for example, a woman's name is Rinah, meaning "song" (or "joy"), and she is a musical person, one might use this saying to indicate how appropriate her birth name is in retrospect, looking back on her life from the present.

Names in the Bible can also be seen to predict at birth what that person's character will subsequently turn out to be. For example, the name of the patriarch Jacob, or Ya'akov, means "usurper"; it describes both how he tried to usurp his brother Esau's prior exit from the womb by grabbing his heel during birth (Ya'akov in fact derives from *ekev*, meaning "heel") and how he ultimately usurped *Esau* as the heir of their father, Isaac; and grandfather, Abraham. Similarly, the name of the prophet Samuel, or *Shemu'el*, means (according to some scholars) "the one about whom YHWH heard me", referring to his heretofore barren mother's prayer for a child.

Traditionally, in other words, the name given a child is considered to be a matter of great importance, having considerable influence on the development of that child's character.

History of circumcision

"And God spoke to Abraham saying: ...This is my covenant which you shall keep between Me and you and thy seed after you -**every male child among you shall be circumcised**". (Gen 17:12)

Brit Milah, the "covenant of circumcision", was commanded by YHWH to Abraham over 3,700 years ago. It has been carried out faithfully from generation to generation, even during times of religious and ethnic persecution when Jews were forced to practice their rituals in secret. In fact, the only time the Jewish people willingly desisted from this practice was during the 40 years of wandering in the Sinai wilderness. Before entering Canaan, every male was circumcised by Joshua.

Since the time of Abraham, Jews have observed the ritual of circumcision as the fundamental sign of the covenant between YHWH and Israel. "The Covenant of Circumcision" is known as *Brit* (or *Bris* meaning "pact") *Milah* in Hebrew. For Jews, this is more than merely a medical procedure. The circumcision is a sign of the child's entry into Judaism.

In every country where Jews resided, they have practised this ritual; sometimes at great personal risk and sacrifice.

The Procedure:

The procedure involved in *Brit Milah* differs from medical circumcision in that heavy clamping or other interventional instruments are forbidden. It is performed by a *Mohel* (Ritual Circumcisior) who uses a protective shield to ensure the utmost safety for the child. Afterwards, the incision is cleaned thoroughly through a uniquely Jewish practice called *m'tzitzah*. If even a thread or speck is left, it is considered to be incomplete.

The procedure is extremely quick and relatively painless. According to most Rabbinic authorities, Jewish law does allow the use of a topical anaesthetic cream. Many *Mohalim* (ritual Circumcisors) use it routinely, with the approval of the family's doctor.

Who Performs the Procedure:

A *Mohel* (ritual Circumcisior) performs the procedure. This person must be trained and certified. A *Mohel* must be trained in both circumcision and Jewish laws and traditions. While traditionally a job held by men, there are now female *Mohalim* in some communities.

A *Mohel* must be an expert in both medical and surgical procedures and sterilisation. This person must also be an observant Jew. In this way, the child is entered into spiritual life at the time of the procedure.

When:

A *Brit Milah* (Circumcision) is performed on the eighth day after birth if the baby is healthy. Even if this day would be *Shabbat* (the Sabbath), or any festival—including *Yom Kippur* (the Day of Atonement), nothing is to stop this service.

Orthodox tradition says that the *Brit* of a baby delivered **by caesarean section** should not be performed on the Sabbath or on a Jewish holiday. If the eighth day falls on one of these, then the *Brit* should be delayed until the next weekday.

A *Brit Milah* is never performed if it poses any danger to the infant. The doctor and/or mohel's advice to delay a *Brit* for health reasons should always be heeded. In case of jaundice (yellow pigmentation of the skin), the *brit* cannot be performed; it is delayed until the *bilirubin* in the blood drops to a safe level. The *brit* may then be performed without endangering the child. In some cases of illness, a delay of seven days following full recovery is required.

It is forbidden to postpone the *brit* for any reason other than health of the child, or in order to obtain a proper *Mohel*. It is the responsibility of the *Mohel*, in consultation with the doctor and the family, to determine if a delay is required.

The Ceremony:

For it is written, "*And in the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised*", and it was taught: The whole day is valid for circumcision, but the zealous are early (to perform) their religious duties; for it is said, "*And Abraham rose early in the morning!*" (Gen 22:3). The best time, therefore, for circumcision is early in the morning (*Pesachim* 4a.)

The baby is brought in to the room, carried by the *kvatter* and *kvatterin* (the godparents).

There are two chairs prepared. The first is the one for the *sandek* who holds the baby on their knees during the actual circumcision. The lap of the *sandek* is considered similar to the altar of the Temple. It is considered a great honour to be the *sandek*. Tradition says that this honour links the soul of *sandek* and the child. This person will be the spiritual mentor of the child. Often one of the grandfathers assumes this role.

The second chair is set aside for the spirit of Elijah the Prophet of blessed memory. According to Jewish tradition, Elijah comes to every circumcision to testify before the Almighty to the commitment of the Jewish people to this great *mitzvah* (commandment) through the generations. Just before the *Brit*, the baby is placed

on the chair of Elijah, and the *mohel* recites a special prayer asking for the spirit of Elijah to stand over him as he performs the *Brit*.

The *mohel* uses a probe to lift the *priah* (underlying membrane) into the *orlah* (foreskin). He determines the amount to be removed and fixes a shield in the correct place. The *priah* and *orlah* are cut with one sweep along the shield. A special knife called an *izmail* is used. Traditionally, the knife is sharp on both edges to eliminate the possibility of causing the child pain. Lastly, blood is drawn (*metzitzah*), which is a therapeutic prescription from the *Talmudic* period. A sterile dressing with topical anesthetic is applied. When performed by a competent *mohel*, the entire procedure, which flows as one continuous motion, takes less than a minute. The excised foreskin is buried in the earth.

The parents recite the *berakhah* (blessing) "...who has sanctified us by Thy commandments and commanded us to enter our sons into the covenant of Abraham, our father". The *mohel* responds "...even as this child has entered into the covenant, so may he enter into a life of Torah, the marriage canopy and good deeds".

The child is then held by the *mohel*, *sandak* or another honoured guest. With *kiddush* cup in hand, the *mohel* recites the blessing for "wine", giving a drop to the child. A second blessing praising YHWH, "who established a covenant with His people, Israel", is said.

Finally, the *mohel* offers a prayer for the welfare of the child during which his Hebrew name is formally announced. The child is given another taste of "wine".

The *brit milah* is a cause for celebration and should be treated that way. You may want to decorate the house or synagogue with flowers or candles. "Every Mitzvah that they accepted upon themselves with joy... they still perform with joy". (Talmud, Shabbat 130a.) Rashi interpreted this to mean that a festive meal should be prepared. Included in this meal should be *challah* (bread) and kosher "wine". The meal was/is a foreshadowing of the "Holy Communion". While you will probably want to provide a festive table of food for your "selected" guests (the meal considered a *seudat mitzvah*, a meal with sacred status), at a minimum you will need the loaf of *challah* or other bread (or two if it is *Shabbat* or a holiday), kosher wine, and a *kiddush* cup. You may want to provide *kippot* (head coverings) for those who wish to wear them.

It is customary not to issue a direct invitation to the circumcision meal, for one may not refuse to attend. To do so would be equal to turning down the opportunity to perform a *Mitzvah* (commandment). At the conclusion of the meal, *Birkat Hamazon* is recited with special blessings for the child, parents, *sandak* and *mohel*.

In an ideal world, a *minyan* (ten Jewish men above age 13 - or in some conservative or reform traditions, 10 adult Jews) will be present for the *brit*, but it is not required.

Baby Naming:

I mentioned the Hebrew name. This is an important part of synagogue life. In the *Torah* it says that YHWH changed Abraham's name from *Avram* to *Avraham* at the time of his circumcision. In keeping with that tradition, a Jewish boy is given his Hebrew name at the time of his *Brit Milah*. Judaism places a great deal of significance on a child's Hebrew name. It is customary to name the child after someone who led a righteous life so that the child will try to emulate that individual.

The Hebrew naming of a baby girl should take place at the first occasion after the baby is born when the father can be called to the *Torah* scroll. At that time, there is a special prayer recited on behalf of the mother and the baby, and a Hebrew name is given to the child. In conservative and reform traditions, the mother and father may both be called to the *Torah* scroll. Who a baby girl is named after is the same as for boys.

It is interesting to note that the ritual of "*Pidyon HaBin*" (redemption of the firstborn) is not being performed for *Yochanan*. The reason is that both Elizabeth and Zacharias were descendants of the tribe of Levi, and this ritual does not apply to them. See the *Pidyon HaBin* section under "**The Visitations**" as it was applicable to *Y'shua*.

"(60) And **his mother answered** and said, Not so; but **he shall be called John**". As said, the angel had already instructed what the name would be: (*Yochanan*) and Elizabeth insisted.

"(61) And **they said unto her, There is none of thy kindred that is called by this name**". According to Jewish custom of that day, you named your child after a relative, whether living or dead. In modern Jewish

tradition, you still do this to a degree, except it must always be a dead relative. However, neither Elizabeth's side of the family, nor on Zacharias' side, had ever had someone named *Yochanan*. Elizabeth's response is probably due to Zacharias' inability to speak, since according to custom it is the father's responsibility to name the child.

"(62) **And they made signs to his father, how he would have him called**". The neighbours do not seem to like what Elizabeth is doing, so they try to go over her head and go to her husband.

"(63) **And he asked for a writing tablet, and wrote**, saying, **His name is John**". And they marvelled all". Zacharias cannot speak out so he writes on a tablet that the name is to be *Yochanan*.

"(64) **And his mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue loosed, and he spake, and praised God**. (65) And fear came on all that dwelt round about them: and all these sayings were noised abroad throughout all the hill country of Judaea. (66) And all they that heard them laid them up in their hearts, saying, *What manner of child shall this be! And the hand of the Lord was with him*". When he exercises this new act of obedience, the judgment of dumbness is now removed and he is able to speak. No doubt when Zacharias could speak again, he shared with them what the angel had said concerning the prophecy in Malachi, which we will discuss later. The miracle of him getting his speech back was confirmation. *Yochanan* would some day lead the way for the coming of the Messiah that Israel had wanted for several hundred years.

"(67) **And his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Ghost, and prophesied, saying, (68) Blessed be the Lord God of Israel; for he hath visited and redeemed his people**". When Zacharias speaks, he is now filled with the Holy Spirit and he issues a song found in verses 68-79. This song can be divided into two main segments: (1) verses 68-75 speak of the Messiah who is to come; and (2) verses 76-79 talk about his own son, *Yochanan*.

"(69) **And hath raised up an horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David**; (70) As he spake by the mouth of his holy prophets, which have been since the world began: (71) **That we should be saved from our enemies, and from the hand of all that hate us**". Again, we find him relating the coming of Messiah to the Jewish covenants. In this verse it is the Davidic Covenant.

"(72) **To perform the mercy promised to our fathers, and to remember his holy covenant**; (73) **The oath which he sware to our father Abraham**", In these verses, it is the Abrahamic Covenant.

"(74) **That he would grant unto us, that we being delivered out of the hand of our enemies might serve him without fear, (75) In holiness and righteousness before him, all the days of our life**". Also we find in these verses the play on words of the meaning of Zacharias, "YHWH remembers"; and Elizabeth, "oath or covenant of YHWH"—the combined meaning of: "YHWH remembers His covenants". The last line of verse 72 and the first line of verse 73 give you the interplay. The oaths, in particular, are contained in the Jewish covenants; but now with the coming of Messiah, the covenants are to find their fulfilment.

"(76) **And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways**". He will not merely be a forerunner, but he will have the office of a prophet. The Hebrew word for prophet is "Navi", and it signifies a spokesman or one who speaks for a divine power to human beings. The idea of prophecy is based on belief in YHWH, on whom the destiny and the well-being of man depends.

"(77) **To give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission of their sins**". It is the New Covenant in this verse. So, three of the Jewish covenants are related here to the coming of Messiah.

"(78) **Through the tender mercy of our God; whereby the dayspring from on high hath visited us**". The word "Dayspring" means daystar, or the morning star. The morning star announces the coming of day. In that sense, *Yochanan* is the dayspring. He is the morning star announcing the coming of the Sun of Righteousness of the book of Malachi (4:2).

"(79) **To give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace**". The two-fold ministry of the Sun of Righteousness is given in this verse, and notice the exchange of pronouns: "to give light to them (to shine upon them, the Gentiles) *that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our* (the Jews) *feet in the way of peace*". The contrast is between "them" and "our", Gentile and Jew.

"(80) **And the child grew, and waxed strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his shewing unto Israel**". Early in life (we are not sure of what age) he leaves the town in which he is born and goes into the

wilderness of Judea. He spends most of his life there. But, this does one thing for *Yochanan*: it separates him from the man-made traditions of the Judaism of his day. When his message finally does come, it is going to be richer than the Judaism of his day. *Yochanan* the Immerser was a wonder-child, born to a priestly couple in their old age. For some years before his “manifestation to Israel”, since the discovery of the Dead Sea Scrolls, it has been thought probable that his wilderness visit was not isolated. Perhaps he lived for a time (perhaps most of his adult life) in the community of the Essenes at Qumran. Josephus, the First-Century historian, wrote that the Essenes “adopted other men’s children and molded them according to their principles”. It is thought by some that Zacharias and Elizabeth allowed the Essenes to adopt their son at some late point in time and raise him, suspecting that their lives would soon end as they had been very old. Also, to ensure that their son was taught the principles that they believed in, the Essenes would be the closest group to do this.

Birth of Y’shua HaMashiach (Y’shua the Messiah) (we read again from Matthew chapter 1)

- (18) “Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost.
- (19) *Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily.*
- (20) *But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost.*
- (21) *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins.*
- (22) *Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,*
- (23) *Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us.*
- (24) *Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife:*
- (25) *And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS”.*

“(18) Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, **before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost**”. In this segment the emphasis is on the virgin birth. Remember, Matthew is trying to solve the problem of Jechonias the cursed, and for Matthew the solution to the problem is the virgin birth. So, three times he emphasises it. We are now dealing with Matthew because he tells the story from Yoseph’s perspective.

“(19) *Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a publick example, was minded to put her away privily*”. By Jewish law, to break a betrothal required a bill of divorce (get). As Yoseph was thinking of breaking the betrothal, he would have to deal with a bill of divorce. The *Mishnah* says, “Should a bridegroom have to complain of non-virginity on the part of the bride, he presents himself early the next morning to the *Bet Din*”. This was Yoseph’s first option at that point since his wife-to-be was pregnant, indicating that she was not a virgin. He could bring her before the *Bet Din* and get the divorce finalised. This procedure is called “*Sotah*”. According to the *Mishnah* the espoused wife may thus, before the marriage, be put away.

According to Jewish custom, his second option was to affect the divorce privately instead of bringing her before a public tribunal and expose her to public disgrace. This is exactly what Yoseph was contemplating when the angel told him to proceed with the marriage.

“(20) *But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the Lord appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost*”. The angel’s message to Yoseph can be summarised in three points.

First, he is to fulfil the marriage vow to *Miriam*.

Secondly, he is to believe and accept *Miriam’s* story.

And thirdly, all is going according to plan.

“(21) *And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins*”. The fact that Y’shua was a Jew by birth is crucial for understanding the nature and person of Y’shua as being presented in the Synoptic Gospels. He was given the Hebrew name Y’shua. This name, derived from the Hebrew verb “*yasha*”, revealed the destiny He was to fulfil in His life and ministry on this earth.

"(22) Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying,

(23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name

Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us". As in the previous explanation of these verses: In quoting this verse in Isaiah, it tells us the way this verse was understood by the Jewish people of that day. They knew it was speaking of a virgin birth. That is the literal meaning of that verse.

"(24) Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: (25) And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS". Indeed, YHWH did work out Miriam's relationship with Yoseph. In this concluding segment two things must be noted.

First, Yoseph immediately obeyed the angel, being a righteous and spiritual man himself. He took Miriam to be his wife and followed through with the marriage ceremony.

Secondly, it clearly says "he knew her not", meaning he had no sexual relations with her until she brought forth a Son.

After the birth of Y'shua, they did have subsequent sexual relations; and this falsifies the common claim that Miriam remained a virgin for the rest of her life. The teaching of the "perpetual virginity" of Miriam is not Scriptural. Not only did she not remain a virgin; but furthermore, she possibly gave birth to as many as six other children (Mat 13:55-56).

We continue with Luke chapter 2:

(1) "And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, that all the world should be taxed.

(2) (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.)

(3) And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city.

(4) And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

(5) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

(6) And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

(7) And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn".

"(1) And it came to pass in those days, that there went out a decree from Caesar Augustus, **that all the world should be taxed**. (2) (And this taxing was first made when Cyrenius was governor of Syria.) (3) **And all went to be taxed, every one into his own city**". The Romans forced the people to go to their hometowns for tax (registration) purposes. The detail can be seen under the section "**Matt 2:2-4 A Star out of Jacob**".

"(4) And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, **into Judaea, unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem; (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)**" Under normal circumstances, the registration was a Roman law exercised under Jewish custom. The practical Romans normally had a census taken for taxation in one's own city of residence. To keep peace with the Jews, however, the Romans allowed the Jews to return to their tribal cities to enroll and pay taxes. As descendants of David, Yoseph and Miriam were required to return to Bethlehem. When viewed from a human perspective, Yoseph and Miriam came to Bethlehem because it was required by the law. From the divine perspective, however, YHWH was acting providentially to bring them to the place where Micah had prophesied that the Messiah would be born (Micah 5:2-5).

"(5) **To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child**". At the birth of Y'shua, Miriam is still noted as Yoseph's espoused wife because they still had not consummated the marriage through having sexual relations.

"(6) **And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.** (7) **And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn**". Most people will be surprised to know that Y'shua was actually born in a "stable". Many people lived in caves in Y'shua's time. A section in the cave was also allocated for the owner's animals, to be protected from the elements of nature. But Y'shua's stable was not a cave as will be explained later.

This is also a good time to discuss the year of Y'shua's birth. Let's do it on several points. Some scholars say we know that Y'shua had to be born prior to the year 4 B.C., for the simple reason that in that year Herod the Great died. At the time of Y'shua's birth, Herod was still living. They claim the decree of Cyrenius came in the

year 8 B.C., and that they can draw some conclusion in that the birth of Y'shua had to take place somewhere between 8 and 4 B.C. They continue by saying they can draw even a firmer year because of some subsequent records that they have.

One of these records is Josephus, a Jewish historian, who wrote roughly around A.D. 80-90. He tells that Herod the Great left Jerusalem in the year 5 B.C. and went to Jericho. He remained there until his death. Since the wise men saw him in Jerusalem, it tells us that the birth of Y'shua would have to be moved back somewhere around the year 6 B.C. or earlier.

They say Josephus also tells us something else. During the entire year of 8 B.C., Herod was outside of Jerusalem fighting a war. From this they can conclude that Y'shua was born somewhere between 7 and 6 B.C. Most scholars now use the conservative date of 4 B.C.—but is it really the correct date? See the sections, “The Death of Herod” and “The Astronomical Perspective”, under Matt 2:2-3.

The visitations (we continue to read from Luke chapter 2):

- (8) “And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.
- (9) *And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.*
- (10) *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*
- (11) *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord.*
- (12) *And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*
- (13) *And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying,*
- (14) *Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men.*
- (15) *And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us.*
- (16) *And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger.*
- (17) *And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child.*
- (18) *And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds.*
- (19) *But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart.*
- (20) *And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them”.*

“(8) And there were in the same country **shepherds** abiding **in the field**, keeping watch over their flock **by night**”. This one statement gives us a hint about the time of the season of the year. This verse is often used by the bulk of Christians as an argument against the month of December as being the time of Y'shua's birth.

Please take note, Y'shua was not born in December as will be proven. We are told there were “**shepherds**” and “**their flock**” out there “**in the field**”. You just don't have shepherds and sheep out there “**in the field**” in December. Why? It is extremely cold, especially at night, from the snow in the winter months. Israel is in the northern hemisphere and winter is in December. No shepherd in his right mind would allow his flock to be exposed to these extremely cold conditions. This is only one of the reasons why Y'shua could not have been born in December. Allow me to explain further.

The date of the birth of Y'shua is easy to document, but it is **not** a well-known fact. This is done by establishing several things:

- 1) The date that Gabriel the angel tells Zacharias, the soon-to-be father of *Yochanan*, about his son's birth.
- 2) The birth date of *Yochanan* is then established by going forward nine months, the term of pregnancy.
- 3) The approximate date of *Miriam*'s conception.
- 4) The date of Herod's death (See sections “The Death of Herod” and “The Astronomical Perspective” under Matt 2:2-3).

The date that Gabriel the angel told Zacharias that he and Elizabeth were going to have *Yochanan* is established from the following. Luke 1:5 states that Zacharias is a priest of the course of “*Abijah*”. King David, according to 1 Chron 24, divided the priestly families into twenty-four groups. Each group was called a

mishmar (a course or division), and named after the head of that particular family. Each course served for one week in the first half of the year, and for another week in the second half of the year.

This was in addition to the weeks of *Hag haMatzah* (the Feast of Unleavened Bread of which Passover is part of), *Shavuot* (the Feast of Pentecost), and *Sukkoth* (the Feast of Tabernacles). These are the three most important festival periods when YHWH requires every Jewish male to be present in Jerusalem at the Temple. During this time Jerusalem and the surrounding areas / villages / towns, etc.; i.e., Bethlehem, were overcrowded with thousands of people coming from various places, and all accommodations were normally fully booked.

During this *Shalosh Regalim* periods, all the Temple courses (divisions) were required to be present: “**Three times in a year shall all thy males appear before the LORD thy God in the place which he shall choose** (Temple); **in the feast of unleavened bread** (*Hag HaMatzah* – Pesach), and **in the feast of weeks** (Pentecost), and **in the feast of tabernacles** (*Sukkoth*): and they shall not appear before the LORD empty:” All males were compelled by the law of YHWH to draw up to Jerusalem (**Positive Law 53: Exod 34:23 - On appearing before God during the Festivals: Deut 16:16**. Additionally: Exod 23:14-17, **Positive Law 52: Exod 23:14 - On the three annual Festival pilgrimages to the Temple.**)

Under normal circumstances, the first course (division) served the first week of the year (Aviv / Nisan); the second course the second week; then all the priest courses together in the third because it was *Hag haMatzah*, and so on. 1 Chron 24:10 lists the course of *Abijah* (Abia) as the ‘eighth course’ in the sequence of the program, but it would literally fall on the ‘tenth week’ of the first half of the year. Why, because of allowing a week each for *Hag haMatzah* (Unleavened Bread – 14th of Aviv / Nisan) and *Shavuot* (Pentecost – 7 weeks later). It is at **this time in the tenth week, at Sivan**, when Zacharias receives the prophecy of *Yochanan*’s birth. Let’s now put the pieces together:

Month Number	Babylonian Calendar	Chronology of events	Christian / Gregorian calendar equivalent
1	Aviv (Nisan)		April, May
2	Iyyar		May, June
3	Sivan	Late in Sivan – Elizabeth conceived Yochanan	June, July
4	Tammuz		July, August
5	Av		August
6	Elul		September
7	Tishri		September, October
8	Cheshvan		October, November
9	Kislev		November, December
10	Tevet		December, January
11	Shevat		January, February
12	Adar		February, March

At the time of *Yochanan*’s birth, now nine months later (Adar – February / March), *Miriam* is three months pregnant: Luke 1:35-41 “And the angel answered and said unto her (Miriam), The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. (36) And, behold, **thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her**, who was called barren ... (39) And Mary arose in those days, and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Juda; (40) **And entered into the house of Zacharias, and saluted Elisabeth.** (41) And it came to pass, that, when Elisabeth heard the salutation of Mary, **the babe leaped in her womb**”.

Six months following Elizabeth’s conception, the angel Gabriel is sent to *Miriam*, the cousin of Elizabeth:

Month Number	Babylonian Calendar	Chronology of events	Christian / Gregorian calendar equivalent
1	Aviv (Nisan)		April, May
2	Iyyar		May, June
3	Sivan	Late in Sivan – Elizabeth conceived Yochanan	June, July
4	Tammuz		July, August
5	Av		August
6	Elul		September

Month Number	Babylonian Calendar	Chronology of events	Christian / Gregorian calendar equivalent
7	Tishri		September, October
8	Cheshvan		October, November
9	Kislev	Late Kislev – Elizabeth 6 months pregnant – Miriam now conceives Y'shua (Chanukkah – the Feast of Dedication)	November, December
10	Tevet		December, January
11	Shevat		January, February
12	Adar		February, March

Three months later was the time of *Yochanan*'s birth, and that would be approximately *Pesach* (Passover). This is very important as the religious Jews at that time (even today), expected that Elijah would appear (Mal 4:5) during Passover. Remember, *Yochanan* came in the spirit of Elijah (Matt 11:7-14) and not in the flesh.

John the Baptist, Chanukkah, Pesach, and Succoth

Luke tells us that Elizabeth was six months pregnant when the angel Gabriel visited Mary. The beginning of Elizabeth's sixth month would have been the 25th day of the Jewish month of *Kislev*, which is the first day of *Chanukkah*. *Chanukkah* is known as the "Feast of Lights" or "The Feast of the Dedication" (John 10:22). This date is considered by some to be the first day of the dedication of the Tabernacle and of the first and second Temples, as well as the rededication of the second Temple after the Maccabean revolt. Except for the rededication following the Maccabean revolt, it is not completely clear from Scripture what role the day of Kislev 25 played in the dedication, but Scripture tells us that the foundation of the second Temple was laid on *Kislev* 24 (Hag 2:18). It is, however, clear that *Miriam* was being dedicated for a purpose of enormous magnitude.

Also, if *Miriam* was conceived on *Chanukkah*, the feast of the Dedication of Lights, then John 1:6-9 makes perfect sense: "(6) There was a man sent from God, whose **name was John**. (7) He came as a **witness** to testify to the **light**, so that all might believe through him. (8) He himself was not the light, but he came to testify to the **light**. (9) The true **light**, which **enlightens everyone**, was **coming into the world**".

Now, if *Miriam* conceived on *Kislev* 25, then *Y'shua* would have been born on the first day of *Succoth* (the Feast of Tabernacles)—approximately 280 (max 285) days later. Note: 25 Kislev to 25 Tishri is 9 full Jewish months; a Jewish month is shorter than a Gregorian month. Deduct 10 days from the 25 of Tishri to the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles, which is on the 15th of Tishri. (280 divided by 7 +40, meaning 7 cycles of 40 days).

Also, if John the Baptist was born on the first day of the *Pesach* (the Passover feast - *Nisan* 15), *Y'shua* would have been born exactly six months later on the 15th day of the month of *Tishri*. This is the first day of the Feast of Tabernacles. It is a high day, a special Sabbath, a time of great rejoicing!

Month Number	Babylonian Calendar	Chronology of events	Christian Gregorian calendar equivalent
1	Aviv (Nisan)	Elizabeth gave birth (Pesach – Passover) Miriam now 3 months pregnant	April, May
2	Iyyar		May, June
3	Sivan		June, July
4	Tammuz		July, August
5	Av		August
6	Elul		September

Month Number	Babylonian Calendar	Chronology of events	Christian Gregorian calendar equivalent
7	Tishri		September, October
8	Cheshvan		October, November
9	Kislev		November, December
10	Tevet		December, January
11	Shevat		January, February
12	Adar		February, March

Going forward six months places the birth of Y'shua at late September or early October, the time of *Succoth*. (From December/January to September/October would be a normal gestation period of 280 days, approximately – 9 months.)

Josephus records that Herod's death came late in "the fall", which is correct. The fall of the leaves from the trees is another way to say autumn / winter.

Remember that winter in the Northern Hemisphere starts in November and goes through to February. Since Herod was alive at the time of Y'shua's birth (September / October), this also confirms the time of the year.

Month Number	Babylonian Calendar	Chronology of events	Christian / Gregorian calendar equivalent
1	Aviv (Nisan)	Elizabeth gave birth (Pesach – Passover) Miriam now 3 months pregnant	April, May
2	Iyyar		May, June
3	Sivan		June, July
4	Tammuz		July, August
5	Av		August
6	Elul		September
7	Tishri	Miriam gave birth 6 months later to Y'shua during the Feast of Succoth (Tabernacles)!	September, October
8	Cheshvan		October, November
9	Kislev	Herod died any time from here ...	November, December
10	Tevet		December, January
11	Shevat	...to here	January, February
12	Adar		February, March

We continue with "**The visitations**", by reading from Luke chapter 2:

"(9) And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid. (10) And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people". The glory of YHWH is the Shekhinah Glory, and this is the first appearance since the days of Ezekiel. Ezekiel the prophet records how the Shekhinah Glory (Presence Glory) departed from Israel in four successive and reluctant stages, hoping for the people of Israel to repent. But, Israel did not repent—and so the Shekhinah disappears from Jewish history. Here the Shekhinah is used to announce the birth of a Jewish King to Jewish shepherds.

"(11) For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, **which is Christ the Lord**". Christ is Greek for Messiah and means the "Anointed One". According to Jewish thought of those days, He was to be a charismatically endowed descendant of King David, whom the Jews of the Roman period believed would be raised up by YHWH to break the yoke of the heathen Roman Empire and reign over a restored kingdom of Israel to which all Jews of the Exile would return. This thought is very common in Zacharias' prophecy.

"(12) And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger". Such a momentous event required a sign. The sign was that the Babe would be wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger. One would expect a King to be lying in luxurious garments in a palace. This King laid aside His glory (Phil 2:7). The fact that He is lying in a "manger" tells us that he is in a stable. In those days, stables were actually natural caves in the hillsides or wooden structures (pen, fold, kraal) in which were used during the warmer months.

In biblical times, raw caves served as houses as well, and the owner/lodger shared the cave with his animals during night-time. In the case of a wooden structure, the person or shepherd occupying the stable would

actually sleep in the door to protect his animals in the fold. That is why Y'shua said he is the "door". My opinion is that it was a wooden structure, as I will explain. Either way, it was not a *Kosher* place.

During this time of year, during the month of *Tishri* (September/October), during the seven days of *Succoth* (Feast of Tabernacles), all Jews had to stay in "**temporary shelters**" outside their normal houses or boarding place.

During these seven days of *Sukkoth*, people were actually required to erect and dwell in small temporary booths (shelters or "*succas*") for the celebration of *Succoth*, which is also called the Feast of Booths or Feast of Ingathering (Exod 23:16, 34:22). It is important to note that every Jew and his family had to stay for a period of seven days in their temporary booth made of tree boughs, etc.; and gazed toward the east hoping to see the star, or phenomenon, that would herald the birth of their Messiah (Lev 23:34, 41). During September/October (*Tishri*) when this feast is celebrated, the nights in Israel are not cold as the summer only ended, and the winter only starts in November/December.

The prophet Isaiah also bears witness to the occasion of the birth of Y'shua *HaMashiach* during the Feast of Tabernacles when he said, "*They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest*". (Isaiah 9:3). This feast was in the fall of the year (autumn) at the time of ingathering, or harvesting of all things out of the field (Exod 23:16). Isaiah explains this joy in the sixth verse of this ninth chapter when he declared, "*For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given*" indicating that the "joy in harvest" was actually the birth of Y'shua at the time of harvest, or Ingathering.

Another small scriptural clue which has been overlooked and lends credence to this thought is found in John 1:14, which translated literally declares, "*And the Word became flesh; and tabernacled among us*", (Greek – ho logos sark egeneto, pai eskenosen en hemin.) Here we have a key which reveals to the alert eye that the time at which the Word was made flesh and tabernacled among men was in the Feast of Tabernacles (Isaiah 9:2-3).

Verse 10 of Luke chapter 2 also gives us a clue about the time of the birth by the angel who appeared to the shepherds and said, "*Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people*". There are actually two clues here. *Succoth* is a festival of joy, and it is also known as the "Festival of the Nations". The angel was actually giving them a greeting for the Festival of *Succoth*. This is the only festival where the "nations" are positively encouraged to participate. (Zech 14:16-19).

As said, during *Succoth*, the Jews construct flimsy shelters called "*Succas*", using wood, branches and leaves, and eat or sleep in them. This is to remember how they were completely dependent on YHWH as they wandered around for forty years in the wilderness when they came out of Egypt. They are celebrating "God with us". The birth of Y'shua at *Succoth* fulfills another prophecy: "*Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us*". (Mat 1:23) A quotation from Isaiah 7:14: "*Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel*".

If this is not enough, we also have to consider the type of dwelling in which Y'shua was born. Had it not been for the inconvenience caused by the census, he would have been born in a cave house like all other children. But he wasn't, he was born in a "stable". Manger is "phátne" in Greek, and is generally described as "**a manger or crib at which cattle are fed**". Gen 33:17 tells us that Jacob made *succas* for his cattle. The crib to feed animals in was normally made out of wood, for the convenience of cleaning. I therefore present to you that Y'shua was born in a flimsy dwelling, a *succah*, in a place where they kept sheep and cattle.

Another fact is that *Yoseph* and *Miriam* would not break the law and had to comply with **Positive Law 168 - Lev 23:42 - On dwelling in a Sukkah (booth) for seven days**. So Y'shua was born in a *Succah*, to indicate that YHWH had come to earth to dwell with humanity.

From this we can logically conclude that the date of the birth of Y'shua *HaMashiach* was undoubtedly during the Feast of Tabernacles in the Jewish month *Tishri* (September/October), on the first day of the feast, the great day and solemn assembly. (Lev 23:39; John 7:37).

Other arguments against the birth having taken place in December:

The extreme improbability, amounting almost to impossibility, that *Miriam*, under such circumstances, could have undertaken a journey of about 113 kilometers (as the crow flies), through the hill district averaging some 3,000 feet above sea-level, in the depth of winter when it is snowing in Israel.

Shepherds and their flocks would not be found "abiding" (Greek 'agrauleo') in the open fields at night in December (*Tebeth*); for the paramount reason that there would be no pasturage at that time. It was the

custom then (as now) to withdraw the flocks, starting during the month *Marchesven* (October -November), from the open districts and house them for the winter.

Biblical traditions on the Feast of Tabernacles and why Y'shua said certain things later in his life on these days

During the Feast of Tabernacles on the last day of the seven-day feast, two major ceremonies were performed. The first one is the drawing of water '*nissuch ha-mayim*' or '*hoshanna rabba*'. It is a major ceremony but was not part of the biblical celebration of the feast. The feast reached its height with this ceremony and is rooted deep in the agriculture (harvest) character of the feast.

Rain was a prominent feature in the celebration of the feast, and the water-drawing ceremony was a joyous occasion. Why was the name of it called 'the drawing out of water'? Because of the pointing to Y'shua, according to what is said in Isaiah 12:2-3. "*Behold, God is my salvation* (Y'shua); *I will trust, and not be afraid: for the LORD JEHOVAH is my strength and my song; he also is become my salvation* (Y'shua). **Therefore with joy shall ye draw water out of the wells of salvation** (Y'shua)".

Years go by and Y'shua is in Jerusalem on the last day of the Feast of Tabernacles when this water drawing ceremony is performed. It was during this ceremony when He uttered this awesome statement:

"(37) ***In the last day, that great day of the feast,*** Jesus stood and ***cried,*** saying, ***If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink.*** (38) ***He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water.*** (39) (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (John 7:37- 39)

The Hebrew ritual:

Levitical priests descend down to the Pool of Siloam and fill a special golden flask (pitcher) with water. They return through the Water Gate of Jerusalem and 'shofars' are sounded.

The golden flask is then placed with two silver basins, which are different from one another, on the southern side of the great altar – one filled with water and the other with wine. While the words of Psalm 113 and 118 are recited, they shake palm branches in their hands and march seven times around the burnt offering altar, while the water/wine drips to the base of the altar. It was during this water drawing ceremony when Y'shua said the words in John 7:37- 39.

A second major ceremony is also performed later the day when the sun sets and that is the illumination of the Temple, with four enormous golden lampstands higher than the Temple walls. That night Jerusalem glittered like a diamond.

But the brightness of the holy city during the ceremony of illumination paled in the presence of Y'shua. In the brilliance of the gloriously lit Temple, Y'shua cried that night, "*I am the light of the world; he who follows me shall not walk in the darkness, but shall have the light of life.*" (John 8:12)

As the Jews celebrate the end of the agricultural period and all the harvest is now in the storerooms, they therefore also call this feast the Feast of Ingathering. There are two critical things the Jews needed for their crops to grow, **water** and **light**. Praise YHWH, our *Messiah* gives every believer both to ensure we grow spiritually:

'Water of life' – to purify.

'Light of the world' – to illuminate.

Y'shua came to quench his own people's spiritual thirst that they might see the light, but they did not drink from him.

From the facts given, every event and circumstance seems properly reconciled and proves that Y'shua's birthday was on a warm autumn night when the shepherds were outside (verse 13). WHY NOT HONOUR THE BIRTH OF Y'SHUA AT THIS FEAST TIME instead of during the Pagan holiday of Christmas?

In the same manner as the Feast of Ingathering, we the people of YHWH today should take this memorial time to reflect on how productive we have been for YHWH in sowing the spiritual seed of His word and reaping souls for the kingdom (Luke 8:5-15).

Continuing with verse 12, "*And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger.*" Another clue is that he is wrapped in swaddling clothes. Swaddling clothes

here means "burial clothes". They are not normal baby clothes. Probably they had to make do with what they could on such short notice and borrowed these from a nearby tomb. With the wrapping of swaddling or burial clothes, we are told the reason for the Baby's birth. He was born to die and even will be buried in a borrowed tomb.

"(13) And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, (14) Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men. (15) And it came to pass, as the angels were gone away from them into heaven, the shepherds said one to another, Let us now go even unto Bethlehem, and see this thing which is come to pass, which the Lord hath made known unto us". It is important to grasp the incredible change in Israel's relationship with YHWH that was taking place here. During Israel's history, angels had appeared to only a select few individuals. For the last 400 years, Israel had not even heard from YHWH. Suddenly, He is now speaking profusely to men and women in Israel. This in itself is a sign that something incredible was happening.

Another important note is that the shepherds were out in the field and from there they moved to Bethlehem.

"(16) And they came with haste, and found Mary, and Joseph, and the babe lying in a manger. (17) And when they had seen it, they made known abroad the saying which was told them concerning this child. (18) And all they that heard it wondered at those things which were told them by the shepherds". Caught up in the excitement of the hour, the shepherds rush to see the Miracle Child. They find everything to be as the angel had said.

"(19) But Mary kept all these things, and pondered them in her heart". Miriam pondered upon these things, but kept them to herself. Years later, she would reveal them to the Gospel writer, Luke.

"(20) And the shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, as it was told unto them".

Brit-milah (circumcision) of Y'shua – the first of the Jewish Lifecycle customs (we continue to read from Luke chapter 2)

"(21) And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS (Y'SHUA), which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb". Here we can see that the Hebraic custom of *bris* was followed very carefully by Y'shua's parents. We will see that Y'shua complied fully with the traditions and customs of Judaism. Before we continue, allow me to explain what Judaism is:

Judaism:

Judaism as we know it is the culmination of thousands of years of growth and development shaped by the Written and the Oral Traditions, and the religious (orthodox) Jews adhere to these customs and traditions.

The Written Tradition (*Torah shel biktov*) includes everything that was written in the *Tanach* (the Old Covenant of the Bible). It includes three parts:

Torah – The first five Books of the Bible, the Five Books of Moses also known as the Pentateuch, serves as the foundation of Judaism (revelation or instruction from YHWH);

Nevi'im ("Prophets") starts where the *Torah* leaves off. It documents Joshua leading the Israelites into the Promised Land, includes stories from the period of Judges and Kings and culminates with the Prophets (basically all the Books written by the Prophets in the Old Covenant);

Ketuvim ("Writings"), which includes the most dramatic works of literature questioning the most basic questions about life and human existence. The Book of Job, Song of Songs, Lamentations and Proverbs are all found in this third section of the Written Tradition. It includes a historical record of the Jewish People dating to the end of the Babylonian captivity around 500 B.C. The rabbis of old closed the Written Tradition with Chronicles I and II, forbidding anything else to be added to it. Everything that followed became a part of the Oral Tradition.

The Oral Tradition includes everything that was written in the *Talmud*, *Mishnah* and *Zohar* (explained in the "Glossary" section at the back) on the Holy Scriptures.

In a nutshell, every religious Jew adheres to the 613 commandments laid out in the *Torah*. Y'shua and his family did exactly the same as the Scriptures prove. With that in mind, let's continue with Y'shua's *bris* (circumcision).

"(21) And when eight days were accomplished for the circumcising of the child, his name was called JESUS (Y'SHUA), which was so named of the angel before he was conceived in the womb". Two very important issues are mentioned here in this verse:

Bris was carried out on the eighth day; and only after the *bris* was His name officially given to Him.

Circumcision shows the faith of the parents, not the child. If the child were given the option, he would probably vote against it, since it is not always a pleasant experience. That is why circumcision was not fulfilled in baptism. An infant circumcision was no grounds for infant baptism, because baptism always shows the **faith** of the one being baptised. Circumcision is when a newborn male is joined to the Jewish People by *bris* on the eighth day of his life. From here we will see that Y'shua the Jew complied fully with Judaism and was also joined to His people on the eighth day through *bris*.

In Judaism, Circumcision is always performed on the eighth day (**Positive Law 215: Gen 17:10; On circumcising one's son: Lev 12:3**), and also the time in the Jewish world for the official naming of the baby. Circumcision was inaugurated in two covenants: the Abrahamic Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant. Each had a different purpose. Circumcision under the Abrahamic Covenant was a sign of Jewishness. Circumcision under the Mosiac Covenant was a sign of submission to the Law. It is still necessary for the Jew under the Abrahamic Covenant because this is an eternal covenant.

"*Bris*" means "pact". Abraham's faith was tested ten times by YHWH, after which YHWH was assured that his convictions were unshakable. The ninth ordeal was to remove the excess foreskin of the male organ, denoting spiritual domination over base compulsion. After all ten, Abraham entered into a pact of mutual faith with YHWH that lives forever. It is said that Abraham accomplished this on the tenth day of the month of *Tishrei*, later designated as *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), when the sins of the Jewish people were forgiven. It is important to note that the dominant symbol of *bris* is its blood; and understanding the seven main festivals of Lev 23 (especially *Yom Kippur*), you will know that that blood was needed for the remission of sin. This is exactly what Y'shua did for us on Golgotha. *Bris* is then also a reminder of another Covenant—the New Covenant, every time a family sees the blood. Also, when the Israelites came out of Egypt and celebrated the first Passover (symbolic of Y'shua being sacrificed for us), they were all commanded to be circumcised—including all the strangers who joined them (Exod 12:43-51). (To obtain addition information on circumcision, see "**Birth of Yochanan (John)**".)

Both *Miriam* and *Yoseph* were told on separate occasions that the Child was to be named Y'shua. The official naming of a child in the Jewish world then, as today, comes on the day of circumcision. Y'shua was circumcised and on this occasion was officially named in obedience to what the angel had told them. Y'shua was given a Hebrew name and not the name "Jesus" as we have it in English.

Judaism places great importance on the naming of each new child. It is believed that the name of a person or thing is closely related to its essence. It is important, therefore, to give much thought to a child's *shem kodesh*, sacred or Hebrew name. The Hebrew name is the spiritual call sign, a title that reflects the unique character qualities and God-given gifts according to the Jews. In this case, we can clearly see it in Y'shua's name – meaning "Salvation". YHWH, his "heavenly Father" took great importance in the naming of his Son.

When a parent gives a child a name, the parent is giving the child a connection to previous generations. The parent is also making a statement about their hope for who their child will become. In this way, the name carries with it some identity for the child.

According to Anita Diamant in *What to Name Your Jewish Baby*, "Like Adam's appointed task of giving names to all living things in Eden, naming is an exercise of power and creativity". Many parents today put a great deal of thought and energy into deciding what to name their Jewish baby.

The making of a *Sholom Zachar* (a festival celebration) normally precedes the day of the *Brit-milah* (circumcision):

There is a custom to make a feast of fruits and beverages on the *erev Shabbat* (the Sabbath evening) before the day that the *brit* takes place. This is seen as a feast held in honour of performing a *mitzvah* (commandment) and is called a "*shalom zakhar*". Similarly, there is a custom to stay awake studying all night before the circumcision to protect the child from demons, etc. It is obviously the last chance for the demons to get the child before circumcision makes him safe. This is called *leil shimmurim* – the night of Watching.

Several other different explanations are offered for the custom of *shalom zachar*.

It is a thanksgiving meal. Jews are offering thanks to YHWH that the baby was born safe and sound. Birth (especially in the past) was a very dangerous time for the (mother and) baby, so they thank YHWH that the baby survived this ordeal (*Terumas Hadeshen*, vol. 1, siman 269).

They come to cheer up the child who has just forgotten all the *Torah* he studied while in his mother's womb (see *Niddah 30b*) (*Taz and Derisha on Yoreh De'ah*, siman 265).

According to *kabbalah*, a child is not ready to be circumcised until he has gone through a *Shabbat* (Sabbath), for the *Shabbat* provides the infant with the spiritual power necessary to enter into a lasting covenant with *Hashem*, The Creator. (This is (one of) the biggest reasons why the *bris* is on the eighth day: to ensure that a *Shabbat* passes). For this reason, the Jews have a special celebration on the *Shabbat* after the baby is born (based on the *Zohar*, beginning of *Parshas Tazria*).

The advantage of the third reason is that, according to this reason, we can understand why *shalom zachars* are only done for boys. Although the Scripture does not mention it, *Y'shua*'s family strictly followed the Hebraic roots and traditions and would have gone through this celebration.

Informing versus Inviting:

What is the reason behind the peculiar custom of "informing" family and friends about a *bris* but not actually "inviting" anyone?

It is customary not to issue a direct invitation to the circumcision meal, for one may not refuse to attend. To do so would be equal to turning down the opportunity to perform a *Mitzvah* (commandment).

The *Rama* writes (*Shulchan Aruch, Yoreh Deah*, 265:12, based on *Talmud Pesachim* 113b), that since one who is invited to a *bris* and does not participate is "excommunicated from Heaven", we should refrain from inviting people to a *bris* in order to spare them the possibility of suffering this disgrace. This may explain why not much is said in the Scriptures about *Y'shua*'s *brit*.

Why did YHWH choose the sexual organ to place thereon His eternal covenant with His Jewish nation?

There are two primary reasons why YHWH commanded the Jew to place the symbol of their covenant in the male sexual organ:

YHWH wanted this sign to be in the very part of the body which symbolises pleasure. This is supposed to be a constant reminder to them that they should be focused on their special relationship with YHWH and not get lost in life's pleasures and vices. Basically, they should always keep in mind that which is important and that which is quite trivial.

They place their sign on their reproductive member, for they pass on their covenant with YHWH to their children. (The *Rambam* writes that cutting off the foreskin actually lessens a person's sexual pleasure.)

Customs:

The three main participants: the father, *mohel* and *sandak*, wear *talitot* (prayershawls).

Shalom Zakhor (also *Ben Zakhor*): On the first Friday night after a boy is born, it is customary to celebrate by gathering in the home of the newborn to welcome him. "As soon as a male comes into the world, peace comes into the world". (*Talmud, Nidarim* 31b). YHWH finished the creation of the world with the Sabbath and introduced peace and rest. Thus the Sabbath surrounds the newborn with an aura of holiness and enhances his entry into the Covenant of Abraham, the Jewish father.

It is customary to light lamps in the room where the *brit* is to take place.

The Power of Eight:

Abraham was in his 90's when he circumcised himself; he had extreme self-control and a powerful mind; he understood what he was doing; and, understanding the critical importance of the "pact", circumcised his first son *Yishmael* (Ishmael) at the age of 13. At that stage, *Yishmael* was capable of asking intelligent questions. His relationship with YHWH thus began with intellect.

His second son, little Isaac was only eight days old when he got "brisseed". Eight is one step beyond the natural. Seven symbolises perfection and nature: the never-ending routine of weekdays and weekends; sunrise, sunset; day in, day out. Eight is beyond that. Eight symbolises the supernatural and new beginnings. As an eight-day-old infant, Isaac had no intellect—just an overarching, permanent awareness of YHWH scorched into his subconsciousness from his earliest days. His relationship with YHWH was begun in a supernatural manner.

The survival of the Jewish people throughout the ages is supernatural. No one can explain it. And the Jewish nation's very nature is supernatural because they descend not from *Yishmael* the rationalist, but from Isaac

the humbly accepting. For this reason, the *bris* is done on Day Number Eight – the day that symbolises the eternal super-nature of the Jewish Nation.

In return for Abraham's faithfulness, YHWH promised him that his descendants would become a great nation and inherit the land of Canaan for eternity.

For today:

Circumcision is an obligation that was placed upon Abraham, his household and the strangers who lived among them, because of the covenant that YHWH had made to give the Land of Israel to Abraham's descendants through the line of Isaac and Jacob, whose name was changed to Israel.

The covenant that YHWH made with Abraham to give him the Land pre-dates the command to be circumcised and is irrevocable. Circumcision is another outward sign of participation in the Covenant just as Baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit are also outward signs of a Believer in *Y'shua*.

The Covenant of Circumcision has not vanished, as some would like to infer from Heb 8:13. **The Torah itself is not diminished in any way, and we can observe as much as we are able without condemnation for our failures. The Torah is there for moral standards and guidelines, and cannot give eternal life through "works". Eternal life can only be obtained through the shed blood of *Y'shua HaMashiach*.**

The Israelites are under an obligation to be circumcised because of the irrevocable covenant that YHWH made with Abraham to give them the Land of Israel.

Circumcision has nothing to do with salvation.

As said, eight days later according to Luke 2:21, *Y'shua* was circumcised. Not in the Temple as some suppose; but in Bethlehem, in the *Succah* where He was born. Mary would still be ceremonially unclean for the remaining of the 33 days according to Lev 12. Besides, she would be unlikely to travel to Jerusalem so soon after the birth even though it was not very far.

With *Y'shua*'s date of birth on the first day of *Succoth*, then the day of his circumcision would be the eighth day of this feast; which like the first day, is also a day of sacred assembly (Lev 23:39). On this day, or traditionally the day after, the Jews complete their annual cycle of *Torah* readings (*Torah* divided into weekly sections for the duration of the year) and start again from *Bereshit* (Genesis). This day is called *Simchat Torah* (Rejoicing of the Law), and is considered to be a time of "fulfillment" of the *Torah*. The circumcision of *Y'shua* took place on this day. It indicates how *Y'shua* (the Word) had come to fulfil the Law and the Prophets (Mat 5:17-18). Also, in John 1:14 we read about how "***The Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us***" - another obvious reference to *Succoth*.

When the days of *Miriam*'s purification were over (after 33 days), they would have made their way to Jerusalem to sacrifice a pair of doves or young pigeons (Luke 2:22-24). Then they went back to Nazareth (Luke 2:39).

Y'shua presented in the Temple - *Pidyon HaBen* – the second of the Jewish Lifecycle customs (We continue to read from Luke chapter 2)

(22) "And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord;

(23) *(As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)*

(24) *And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.*

(25) *And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him.*

(26) *And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord's Christ.*

(27) *And he came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law,*

(28) *Then took he him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said,*

(29) *Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:*

(30) *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation,*

(31) *Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people;*

(32) *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel.*

(33) *And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him.*

(34) *And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against;*

(35) *(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.*

- (36) And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity;
- (37) And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day.
- (38) And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem".

Background on *Pidyon HaBen*:

The special excitement and wonder accompanying the birth of the firstborn male is captured in Judaism in the special ceremony for the redemption of the first son, *Pidyon HaBen*. One explanation given for this commandment is that it commemorates the great miracle that took place in Egypt when the Almighty killed all the firstborn Egyptian males and spared the Jewish sons.

Furthermore, the firstborn male child has special rights concerning inheritance and a certain religious obligation to fast on the eve of *Pesach* (Passover). The sunrise to sunset *ta'anit* (fast) *bekhorim* (of the firstborn) is the only fast that applies to just a segment of the community: all males who are the firstborn children in their families (if the firstborn child is female, the first son born after her is not required). The father of a child too young to fast fasts for him and if he himself is *bekor*, the mother fasts for the child on the day of *Erev Pesach* (the day in which *Pesach* begins at nightfall). Since it is forbidden to withdraw from eating on *Shabbat* (except for *Yom Kippur*), when *Erev Pesach* falls on Friday night, the fast takes place on Thursday. This stems from the historic fact that the Almighty sanctified the firstborn males of the Jewish people while they were still in bondage in Egypt, so that they would devote their lives as priests in the Tabernacle and the Temple.

This is interpreted as a reward for the faith and trust in YHWH displayed by the Jewish people, who fulfilled the commandment of and the *Pesach* (Passover) sacrifice while in Egypt and under the difficult conditions imposed upon them, as well as the circumcision which followed later. As the entire nation proved their loyalty to YHWH by joining the covenant, the Almighty did not isolate the entire nation for the priesthood but only their firstborn, as it is written: "*Sanctify each firstborn male child to Me, among the children of Israel*". (Exod 13:13).

However, since the firstborn males joined the nation in their act of worshipping the golden calf in the desert, the Almighty replaced them with the Levites, ordaining: "*And each firstborn male child shall be redeemed*" and "*And you shall take the Levites for Me, the Almighty, instead of each firstborn male child in Israel*".

The sanctity of the firstborn is retained in his birthright and in the religious regulations specific to him, such as the *Pidyon HaBen* ceremony and the obligation to fast on the eve of (that is, the night before) Passover.

The ceremony for the redemption of the firstborn is a *mitzvah* (commandment) bound in religious law (**Positive Law 82 - Exod 13:13 - Sanctify each firstborn male child to Me...**) The root of this *mitzvah* is that by performing the determined symbolic act of redeeming his firstborn male child from the Almighty, man acknowledges that all belongs to the Creator and that man has only that which YHWH wishes to bestow upon him.

This happened when YHWH commanded the Israelites that once they arrived in the land of Canaan, they must "*redeem every first-born male among your children*" (Exod 13:13).

The *Pidyon HaBen* ceremony is when neither the mother nor the father of the child is a *Kohain* or *Levi* (from a priestly descent). This firstborn child must be redeemed from the *Kohain* (priest) for the sum of five silver Shekels. "*And it came to pass, when Pharaoh would hardly let us go, that the LORD slew all the firstborn in the land of Egypt, both the firstborn of man, and the firstborn of beast: therefore I (Moses) sacrifice to the LORD all that openeth the matrix, being males; but all the firstborn of my children I redeem*". (Exod 13:15.)

To qualify for *kohanic tutelage*, the boy must be the first natural child, and first natural birth, from his parents: if he was preceded by a miscarriage/stillborn, or has an older sibling, or was born Caesarian, he wasn't "born first". Obviously, both parents must also be Israelites.

This "redemption" ceremony is done normally on the thirty-third day after the seven unclean days of the mother following the birth of the child—which is forty days after birth. This redemption ceremony is accompanied by a *Seudas Mitzvah* (a *Mitzvah* (commandment) Meal). "*And those that are to be redeemed from a (Jewish) month old shalt thou redeem, according to thine estimation, for the money of five shekels,*

after the shekel of the sanctuary, which is twenty gerahs". (Num 18:16). If this day falls on *Shabbat* or a *Yom Tov* (Holy Day), the ceremony is postponed until the first following weekday.

The ceremony is actually a simple one. The father presents the firstborn to one of the *Kohens* (descendants in the priestly line) who asks the father whether he would rather give the son away or redeem him. The father chooses to redeem the boy and, with the equivalent of five silver shekels in his hand, says:

"Blessed art Thou, Lord our God, King of the universe who has sanctified us with His commandments and commanded us concerning the redemption of the first-born son".

The money is handed over to the *Kohen* who passes it over the boy's head saying, "*This is in place of this...*" and then says the priestly blessing over the child. The ceremony ends with a blessing over a cup of wine. In conclusion, the first male child has special significance for both parents, and this was as true in biblical times as today. A mother's first-born boy was consecrated to divine service, and a father gave his first-born son a double portion of his possessions as his birthright inheritance.

With that as the background, let's see how *Y'shua* was "pidyoned".

"(22) And when the days of her purification according to the law of Moses were accomplished, they brought him to Jerusalem, to present him to the Lord". There are two activities mentioned in this verse: Miriam's purification ceremony. The mother was reckoned "unclean" after giving birth and needed to be "purified".

The other is the ceremony *Pidyon HaBen* (Redemption of the Firstborn).

Miriam had to comply with the commandment of "separation" (**Positive Law 100 - Lev 12:2 - On Tumah of a woman after childbirth**), as well as to the time of her "purification". For that, we need to study Lev 12 first.

(1) "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

(2) Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, If a woman have conceived seed, **and born a man-child**: then she shall be **unclean seven days**; according to the **days of the separation** for her infirmity shall she be unclean.

(3) And in the **eighth day** the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised.

(4) And she shall then continue in the blood of her purifying **three and thirty days** (33 days); she shall touch no hallowed thing, **nor come into the sanctuary, until the days of her purifying be fulfilled**.

(6) And when the **days of her purifying are fulfilled**, for a son, or for a daughter, **she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtledove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle** of the congregation, unto the priest:

(7) Who (the priest) shall offer it before the LORD, and **make an atonement for her**; and **she shall be cleansed from the issue of her blood**. This is the law for her that hath born a male or a female.

(8) And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; **the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering**: and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean".

From Lev 12 and the verses in Luke 2, we can formalise the following table of events:

Day Zero Start of <i>Succoth</i>	To the end of <i>Succoth</i> - Miriam 7 days unclean, (including day of birth)	Day 8 On <i>Simchat Torah</i> - <i>Y'shua's Brit-milah</i> (circumcision)	Miriam continued in her purifying for another 33 days	Miriam brought a pair of turtledoves, and two young pigeons for the burnt offering and a sin offering to the priest unto the door of the Temple in Jerusalem to end her purification	Later on day 40 Then after the sacrifice (when Miriam was pure) they present Him to YHWH – <i>Y'shua's Pidyon HaBen</i> (Redemption of the Firstborn).
<i>Y'shua's birth</i>	<i>Miriam's 7 days of separation</i> – not allowed into Temple	Not performed in Temple but in Bethlehem	<i>Miriam</i> not allowed into Temple during this period	<i>Miriam</i> still not allowed into Temple until sacrifice was completed	<i>Miriam</i> now allowed into Temple

To summarise: Immediately after birth, a woman is considered *niddah* and must remain sexually separated from her husband for a period of seven days after the birth of a male child and fourteen days after the birth of

a female child (Lev 12:2.) This separation is the same as the regular monthly *niddah* separation. In the days of the Temple, when considerations of ritual purity were more important, a woman was considered partially impure for an additional period of thirty-three days after the birth of a male child and sixty six days after the birth of a female child. No reason is stated why the period is longer for a female child than for a male child; however, one resource emphasises that a female child is not more defiling than a male child, because the method of purification at the end of this period is the same for both genders.

The firstborn son can be redeemed from thirty-one days **from** the day of his *Brit Milah* (circumcision). That is, any time after a normal Jewish month period (some Jewish months are 29 days and others are 30 days).

Ordinarily, the ritual is performed on the thirty-first day from *Brit Milah*; this then means when the child reaches the age of forty days. However, the ritual cannot be performed on *Shabbat* because it involves the exchange of money. This procedure is commanded at Num 18:15-16.

As the separation period for a boy is “seven days”, and verse 22 of Luke chapter 2 says that “after her days of purification”, which is thirty-three days, altogether totals forty days. This, then, means the *Pidyon HaBen* (Redemption of the Firstborn) ceremony only took place after *Miriam*’s purification period. This was when *Miriam* and *Yoseph* brought *Y’shua* to Jerusalem to present him to YHWH in the Temple – seen from verse 25 on.

Many read into the Scriptures that the *Pidyon HaBen* (Redemption of the Firstborn) of *Y’shua* was after *Miriam*’s seven days’ “separation” period, immediately after *Y’shua*’s *Brit Milah* (circumcision on eighth day). Many scholars assume that this took place on the ninth day or soon thereafter. It is not so; it could only take place after a full forty days from the date of birth, which is displayed in the table above and further explained in the verses to follow.

But more importantly, *Miriam* and *Yoseph* had to go to the Temple for both events: the “purification” as well as for the “redemption” ceremonies. Once again, strong evidence is given that both *Yoseph* and *Miriam* were righteous people, as shown by their obedience to the *Torah* (commandments) of the Mosaic Law. *Y’shua* was indeed being brought up by two people who were spiritual, righteous and obedient to the Law of Moses. *Y’shua* was rooted deep into the Mosaic Law from birth.

“(23) (As it is written in the law of the Lord, Every male that openeth the womb shall be called holy to the Lord;)” Notice that the “*law of the Lord*” is mentioned here, but it is called the “*law of Moses*” in verse 22. This demonstrates that the Jews believe, and rightfully so, that YHWH spoke through Moses and gave him His Law. The two terms are interchangeable. The Jews say the *Mishnah* or *Oral Law* (commentary on the Written Law) carries this same authority.

This verse says every male child born from the mother is called holy to YHWH. For that reason, this special dedication ceremony—*Pidyon HaBen* (Redemption of the Firstborn), is held at the Temple as seen in verses 22 and 25 onwards.

“(24) And to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, A pair of turtle-doves, or two young pigeons.” *Yoseph* and *Miriam* had no choice: they had to comply with **Positive Law 76**, Lev 12:6 - **On offering brought by a woman after childbirth:** “*And when the days of her purifying are fulfilled* (\pm a month), **for a son**, or for a daughter, **she shall bring a lamb of the first year for a burnt offering, and a young pigeon, or a turtle-dove, for a sin offering, unto the door of the tabernacle** (Temple in *Miriam*’s days) **of the congregation, unto the priest:**” Not allowing *Miriam* into the Temple, but only to the door of the Temple. There the turtle-doves or pigeons were handed over to the priest for her purification offering. Furthermore, they had to bring the offerings **to** the Temple. They could not take it to the priest’s house. This is instructed in **Positive Law 84**, Deut 12:14 - **All offerings must be brought only to the Sanctuary.** “**But in the place which the LORD shall choose** (Temple) **in one of thy tribes, there thou shalt offer thy burnt offerings, and there thou shalt do all that I command thee**”.

During the offering to YHWH in the Temple, according to *Miriam*’s period of uncleanness, only a pair of doves or two young pigeons was given by *Y’shua*’s family. This indicated that His family was not wealthy: “**And if she be not able to bring a lamb, then she shall bring two turtles, or two young pigeons; the one for the burnt offering, and the other for a sin offering:** and the priest shall make an atonement for her, and she shall be clean”. (Lev 12:8). Once again, *Y’shua* was raised according to the Torah.

“(25) And, behold, there was a man in Jerusalem, whose name was Simeon; and the same man was just and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel: and the Holy Ghost was upon him. (26) And it was revealed unto him by the Holy Ghost, that he should not see death, before he had seen the Lord’s

Christ (Messiah)". In this passage, a man called Simeon is mentioned. It may very well have been the famous Simeon of *Talmudic* literature, Rabban Simeon, who was the son of Hillel (see **Glossary** section) and the father of Gamaliel whom Paul studied under. Whether or not it was this person, the timing would have been about right.

It says that he was looking for the "*consolation of Israel*". The "Consolation (comfort/relief) of Israel" was one of the titles of the Messianic Hope among the rabbis. One of the names of the Messiah in Rabbinic literature was "Menachem", meaning "Comforter". This is because Messiah would be the Comforter or Consoler of Israel.

In the course of their stay that day, they have two encounters. Simeon, we are told, was a member of those who were looking for the Messiah. This man was righteous and devout, looking for the "*Consolation of Israel*". Although he was fairly old, nevertheless, it was revealed to him that he would not die until his eyes beheld Messiah. When his eyes beheld the Boy, he realises the fulfillment of that promise in what he sees.

"(27) *And he* (Simeon) *came by the Spirit into the temple: and when the parents brought in the child Jesus, to do for him after the custom of the law*". After Miriam's purification ceremony (verse 24), Yoseph and Miriam had come to the Temple to perform the special ceremony called *Pidyon HaBen*. The ceremony of redeeming the firstborn only after a month has its origin in the *Torah* (**Positive Law 80, Exod 22:29 - On Redeeming the First-born of man, Pidyon ha-ben - Num 18:15.**) "*Thou shalt not delay to offer the first of thy ripe fruits, and of thy liquors: the firstborn of thy sons shalt thou give unto me*". (Exod 22:29). "*Every thing that openeth the matrix in all flesh, which they bring unto the LORD, whether it be of men or beasts, shall be thine: nevertheless the firstborn of man shalt thou surely redeem, and the firstling of unclean beasts shalt thou redeem*". (Num 18:15). What an incredible thought it is that the Redeemer of mankind had to also be redeemed!

Some scholars say this precept possibly was originally designed to counteract the heathen practice of sacrificing their firstborn sons or beasts to their pagan gods. (Lev 18:21, 20:2-5; Jer 7:31; Amos 1:3 and 5:26.)

"(28) *Then took he* (Simeon) *him up in his arms, and blessed God, and said, (29) Lord, now lettest thou thy servant depart in peace, according to thy word:*" Now Simeon says that he is ready to die because he has finally seen the Messiah.

"(30) *For mine eyes have seen thy salvation* (Y'shua), (31) *Which thou hast prepared before the face of all people*". It should be remembered that he is not speaking English or Greek, but Hebrew. When he said, "My eyes have seen Your salvation", he would have actually said, "my eyes have seen your Y'shua". The hope of the Jewish people was that someday YHWH would send a Redeemer to them as promised in His word: "*the Redeemer shall come to Zion*" (Isaiah 59:20). The Redeemer is described as a King who shall reign and govern wisely. The principal features of this expectation are the recovery of independence, an era of peace and prosperity of faith in YHWH and His *Torah*, of justice and brotherly love among men, and the Ingathering of the Exiles. The Jews were looking for an earthly Deliverer, and that is why they had difficulty in accepting the ministry of Y'shua.

"(32) *A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of thy people Israel*". The two-fold element of the ministry of Y'shua is again brought out in this verse. The Gentiles are the ones (lost sheep of the House of Israel), according to the previous segments, who "sit in darkness". Upon them the Light is also to shine.

In Judaism, the word "revelation" means an act whereby the hidden, unknown YHWH shows Himself to man. The meaning of this verse is that YHWH intended, through Israel, to show Himself to the entire world. It is worthwhile to note that both here and in Zacharias' prophecy, Israel believed that the Messiah was for the entire world and not just them.

"(33) *And Joseph and his mother marvelled at those things which were spoken of him* (Simeon). (34) *And Simeon blessed them, and said unto Mary his mother, Behold, this child is set for the fall and rising again of many in Israel; and for a sign which shall be spoken against,* (35) *(Yea, a sword shall pierce through thy own soul also,) that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed*". The sign spoken of here is Y'shua Himself and He spoke of that division that Simeon prophesied about in verse 32 and here in 33. Many in Israel would fall because they rejected Him as Messiah. But, many would rise again in the glory of YHWH that Israel had once because they accepted Him.

Simeon recognises something else: that Y'shua would become a point of division in the Jewish world. He will be for some "a fall" and for others "a rising". He will be that sign that will be spoken against because He will

cause a division in the Jewish world. The piercing of the soul of Miriam will come when she beholds her son hanging on the crucifixion stake. But, through that death and subsequent resurrection, the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed.

"(36) And there was one Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Aser: she was of a great age, and had lived with an husband seven years from her virginity; (37) And she was a widow of about fourscore and four years, which departed not from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. (38) And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem". The second encounter is with a prophetess named Anna. She, we are told, is of the tribe of Asher. Now, there is a popular concept about the "Ten Lost Tribes of Israel". When Sargon came against the ten northern tribes and took them captive, it is a very real possibility that a small number of refugees from possibly all ten tribes—or at least some—fled to Judah to escape capture. When the tribes of Benjamin and Judah were taken captive to Babylon, more than likely a small number of representatives from all twelve tribes were there. Here we find that Anna is a member of the tribe of Asher, one of the so-called "ten lost tribes", and she is hardly lost. When the Jews returned from the Babylonian Captivity, it is very probable that they returned with members of all or at least some of the twelve tribes. If a member of one of the ten is present, it is a very real possibility that the other nine had representation there, also.

The text further states that by this time she was of great age, having lived with a husband for only seven years before becoming widowed. After her husband's death, she lived another eighty-four years, for a total of ninety-one years. She would have normally married at somewhere between the ages of twelve to fifteen. This means that she is approximately 103-105 years old. She is indeed a matriarch of Israel, a lady greatly respected in her community. Here we see the principle of "two witnesses" at work, and what two witnesses they are, Simeon and Anna once again, according to the *Tanach* pattern: "*One witness shall not rise up against a man for any iniquity, or for any sin, in any sin that he sinneth: at the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, shall the matter be established*". (Deut 19:15)

"(38) And she coming in that instant gave thanks likewise unto the Lord, and spake of him to all them that looked for redemption in Jerusalem". Like Simeon, Anna also recognised this month old boy as being the Person of the Messiah and rejoiced greatly. She was finally free to leave the Temple compound and went out to tell everyone that the Messiah had been born and that she had seen Him.

For today:

Having a relationship with YHWH means giving, too, not just receiving. And the *Torah* tells just what to give. Got children? Be a proud father and sacrifice your first-born son. Don't jump – no horror involved. "Sacrificing" Junior just means giving him an awesome, life-long education. **Positive Law 79, Exod 13:2 – "Sanctify unto me all the firstborn,** whatsoever openeth the womb among the children of Israel, both of man and of beast: it is mine". It requires him to grow up/work/live to serve YHWH – to live a deep spiritual life. Redemption of the first-born son is an act of gratitude and humility.

The child is redeemed by paying the modern equivalent of five shekels, via coins or in some traditions, objects of value to a *kohen*, a descendant of Aaron the priest. Dad rents five fine silver coins of a minimum carat/weight with which to "ransom" his son from the *kohen*. He invites friends and family to his home, *shul* (school) or favourite social hall and brings Baby along. *Kohen* stands by. Dad approaches *kohen* bearing Baby and coins, formally informs him that his wife bore him "this child", and *kohen* queries: "Which do you prefer: your first-born son, or the five silver coins?" Dad's response is obvious, hopefully. He must verbalise it. As he hands over the silver, he recites the *Pidyon HaBen* blessing. (Today, the Bank of Israel has minted special coins for use in this ritual.) Son is redeemed, everyone happily sits down to celebrate and eat, and the *kohen* traditionally drinks a cup of wine. And the "Law" lives on.

The ceremony is only performed for the first child of a mother who has "broken the womb". A child delivered by caesarean section or the child of a woman who has miscarried would not be redeemed.

Many Jews will say: "Today, no Temple, no apprenticeship", but no expiration date on the *Torah* either. Junior is still *Kohen* property. **Positive Law 80, Exod 22:29 - On Redeeming the First-born of man, Pidyon ha-ben Num 18:15** is his ticket home. *Pidyon HaBen* still happens. (Details regarding this ritual were laid down in the *Mishnah*, in a tractate entitled *Bekhorot*, "first-borns".)

Interesting:

It is interesting to note that the ritual of "*Pidyon HaBen*" was not being performed by *Yochanan's* (John's) parents. The reason is that both Elizabeth and Zacharias were descendants of the tribe of Levi, and this ritual does not apply.

Yoseph and Miriam were observant Jews

Y'shua's parents, Yoseph and Miriam, held closely to the teachings of the *Torah*. This is evident from the Scriptures, which speak clearly about their observance of the *Torah* commands:

Beginning with the *Brit Milah* (circumcision) of Y'shua on the eighth day of His life

It is also evident that Yoseph and Miriam kept the customs of the Jews, for it is a Jewish custom not to publicly name a newborn male child until the day of his circumcision (*Brit Milah*).

Forty days after the birth of Y'shua, the family went to the Temple in Jerusalem in order for Miriam to go through her *Torah* prescribed purification rite according to the Law of Moses.

Finally, Yoseph ensured that Y'shua was redeemed to YHWH strictly according to the *Pidyon HaBen* (redeeming of the firstborn) ceremony.

When they had performed all things according to the law of the Lord, they returned to Nazareth

Luke gives us great insight that they first went back to their home in Nazareth, and not to Egypt, immediately after Y'shua's birth when they completed all the *Torah* requirements in Jerusalem. This will be discussed later in great detail.

(39) "And when **they** (Yoseph and Miriam) **had performed all things according to the law of the Lord** (Torah requirements), **they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth**.

(40) **And the child grew**, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

(41) **Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover**". (Luke 2:39-41)

Although the other feasts—i.e., *Shavuot* (Pentecost) and *Succoth* (Tabernacles) is not mentioned here in this verse, it was Torah that they would attend them every year in Jerusalem. (**Positive Law 52, Exod 23:14 - On the three annual Festival pilgrimages to the Temple; as well as Positive Law 53, Exod 34:23 - On appearing before YHVH during the Festivals Deut 16:16.**)

How could Y'shua be Son of Yoseph and Son of YHWH?

This section defends the doctrine of the Virgin Birth of Y'shua against the suggestion that "the seed of David according to the flesh" means Y'shua was genetically the son of Yoseph.

In Judaism and the Bible, there is no difference between genetic birth and adoption. This leads to the simple answer to the "Virgin Birth" problem that has puzzled theologians for centuries. The two "apparently" conflicting genealogies of Y'shua in Matthew and Luke exist because, in Biblical genealogy, a person who is brought up in a family is considered to be "born" into that family.

The Anti-Deity Argument:

"Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh".
(Rom 1:3)

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and **his wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elisabeth**". (Luke 1:5)

"Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, **thy cousin Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible**". (Luke 1:34-37)

These verses, in combination, are sometimes used by anti-deity people to try to disprove the Virgin Birth. The argument is that "*the seed of David according to the flesh*" means Y'shua was genetically descended from David. If Miriam (Mary) was a cousin of Elizabeth, she must have been a Levite (from a priestly lineage); therefore, the genetic line of descent could not have been through Miriam but it must have been through Yoseph (Joseph). This makes Yoseph the genetic father of Y'shua and there is no Virgin Birth.

The phrase, "*How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?*" is explained away by the suggestion that Miriam was old and unmarried, and did not expect to have children. This is based on the use of the word "also" that appears in "*She hath also conceived a son in her old age*". In addition to this, there is the suggestion that Yoseph might have been old because he appears to have died before Y'shua began his ministry.

The argument is flawed on three counts:

The “seed of David according to the flesh” does not necessarily mean genetic descent. It can also mean that the person is brought up in the house of a descendant of David. In the case of Y’shua, he wasn’t just brought up in the household of Yoseph, he was born there. His birth was registered by Yoseph in Bethlehem the city of David, and he was circumcised on the eighth day under the supervision of Yoseph. This was considered to be a physical birth into the household of Yoseph, not a spiritual birth as is the case when we are “born again”.

There is no certainty that Miriam was of the tribe of Levi. There was much intermarriage and she could have been a cousin from any tribe.

The use of the word “also” is insufficient to establish that Miriam was old. There is no reason to believe that this word associates Miriam with Elizabeth because of their age. The important thing that they had in common was that they would both have a child. There are other things that suggest that Miriam was young and of childbearing age. She was espoused to Yoseph, they subsequently had other children after Y’shua, they went to Jerusalem every year for Pesach (Passover), and she was still around long after the crucifixion because she was referenced from the early church writings.

Let’s deal with these three points in detail.

Jewish adoption means the child is begotten of the adoptive parents. In the case of Y’shua, it is unlikely that Yoseph would have registered Y’shua as an “adopted son” because he would then have to explain the Virgin Birth to the Roman authorities and they would have considered him to be mad. He would have just registered Y’shua as his son.

Even if Y’shua had been born outside of Yoseph’s household, and Yoseph had adopted him, he would still be considered to be Yoseph’s son just as if he had been born there.

The Talmud states emphatically that there is no difference between an adopted child and a child who was born into the household, and the genealogical tables in the Bible do not attempt to identify anyone as an “adopted son”. Instead, they are just called “sons”. Here is an example:

*“And the sons of Ezrah were, Jether, and Mered, and Epher, and Jalon … And his (Mered’s) wife **Jehudijah** bare Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah. And these are the sons of **Bithiah** the daughter of Pharaoh, which Mered took”. (1 Chron 4:17-18)*

According to the Talmud, Jehudijah and Bithiah was one and the same person. She was the daughter of Pharaoh who took Moses out of the bulrushes and looked after him. She was a Jewish Proselyte, and the purpose of her trip to the river was to cleanse herself from the idolatry of Pharaoh’s house. Jered is considered to be Moses, and it says she “bare” him, even though she only looked after him. The quotes from the Talmud are as follows:

“R. Simon b. Pazzi once introduced an exposition of the Book of Chronicles as follows: ‘All thy words are one, and we know how to find their inner meaning’. [It is written], And his wife the Jewess bore Jered the father of Gedor, and Heber the father of Socho, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah, and these are the sons of Bithya the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took. Why was she [the daughter of Pharaoh] called a Jewess? Because she repudiated idolatry, as it is written, And the daughter of Pharaoh went down to bathe in the river, and R. Johanan, [commenting on this,] said that she went down to cleanse herself from the idols of her father’s house. ‘Bore’: But she only brought him [Moses] up? - This tells us that if anyone brings up an orphan boy or girl in his house, the Scripture accounts it as if he had begotten him. ‘Jered’: this is Moses. Why was he called Jered? Because manna came down [yarad] for Israel in his days”. (Talmud Mas. Megilah 13a)

“And his wife Ha-Jehudiah bore Yered the father of Gedor [and Heber the father of Soco, and Jekuthiel the father of Zanoah] and these are the sons of Bithia the daughter of Pharaoh, whom Mered took. Now, ‘Mered’ was Caleb; and why was he called Mered? - Because he opposed the counsel of the other spies. But was he [Moses] indeed born of Bithia and not rather of Jochebed? - But Jochebed bore and Bithia reared him; therefore he was called after her”. (Talmud Mas. Sanhedrin 19b)

The Talmud Mas. Megilah uses the literal translation of Ha-Jehudiah which means “the Jewess” while Mas. Sanhedrin acknowledges it as a name. The name “Bithiah” might have been given to Pharaoh’s daughter when she was converted, since it means “daughter of YHWH”. Then she was called Jehudijah when she married Mered, because she had joined the tribe of Judah. Amram and Jochebed, the genetic father and mother of Moses, are mentioned in Exod 6:20 and Num 26:59.

If Mered was Caleb, it follows that his father Ezrah was Jephunneh the Kenezite, mentioned in Num 32:12 and Joshua 14:6, 14. The Kenezites lived in the land that YHWH had promised to Abraham and his descendants, and they are mentioned in Gen 15:19. It appears, therefore, that Ezrah (Jephunneh) was a

Proselyte who worshipped the YHWH of Israel and joined the tribe of Judah. So we have Mered (Caleb), the son of a Proselyte, marrying Bithiah, who was also a Proselyte.

The genealogy is as follows:

It is difficult to verify whether or not the *Talmud* has correctly interpreted this passage in 1 Chronicles. However, the purpose of this study is not to establish a precise genealogy, **but to investigate the Jewish view of adoption**. The *Talmud* is universally accepted as an authentic account of Jewish culture and the statement that an adopted orphan is considered to be born into the household should be taken as authoritative.

Here is another example, which is easier to verify: Saul had two daughters, the older one was Merab and the younger was Michal. (1 Sam 14:49). Merab was promised to David as a wife, but she was given to Adriel the Meholathite instead. (1 Sam 18:17-19). David married Michal, the younger daughter of Saul (1 Sam 18:20-30). Michal was given to another man called Phalti after David had fled from Saul (1 Sam 25:44) but David took her back again when he returned to take the kingdom. (2 Sam 3:13-16)

When David brought the Ark to Jerusalem and danced before YHWH, Michal mocked him, saying he had exposed himself to the women. She died childless, apparently as a judgment for her mockery.

"Therefore Michal the daughter of Saul had no child unto the day of her death". (2 Sam 6:23)

In an apparent contradiction to this, the following passage suggests that Michal had five sons from Adriel, who as we have already seen, was the husband of Merab.

"And the king ... took the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul, whom she bore to Adriel the son of Barzillai the Meholathite". (2 Sam 21:8. Green's Literal Translation)

The Talmud resolves this as follows: *"Now as to R. Joshua b. Korha, surely it is written, And the five sons of Michal the daughter of Saul whom she bore to Adriel. - R. Joshua [b. Korha] answers thee: Was it then Michal who bore them? Surely it was rather Merab who bore them! But Merab bore and Michal brought them up; therefore they were called by her name. This teaches thee that whoever brings up an orphan in his home, Scripture ascribes it to him as though he had begotten him".* (Talmud Mas. Sanhedrin 19b) A similar passage occurs in the midrash, where the question arises about what Hebrew name to use for a woman raised by a foster father. The decision is to use the foster father's name, because *"he who brings up a child is to be called its father, not he who gave birth"*. (Exodus Rabbah 46:5)

Clearing the issue of Y'shua's Diety in the Genealogies of Y'shua in Matthew and Luke

As said earlier, the Gospels of Matthew and Luke give two different genealogies of Y'shua. Matt 1:1-17 gives the genealogy from Abraham to David, and then from David to Y'shua via Solomon. Luke 3:23-38 gives the genealogy in reverse order, and goes all the way back to Adam. The line of descent from David is through his son Nathan instead of Solomon. There are many more generations in Luke, and the names are different. According to Matthew, the father of Yoseph is called Jacob. According to Luke, he is called Heli. It is not certain whether Matthan and Matthat are the same person, listed in Matthew and Luke, respectively, as the grandfather of Joseph. The only two names that appear identically in both lists are Zerubbabel and his father Shealtiel.

One possible explanation for the differing genealogies is that Luke's Gospel gives Miriam's genealogy, with Yoseph's name used as a covering to avoid the suggestion that Y'shua was illegitimate.

However, a much more satisfactory explanation is that one or both lists include adopted children, and there is nothing in either of them to suggest who is an adopted son and who is a genetic son. To illustrate this, we should look at the two names that appear in both lists, Zerubbabel and Shealtiel. Matthew associates them with the exile into Babylon as follows:

"And Josiah fathered Jechoiachin and his brothers, at the carrying away of Babylon. And after the carrying away of Babylon, Jechoiachin fathered Shealtiel; and Shealtiel fathered Zerubbabel". (Matt 1:11-12. Green's Literal Translation)

These are undoubtedly the same Shealtiel and Zerubbabel that appear in Ezra as follows:

"Then stood up Jeshua the son of Jozadak, and his brethren the priests, and Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, and his brethren, and builded the altar of the God of Israel, to offer burnt offerings thereon ... Now in the second year of their coming unto the house of God at Jerusalem, in the second month, began

Zerubbabel the son of **Shealtiel**...appointed the Levites ... to set forward the work of the house of the Lord". (Ezra 3:2-8)

They also appear in Haggai as follows:

"In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet unto **Zerubbabel** the son of **Shealtiel**, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying..." (Haggai 1:1)

"Speak now to **Zerubbabel**, the son of **Shealtiel**, governor of Judah, and to Joshua the son of Josedech, the high priest, and to the residue of the people, saying..." (Haggai 2:2)

In 1 Chronicles 3, there are a number of fragmented genealogies of the tribe of Judah. Jeconiah is mentioned as the father of Shealtiel, but Zerubbabel is not listed as the son of Shealtiel. Instead, he is the son of Shealtiel's brother Pediah.

"And the sons of **Jeconiah** were Assir, and **Shealtiel** his son, and Malchiram, and **Pediah**, and Shenazar, Jecamiah, Hoshama, and Nedebiah. And the sons of **Pediah**: **Zerubbabel** and Shimei..." (1 Chron 3:17-19. Green's Literal Translation)

Why does this verse appear to be at variance with Ezra, Haggai and Matthew's Gospel—suggesting that Zerubbabel was the son of Shealtiel's brother Pediah? The only possible answer is that Zerubbabel was the genetic son of one of these two brothers, but was adopted by the other. During the return from the Babylonian captivity, there must have been many orphans who required adoption. It is very likely that either Shealtiel or Pediah might have died and Zerubbabel was adopted by the surviving brother.

Does the Bible say anything to distinguish between genetic birth and adoption?

In true Jewish tradition, as we have already seen, the Bible does not say anything to distinguish between genetic birth and adoption. In this case, it is not even possible to tell from the context who is the genetic father of Zerubbabel and who is the adoptive father.

This, of course, provides the answer to the New Covenant and the *Tanach* (Old Covenant) contradictions. Not only do we have two different fathers of Zerubbabel; but we have also seen how Michal, the daughter of Saul, was childless until the day of her death; yet she bore five sons to Adriel.

It is likely that at the time of *Y'shua*, many different genealogical tables existed, and none of them made any distinction between genetic birth and adoption. Far from contradicting each other, Matthew and Luke are actually strengthening the point that *Y'shua* was descended from David by giving two different tables, and that both have the same result.

Was Miriam a Cohen (Priestly lineage)?

Since we already know that *Y'shua* was of the "seed of David according to the flesh", because of his birth into Yoseph's household, it hardly matters which tribe *Miriam* came from—but for the sake of those who want to argue about it, here we go. The two passages, already quoted earlier, are as follows:

"There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia: and his wife was of the **daughters of Aaron**, and her name was Elisabeth". (Luke 1:5)

"Then said Mary unto the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man? And the angel answered and said unto her, The Holy Ghost shall come upon thee, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow thee: therefore also that holy thing which shall be born of thee shall be called the Son of God. And, behold, thy **cousin** Elisabeth, she hath also conceived a son in her old age: and this is the sixth month with her, who was called barren. For with God nothing shall be impossible". (Luke 1:34-37)

The term "daughters of Aaron" means Elizabeth was a Levite, and more specifically a *Cohen*. The word "cousin" is from the Greek "suggenes" which means a relative or someone of the same race (a fellow countryman), not necessarily a cousin as it appears in the KJV. Some translations alternatively use the word "kinswoman" (LITV).

The same word is used in Rom 9:3 to mean all the Israelites: "For I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my **kinsmen** according to the flesh: who are Israelites..." (Rom 9:3-4)

The term "kinsmen according to the flesh" is very interesting. If this is strictly limited to those who were genetically born into Israel, the Proselytes would all be excluded, and this would imply that Paul is not concerned about the salvation of the Proselytes.

Other references might have a narrower meaning, so that a kinsman is either a blood-relative or someone from the same tribe, for example: “*Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellowprisoners,...*” (Rom 16:7) “*Salute Herodian my kinsman*”. (Rom 16:11) “*Timotheus my workfellow, and Lucius, and Jason, and Sosipater, my kinsmen, salute you*”. (Rom 16:21)

In the context of Luke 1:34-37, it is not clear how Mary and Elizabeth were related. But it is not possible that *Miriam* might have been a *Cohen*, the same as Elizabeth, because of Y’shua’s *Pidyon HaBen* (redeeming of the firstborn) ceremony, as already explained. If inter-tribal marriage was possible, they could have been blood-relatives from different tribes. We know for a fact that Y’shua is from the tribe of Judah as there are many Scriptures stating it. Our Y’shua is the Lion of Zion, the Lion of the Tribe of Judah, and that settles it.

Interesting:

Is there a rule that only a *Cohen* can marry a *Cohen*? Not necessarily. According to the *Mishnah*, even the daughter of a Proselyte father can marry a priest, provided her mother is not also a Proselyte.

“Mishnah 5. R. Eliezer b. Jacob says: A woman who is a daughter of a Proselyte may not marry a priest unless her mother was herself an Israelite woman. [This law applies equally to the offspring] whether of proselytes or freed slaves, even to ten generations, unless their mother is an Israelite. A guardian, an agent, a slave, a woman, one of doubtful sex, or a hermaphrodite bring the bikkurim, but do not recite, since they cannot say: ‘Which thou, O God, hast given unto me’.” (Mishna Mas. Bikkurim [First Fruits] Chapter 1)

In Jewish law, some time after the dispersion in A.D. 70, the rules changed so that the religious status of a child was derived from the mother instead of the father, because in many cases the identity of the father was unknown. Whatever the situation might have been in the days when the *Oral Law* was purely verbal, this section of the *Mishnah* indicates a liberal attitude about who can marry a *Cohen*. The mother, who is assumed to determine the religious status of the child, only needs to be an Israelite, not necessarily a *Cohen*.

Regarding intermarriage generally between the tribes, there appears to be no restriction, provided an inheritance does not pass from one tribe to another. If a woman marries a man from another tribe, she becomes a member of that tribe. However, if she has an inheritance from her father, because she has no brothers to take the inheritance, she may not marry into another tribe because she cannot take the inheritance with her.

An example is the story of the daughters of Zelophelad in Num 27 and 36. Their father had died in the desert, leaving no sons. Moses enquired of YHWH and gave the rule that the inheritance would pass to the daughters. Then there was an inquiry about whether or not they could marry into another tribe, and Moses ruled that they could only marry within their own tribe, to prevent the inheritance from passing from one tribe to another.

How old was Miriam at the time she was pregnant?

The argument about the age of *Miriam* has the same status as the argument about her tribe. Since we already know that Y’shua was of the “seed of David according to the flesh”, because of his birth into Yoseph’s household, the age of *Miriam* becomes irrelevant; but we can argue about it for the sake of those who want to.

The suggestion that *Miriam* was old is based on the use of the single word “also” in the phrase “*She hath also conceived a son in her old age*”. (Luke 1:36)

The anti-deity people have taken considerable liberty by suggesting that *Miriam* was old, on the basis of a single word that has an ambiguous meaning and is more likely to refer to the fact that both *Miriam* and Elizabeth would have a child.

There is also the suggestion that *Yoseph* was old, since he is not mentioned after the trip to Jerusalem when Y’shua was twelve years old, and he might have died. There is good reason to believe that he died; because if he was alive, he would certainly have appeared at the crucifixion of Y’shua, looking after *Miriam*. However, he could have died at any age. For example, if he was 30 years old when he married Mary, he would have been 63 at the time of the crucifixion, and there could have been plenty of reasons why he may have died.

There are good reasons to believe that *Miriam* was young:

She was espoused to *Yoseph* (Matt 1:18, Luke 1:27). As far as we know, she became the first and only wife of *Yoseph*. If *Yoseph* had already been married and had children from other wives, they would have

accompanied him to Bethlehem. It is very unlikely that a Hebrew man with no children would marry a woman who was past childbearing age. (Talmud Mas. Yevamoth 61b)

Y'shua was *Miriam*'s firstborn son (Luke 2:7) and she had other children, both sons and daughters. (Matt 12:46, Matt 13:55-56)

Yoseph and *Miriam* went to Jerusalem every year at Passover and continued to do so until *Y'shua* was at least twelve years old. (Luke 2:41-42) If *Miriam* was old, she would not have undertaken the arduous journey from Nazareth to Jerusalem (probably having to travel on a donkey).

Miriam is mentioned in the writings of Ignatius, who was Bishop of Antioch from A.D. 69 until he was taken to Rome and fed to the lions in 115. At some time during his ministry, he wrote to John the Apostle: "There are also many of our women here, who are desirous to see Mary [the mother] of Jesus, and wish day by day to run off from us to you, that they may meet with her..." (Epistle of Ignatius to St. John the Apostle). If *Miriam* was still alive in A.D. 69 or afterwards, she must have been very young when she gave birth to *Y'shua*. The writings of Ignatius and other early church leaders are available at the Wheaton College web site

Conclusions on "How could *Y'shua* be Son of *Yoseph* and Son of God?"

Y'shua was born into the household of *Yoseph*, a descendant of David, of the tribe of Judah. This was more than enough to make him the "*seed of David according to the flesh*", regardless of the tribe to which *Miriam* belonged.

The differing genealogies of Matthew and Luke are most likely the consequence of adoption. In the Bible, there is no distinction between children who are genetically born into a household and those who are adopted.

The suggestion that Mary was old has no substance, and all the evidence is to the contrary.

Childbearing in the Days of the Bible

The Jewish community was family-oriented, so most births were cause for celebration. In an era when delivery complications were usually fatal, a new birth was looked upon with hope, anticipation, and happiness. Children were considered a blessing (Psalm 127:3-5).

They were an opportunity for parents to "*train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it*" (Prov 22:6). This was done as parents handed down their religious faith, which was the guiding force in their lives.

Motivation for Bearing Children:

There were high motivations to have children in the ancient world, the most prominent being economic and for posterity. A large family, particularly filled with boys, insured your well-being when you were older and in need of care due to your age, injury or inability to work. There was no retirement or nursing homes or state welfare agencies; so without the support of a family, your future could be bleak. Also, to die without children meant the annihilation of the family name and property. For this reason, the levirate practice of a widow marrying her husband's next of kin to pass on the family name became prevalent among the Israelites (Deut 25:5-6; Ruth 3:12).

However, with the Children of Israel, the overriding reason for having lots of children was religious, stemming from the oft-repeated commandment in the Book of Genesis to "*be fruitful and multiply*" (Gen 1:22, 1:28, 9:1, etc.). Children were clear evidence that YHWH had given favour (Psalm 127:3-5) and were symbols of a full and happy life. Therefore, since childbirth was considered normal, then childlessness was abnormal and seen as a curse or judgment from YHWH. Barren women were seen as deficient and open to ridicule (1 Sam. 1:1-8). A husband who did not become a father was looked on with pity. Many assumed that he had a physical problem or an inferior wife. This public scorn could greatly strain a marriage. In fact, it was so devastating that many prayed for a child (1 Sam 1:11; Luke 1:13). Also, YHWH's judgments for certain acts of unlawful sexual relations was to render the person childless (Lev 20:20-21), and therefore a barren couple was suspect.

The Birthright:

As in many societies in the Middle East today, couples longed for a male child. Girls were accepted and loved, but the family was considered incomplete without at least one male offspring. It was the male who carried forward the family name and received the birthright, so he was important. Also, since the man was the breadwinner, sons were helpful to sustain the family if the father should die or when parents became too old to work and needed protection and support. Sons remained in the household, but daughters were given away in marriage. It is easy to see how a girl might feel a little less special than her brothers might.

The birthright was given to the first-born son, and he received rights and privileges not given to the other male children or to daughters. His inheritance was also double what each of the others received. The oldest boy was expected to carry on the family business, be the administrator for the family and property, and be a spiritual leader. Such a system was bound to create jealousies and hatred; e.g., the story of Jacob and Esau shows the devious means to gain the birthright (Gen 25:29-34); birth order was stated as the reason why Jehoram was named king by his father Jehoshaphat (2 Chron 21:3). Guilty of incest, Reuben lost his birthright to Joseph, even though he was the first-born (Gen 49:3-4; 1 Chron 5:1).

There is no direct mention of birthright in the New Covenant except in Heb 12:16; and this is in reference to an Older Testament (OT) passage. However, the parallel concept of the first-born is mentioned, in reference to *Y'shua* being the literal first-born of Mary (Mat 1:25; Luke 2:7); and on a spiritual level, of the supremacy of Messiah (Col 1:15; 11:18). In the story of the prodigal son, the insult felt by the elder brother when his younger brother was doubly blessed, can be traced to the concept of birthright privileges (Luke 15:11-32). Rom 8:29 uses the term to indicate a position of status for those who are called of YHWH.

The Birth Process:

Natural childbirth was the only type of delivery in ancient times, and pain in labour was certainly there as a consequence of sin in the Garden of Eden (Gen 3:16). In an effort to illustrate pain and helplessness, the prophets compare those who are the focus of YHWH's judgment with mothers writhing and crying out in the pain of childbirth (Isaiah 13:7-9; 26:17-18; Jer 50:43). It is not known if there were efforts to reduce this pain, but certain sedative potions did exist. *Y'shua* noted that women soon forgot the pain once their child was safely born (John 16:21). If there were any complications or difficulty in delivery for the mother or baby, death or birth defects would surely result. For this reason, there was a relatively high mortality rate, as compared to today. Children born with deformities were loved and helped; however, there were restrictions on him ever joining the priesthood (Exod 21:22).

Doctors would not have been used for delivery, nor would husbands have taken part. A midwife would have been used, either a professional or a trusted relative, neighbour or friend who was experienced in delivery. The Bible mentions midwives in several instances; e.g., the midwife told Rachel she was the mother of another son just before she died (Gen 35:17); when Tamar gave birth to twins, a midwife was in service and tied a scarlet thread around the wrist of the first-born (Gen 38:28). Pharaoh told two midwives, Shiphrah and Puah, to kill the first-born babies of the Jews, which they did not do (Exod 1:15-21).

Mothers gave birth from a sitting or squatting position, not lying down. This method takes advantage of gravity to help delivery, and may have been derived from the Egyptians (Exod 1:16). The birthstool may have been little more than two stones on which the woman could sit.

When the baby was born, there were four important acts done to insure a healthy start (Ezek 16:4):

The umbilical cord was tied and cut.

The baby was washed with water

The baby was then rubbed with salt, possibly a salt-water solution.

Finally, the baby was wrapped in swaddling clothes. These were tightly bound strips of cloth wrapped around the body, arms and legs like a mummy. *Y'shua* was wrapped like this (Luk. 2:12).

Circumcision:

On the eighth day after birth, boys were circumcised according to the commandment of YHWH, as a sign of covenant between YHWH and the House of Israel. This act was also a commitment between the parents and YHWH, showing by this act their dependence upon Him. Whoever did not have this sign was cut off from his people (Gen 17:1-14). Throughout the OT, the term "uncircumcised" was used to indicate one who was cursed because they were heathens outside YHWH's covenant (Ezek 32:28; 44:7) and as a uncomplimentary term; e.g., David mocking Goliath by calling him an "uncircumcised Philistine" (1 Sam 17:26). This practice was also required for those in an Israelite household; e.g., servant and resident aliens, as well as those who wanted to become part of the House of Israel.

This ritual was taken so seriously that Jews were referred to as "the Circumcision", and non-Jews as "the Uncircumcision" (Eph 2:12), a term for those considered outside the covenant of YHWH. Circumcision was a powerful symbol of a person's relationship to YHWH, and the term was also used metaphorically; e.g., an "uncircumcised heart" (Jer 4:4, Gal 5:6) was unable to receive YHWH's life and love; an "uncircumcised ear" was closed to what YHWH has to say (Jer 5:6). That which caused the hindrance needed to be cut away. This carried over into the NT (Rom 10:45; Eph 2:11-13). In the NT, Paul puts forth the idea that circumcision alone does not produce righteousness without keeping the law in righteous living, nor does it guarantee your place in the covenant without your heart being circumcised as well (Rom 2:25-29).

The procedure involved the cutting away of the foreskin of the penis, in a relatively simple operation performed by a *mohel*. It was witnessed by the father and a quorum of other men in the House of Israel. Here, the boy received his name during blessings said for the child on completion of the circumcision. The ceremony, called the *Brit Milah*, initiates the boy into the *Bnei Israel*, the Sons of Israel. Scientifically, it has been proven that the infant's blood clotting mechanism stabilises on the eighth day after birth; in fact, it is the highest on the eighth day, and circumcision reduces the risk of cancer in both men and their wives.

Consecration of the Firstborn:

After 40 days, a first-born male was taken to the Temple in Jerusalem to be consecrated before YHWH (Exod 13:2,11-16; Luke 2:22-24). This instruction was given to Moses to commemorate the saving of the first-born in Egypt by the blood of the Passover lamb. This consecration of the first-born was for all first-born male offspring, including animals, as all first-born belonged to YHWH. The procedure involved presenting the child to the priest (Num 18:16) and paying five shekels to buy him back or redeem him.

Purification of the Mother:

According to religious custom, the new mother was considered ritually "unclean" after the birth, and was required to make an offering for her purification. The sacrifice was a yearling lamb and a pigeon or a dove. If she could not afford a lamb, then two doves or pigeons alone would suffice (Lev 12:8). *Miriam*, the mother of *Y'shua*, must have had little money since she offered the two pigeons (Luke 2:24).

SECTION I INTRODUCTION TO MESSIAH MATTHEW 2:

Text:

- (1) Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- (2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.
- (3) When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
- (4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
- (5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
- (6) And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.
- (7) Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
- (8) And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
- (9) When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was.
- (10) When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.
- (11) And when they were come into the house, they saw the young child with Mary his mother, and fell down, and worshipped him: and when they had opened their treasures, they presented unto him gifts; gold, and frankincense, and myrrh.
- (12) And being warned of God in a dream that they should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way.
- (13) And when they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for Herod will seek the young child to destroy him.
- (14) When he arose, he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:
- (15) And was there until the death of Herod: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Out of Egypt have I called my son.
- (16) Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men.
- (17) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying,
- (18) In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not.
- (19) But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt,

- (20) *Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life.*
- (21) *And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel.*
- (22) *But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:*
- (23) *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene".*

2:1 Why Bethlehem and not Jerusalem?

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem".

Bethlehem is located some five kilometres south of Jerusalem, in the hill country that was assigned to the tribe of Judah, on the east of the Jerusalem-Hebron Road. According to the Bible, Jacob's wife Rachel, who had long been unable to conceive, died while giving birth to Benjamin near Bethlehem on the way to Efrata; and that Jacob set a pillar over her grave. (Gen 35:19.) The site of Rachel's Tomb, just outside Bethlehem, is a Jewish holy place; and to this day a place of pilgrimage and prayer (Gen 48:7.) The tomb originally consisted of eleven stones laid flat, with one stone above the others. Legend holds that Jacob's eleven sons placed the first stones and their father added the last one, making it twelve for the twelve tribes of Israel birthed from her womb. Y'shua came from the tribe of Judah.

Samuel also anointed David king in Bethlehem (1 Sam 16:1-13) and David was a descendant of Ruth and Boaz, who were married in Bethlehem. And as we have already seen, Y'shua is from the lineage of David.

From the Hebrew Scriptures (*Tanach – Old Covenant*):

In Hebrew, the town is called *Beit-Lechem*, literally "House of Bread"; and in Arabic, it is Bet Lahm, "House of Meat". Bethlehem is referred to in the verse from Micah 5:2. This can be interpreted in strictly a literal sense that the Messiah will be from Beit-Lechem. Also, it could be taken in a figurative sense (still in the "p'shat") as, Messiah will be of the lineage of David: *"But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah (cities), yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting"*. (Mic 5:2)

From the Rabbinic Writings:

An interesting reference can be found in the *Midrash Rabbah* section on Lamentations (written well after Y'shua's time) that links Messiah to Bethlehem, stating that He died around the time the Temple was destroyed and upon His return it would be rebuilt:

Midrash Rabbah Lamentations I:51 – *"BECAUSE THE COMFORTER IS FAR FROM ME, EVEN HE THAT SHOULD REFRESH MY SOUL. What is the name of King Messiah? R. Abba b. Kahana said: His name is 'the Lord'; as it is stated, And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord is our righteousness (Jer. XXIII, 6). For R. Levi said: It is good for a province when its name is identical with that of its king, and the name of its king identical with that of its God. 'It is good for a province when its name is identical with that of its king', as it is written, And the name of the city from that day shall be the Lord is there (Ezek. XLVIII, 35). 'And the name of its king identical with that of its God', as it is stated, 'And this is the name whereby he shall be called, The Lord is our righteousness'. R. Joshua b. Levi said: His name is 'Shoot'; as it is stated, Behold, a man whose name is Shoot, and who shall shoot up out of his place, and build the temple of the Lord (Zech. VI, 12). R. Judan said in the name of R. Aibu: His name is 'Comforter'; as it is said, THE COMFORTER IS FAR FROM ME. R. Hanina said: They do not really differ, because the numerical value of the names is the same, so that 'Comforter' is identical with 'Shoot'.*

The following story supports what R. Judan said in the name of R. Aibu: It happened that a man was ploughing, when one of his oxen lowed. An Arab passed by and asked, 'What are you?' He answered, 'I am a Jew'. He said to him, 'Unharness your ox and untie your plough' [as a mark of mourning]. 'Why?' he asked. 'Because the Temple of the Jews is destroyed'. He inquired, 'From where do you know this?' He answered, 'I know it from the lowing of your ox'. While he was conversing with him, the ox lowed again. The Arab said to him, 'Harness your ox and tie up your plough, because the deliverer of the Jews is born'. 'What is his name?' he asked; and he answered, 'His name is "Comforter"'. 'What is his father's name?' He answered, 'Hezekiah'. 'Where do they live?' He answered, 'In Birath 'Arba in Bethlehem of Judah'. The man sold his oxen and plough and bought felt garments for children. He journeyed from one city to another and from one province to another until he reached that place. All the villagers came to buy garments from him, but the mother of that child made no purchase of him. He asked her, 'Why do you not buy children's felt garments?' She answered, 'Because a hard fate is in store for my child'. 'Why?' he asked; and she answered, 'Because close on his coming the Temple was destroyed'. He said to her, 'We trust in the Lord of

the Universe that as close on his coming it was destroyed **so close on his coming it will be rebuilt**'. He continued, 'Take some of these felt garments for your child and after some days I will come to your house to collect the money'. She took some and departed. After some days the man said, 'I will go and see how the child is getting on'. He came to the woman and asked, 'How is the child?' She answered, 'Did I not tell you that a hard fate is in store for him? Misfortune has dogged him. From the time [you left] there have been strong winds and a whirlwind came and carried him off'. He said to her, 'Did I not tell you at his coming [the Temple] was destroyed and **at his coming it will be rebuilt?**' R. Abun said: Why should I learn this from an Arab when there is an explicit text wherein it is stated, And Lebanon shall fall by a mighty one (Isa. X, 34), which is followed by, And there shall come forth a shoot out of the stock of Jesse, and a twig shall grow forth out of his roots (ib. XI, 1)?"

Another reference is found in the Targums - Aramaic language documents that contained Scripture and commentary together. They were commonly read and discussed in Y'shua's day:

Targum Jonathan: Micah 5:2 – "**Out of thee Beit-Lechem shall Messiah go forth before Me to exercise dominion over Israel.** Whose Name has been spoken from old, from the day of eternity".

"**Although thou** (Bethlehem) **art little among the thousands of Judah, out of thee, shall come forth unto me a Judge to be Ruler in Israel,** and this is the King Messiah". (Rabbi David Kimchi)

"**O, thou Bethlehem Ephrata** ... although thou art little in the thousands of Judah, **out of thee shall come forth unto me a Man, a Ruler in Israel** whose goings forth are from the days of old ... that is from the Seed of David ... who was of Bethlehem Judah". (Abarbanel, Mashmiah Jeshua, fol. 62, c. 2).

The Exegesis:

(1) "Now **when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea** in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,

(2) Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.

(3) When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.

(4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.

(5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet, 'But you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are not the least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a Ruler who will shepherd My people Israel'.

(6) And they said unto him, **In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet**". (Mat 2:1-6)

(4) "And Joseph also went up from Galilee, out of the city of Nazareth, into Judaea, **unto the city of David, which is called Bethlehem;** (because he was of the house and lineage of David:)

(5) To be taxed with Mary his espoused wife, being great with child.

(6) And so it was, that, while they were there, the days were accomplished that she should be delivered.

(7) And she brought forth her firstborn son, and wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger; because there was no room for them in the inn.

(8) And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.

(9) And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.

(10) And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. (11) **For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord** (Y'shua HaMashiach)". (Luke 2:4-11)

Has not the Scripture said that the Messiah comes from the seed of David and from the town of Bethlehem, where David was? (John 7:42)

Y'shua was born in *Beit-Lechem*, called the "Place of Bread"

Is it not remarkable that Bethlehem in Hebrew is called "the place of bread" or "house of bread"? And here we find that Y'shua, "The Bread of Life", was born in this little hillside town called "place of bread": "And Jesus said unto them, **I am the bread of life:** he that cometh to me shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me shall never thirst". (John 6:35)

On the prophetic theme:

The prophecy of Micah is rather complicated concerning not just the birth of the Messiah, but also an allusion to His fate "...they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod..." and to the final outcome of YHWH's plan of salvation "...the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel".

"Now gather thyself in troops, O daughter of troops: he hath laid siege against us: **they shall smite the judge of Israel with a rod** upon the cheek. But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the

thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting. (Margin = the days of eternity.) Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his brethren shall return unto the children of Israel". (Micah 5:1-3)

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

In the First Century, there was open land between the two communities on which the shepherds pastured their flocks. The interesting thing about this area is that it is within the domain where animals were raised for sacrifice at the Temple—especially the lambs offered at *Pesach* (Passover). If one goes into Bethlehem proper where the so-called Church of the Nativity is located, they are outside the area permissible for the raising of sacrificial lambs. We can deduce from this information that *Y'shua* (our Passover Lamb) was probably born at the northern edge of Bethlehem in an area known as *Ephratah* in a *Succah* (temporary shelter), for He needed to be qualified as the ultimate and final Passover sacrifice.

One might ask, "What difference does it make, whether He was born within a certain area of Bethlehem or not? Could not YHWH have designated Him as the ultimate Passover sacrifice anyway?" Of course, YHWH is YHWH and He can do whatever He pleases. However, that is not how He reveals Himself in Scripture. YHWH is certainly the author of all things. As the author of authority, He has chosen to set limits and abide by them in order to show that He is YHWH and knows all things in advance of their happening. In other words, YHWH plays by the rules that He, Himself previously set down. He does not change things on a whim like you and I might do. YHWH has a fixed pattern in the Old Covenant; to understand the New Covenant, find the pattern in the Old as the Old always reveals the New. That is what is so awesome about YHWH: "**For I am the LORD, I change not; therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed**". (Mal 3:6)

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

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

(8) *"And there were in the same country shepherds abiding in the field, keeping watch over their flock by night.*

(9) *And, lo, the angel of the Lord came upon them, and the glory of the Lord shone round about them: and they were sore afraid.*

(10) *And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people.*

(11) *For unto you is born this day in the city of David a Saviour, which is Christ (Messiah) the Lord.*

(12) *And this shall be a sign unto you; Ye shall find the babe wrapped in swaddling clothes, lying in a manger...*

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

The birth of *Y'shua* did not take place in a corner and out of the way where no one would notice. Shepherds of the Levitical Temple servants were among the very first to know, and they undoubtedly announced it in Jerusalem so that all who came to worship at the Temple would hear that the Messiah had been born.

Another interesting fact is that during the Feast of Tabernacles, there would be no rooms available anywhere close to Jerusalem. Of course, there would be *succahs* everywhere. Jews had to journey from all over the world to celebrate the feast in Jerusalem. If you happened to have come from that region, it was also a convenient time to register for the tax census (Luke 2:1-6).

Who was Herod?

The Herodian dynasty ruled Israel and its surroundings from 37 B.C. to A.D. 70 (the war). Herod was technically Jewish by birth as his family had been forced converts (from Edom) at the time of Macabees (2nd century B.C.). This also explains the reason why Pontius Pilate, the Roman governor in Jerusalem, directed Y'shua to King Herod who was also the ruler of the Galilee area. Firstly, because Y'shua was from the Galilee area; and secondly, that Herod was technically Jewish. Pontius wanted the Jews to convict their own Messiah to death, as he did not want any part of it. The Scripture also informs us that he was afraid of an uprising by the people. But at the end, we find Pontius himself gave the death sentence. This then means that both Jew and Gentile had a part in the trial, as we will see later on.

Herod did not reflect anything Jewish in his character, having murdered countless people; including all but two leaders: the famous Hillel and Shamai (see **Glossary** section for more info) of the religious *Sanhedrin* prior to the birth of Y'shua. He was a very paranoid person, even having friends and family killed due to suspicion. The events of Matt 2:1-17 are in line with his character.

Perhaps out of guilt for killing the *Sanhedrin*, Herod launched a massive campaign to reconstruct the Second Temple that had been built under Z'rubavel. This is the Temple we see Y'shua teaching in throughout the Gospels.

King Herod mentioned in Luke 1:5 “In the days of King Herod of Judea...” and Matt 2:1 “In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, “Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews?”

From Josephus' writings:

Ant. 17.7.1 191 (War 1.31.8 665): “Having done these things he died, on the fifth day after having his son Antipater killed, having reigned since he had slain Antigonus thirty-four years, and **thirty-seven years since he had been declared king by the Romans**”.

Some scholars say that from this reference in Josephus, we know that Herod the Great died in 4 B.C.; because Herod's reign began under appointment by Marc Antony in 40 B.C., a date known from Antiquities 14.14.4 386: “So did Herod take the throne, receiving it in the hundred and eight-fourth Olympiad, the consuls being Gnaeus Domitius Calvinus, for the second time, and Gaius Asinius Pollio”. Roman historians also describe the event. Properly taking into account Josephus' use of partial years when subtracting his stated 37 years, results in 4 B.C. for the end of Herod's reign (see the note to War 1.665 in the Loeb Edition).

They conclude that according to Matthew and Luke, **Y'shua could not have been born later than 4 B.C.** Yet our calendar is numbered taking the year A.D. 1 (= C.E. 1) as the year of Y'shua's birth, leading to the puzzle of Y'shua having been born in 4 B.C., 4 years “Before Christ”. This is due to a mistake in calculation by the Roman monk Dionysus Exiguus in A.D. 533, who first began counting years from Y'shua's birth. Some say he did not count the first four years of Emperor Augustus, who used his original name of Octavian during this time. As a practical matter, it is worth noting that our calendar does not, in fact, count from the birth year of Y'shua; which is unknown, but from the death year of Herod. (Is 4 B.C. really the correct date? (See sections, “The Death of Herod” and “The Astronomical Perspective”, under Matt 2:2-3)).

Who were the Magi?

These men came from Babylon or Persia. They were not sorcerers or magicians, but rather astrologers/ astronomers. It is clear from the Gospels that the Magi knew what they were looking for, but this raises an interesting question. How would non-Jews in a foreign land know about the birth of the Messiah, know what sign to look for and know when and where to look for it?

The answer is that hundreds of years earlier, Daniel had been in Babylon and made head of the “magicians”. He evidently taught them about YHWH's ways, including prophecies of the Messiah. The Magi passed these along for generation after generation, until the time came for Y'shua to be born.

Magi from the east

The Scriptures tell us that there were “wise men” (scholars) who came from the east looking for the birth of the Messiah, saying “we have seen his star in the east”. Who were these scholars from the east? Why were they looking for a Jewish Messiah?

Matt 2:1-6 says:

- (1) "In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men (Note: the Greek for "wise men" is (magoi) which is equivalent to rabbi) from the East came to Jerusalem,
- (2) asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage.
- (3) When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him;
- (4) and calling together all the chief priests and scribes of the people, he inquired of them where the Messiah was to be born.
- (5) They told him, "In Bethlehem of Judea; for so it has been written by the prophet:
- (6) **And you, Bethlehem, in the land of Judah, are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for from you shall come a ruler who is to shepherd my people Israel".** (Cited from Micah 5:2)

Babylon was known as "the land to the east". At the time of the birth of Y'shua, the largest Jewish population was actually in Babylon—not in Palestine. Nearly five hundred years earlier, the entire nation of Judah had been carried away captive into Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Only a small colony of Jews returned to Palestine after sixty-three years of captivity. The greater number of them remained where they had established homes in the land of Babylon.

It is very likely that the wise men from the east were Jewish rabbis who had been anticipating the coming of the Messiah because of Daniel's seventy weeks prophecy (Dan 9:24), which was literally fulfilled to the day. They had spotted a new star in the sky and took it to be a sign of the coming of the Messiah.

If these wise men were able to find references to the birth of the Messiah in the Holy Scriptures, then we should be able to find clues to his birth as well. Since the coming of the Messiah is such an important part of Jewish tradition, Christians should ALSO be able to find this event foretold in the annual observances and rituals of the nation of Israel such as *Sukkoth* (Feast of Tabernacles).

2:2-4 A Star out of Jacob

From the Hebrew Scriptures (*Tanach* – Old Covenant):

"**And thy seed shall be as the dust of the earth**, and thou shalt spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south: and in thee and in thy seed shall all the families of the earth be blessed".
(Gen 28:14)

"I shall see him, but not now: I shall behold him, but not nigh: **there shall come a Star out of Jacob, and a Sceptre shall rise out of Israel**, and shall smite the corners of Moab, and destroy all the children of Sheth".
(Num 24:17)

From the Rabbinic Writings:

"**A STAR shall proceed out of Jacob**, and there shall come a SCEPTRE in Israel. The KING Messiah is here spoken of as a STAR". (Rabbi Lieva of Prague)

"**When a king shall arise out of Jacob and the Messiah be anointed from Israel**, He will slay the princes of Moab, and reign over all the children of man". (Targum Onkelos)

"Our rabbis have a tradition that **in the week in which the Messiah will be born there will be a bright STAR in the east**, which is '**THE STAR OF THE Messiah**'". (Pesikta Sortarta fol. 58. c.1)

"He said to him: 'I have yet to raise up the Messiah', of whom it is written, *For a child is born to us* (Isa. IX, 5). Until I come unto my Lord unto Seir (Gen. XXXIII, 14). R. Samuel b. Nahman said: "We have searched all the Scriptures and we have nowhere found [it stated] that Jacob ever came together with Esau at Seir. What then is the meaning of, 'Unto Seir'? Jacob [meant] to say to him: 'I have yet to raise up judges and saviours to exact punishment from you'. Whence this? For it is said, 'And saviours shall come up on mount Zion to judge the mount of Esau' (Obad. I, 21). Israel asked God: 'Master of the Universe, how long shall we remain subjected to him?' He replied: 'Until the day comes of which it is written, **There shall step forth a star out of Jacob and a sceptre shall rise out of Israel** (Num. XXIV, 17); **when a star shall step forth from Jacob and devour the stubble of Esau**'. (Midrash Rabbah - Deut 1:20)

"R. Johanan said: Rabbi used to expound **There shall step forth a star (kokab) out of Jacob** (Num. XXIV, 17), thus: read not 'kokab but kozab (lie). When R. Akiba beheld Bar Koziba he exclaimed, '**This is the king Messiah!**'" (Midrash Rabbah - Lamentations 2:4)

It is also interesting to note that Rabbi Akiva named the false Messiah, Bar-Kosiba, the "**son of the star**" at the time of the second Jewish war with Rome (132 CE).

The Exegesis:

- (1) "Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem,
- (2) **Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him.**
- (3) When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him.
- (4) And when he had gathered all the chief priests and scribes of the people together, he demanded of them where Christ should be born.
- (5) And they said unto him, In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,
- (6) And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel.
- (7) Then Herod, when he had privily called the wise men, enquired of them diligently what time the star appeared.
- (8) And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the young child; and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also.
- (9) When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was". (Matt 2:1-9)
- "We have also a more sure word of prophecy; whereunto ye do well that ye take heed, as unto a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn, and the day star arise in your hearts:" (2 Peter 1:19)
- "I Jesus have sent mine angel to testify unto you these things in the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, and the bright and morning star". (Rev 22:16)

Why gazing at the stars during *Succoth* (The Feast of Tabernacles)?

There is one time of the year when Jews would typically look at the stars. That time was during the Festival of Tabernacles. They would build a tabernacle or booth known as a "succah" out of green tree branches. They would eat their meals and sleep in this *succah* for seven days. It was customary to leave enough holes in the roof of the *succah* so that one could look at the stars. This is an instruction from YHWH that has been handed down from generations till today. This was to serve as a reminder to the Jews of YHWH's protection during the time they wondered in the wilderness in *succas*. The *succah* served as protection during the day from the blazing wilderness sun and at nighttime as a reminder of YHWH's presence when they look at the stars. This "presence" became a reality when Y'shua was born, the night when all the Jewish people stared at the stars from within their *succas*.

As proven so many times already, the birth of Y'shua is shown to have occurred in the autumn (In Israel) of the year during the Feast of Tabernacles, on the first day of the feast.

John 1:14 in the original Greek says: "*And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us*" – literal English.

Look at what Dr. Samuele Bacchiocchi has to say concerning the Feast of Tabernacles: "*To introduce the nature and mission of Christ, John in his Gospel employs the metaphor of the "booth" of the Feast of Tabernacles. He explains that Christ, the Word who was with God in the beginning (John 1:1), manifested Himself in this world in a most tangible way, by pitching His tent in our midst: "And the Word became flesh and tabernacled among us, full of grace and truth; we have beheld his glory, as of the only Son from the Father".* (John 1:14)

The Greek verb "skenoo" used by John means "to pitch tent, encamp, tabernacle, dwell in a tent". The allusion is clearly to the Feast of Tabernacles when the people dwelt in temporary booths. In his article, "*The Feast of Tents: Jesus' Self-Revelation*", published in Worship (1960), David Stanley notes that this passage sets the stage for the later self-revelation of Y'shua at the Feast of Tabernacles in John 7 and 8. Stanley writes: "*The most basic clue to the mystery pervading this entire narrative [John 7 and 8] is provided by the symbolic action that gives this feast its name: the ceremonial erection of little bowers, made with branches of trees, in which every Jew was expected to live during the festival. These shelters were commemorative of the forty years' wandering in the desert when Israel had lived as a nomad in such intimate union with her God. For John this dwelling in tents is a primordial symbol of the Incarnation: 'Thus the Word became a mortal man: he pitched his tent in the midst of us' (John 1:14). It is this insight which presides over the composition of John's narrative which we are considering [John 7-8]. All that happened, all that Jesus said on this occasion has some reference to the Incarnation*".

According to the Companion Bible, Appendix 179: "*The word tabernacled here receives beautiful significance from the knowledge that "the Lord of Glory" was "found in fashion as a man", and thus*

tabernacling in human flesh. And in turn it shows in equally beautiful significance that our Lord was born on the first day of the great Jewish Feast of Tabernacles, viz. the 15th of Tishri, corresponding to September 29, 4 B.C. (modern reckoning)". I fully agree with the 15th of Tishri but not to the 4 B.C.

The Circumcision of Y'shua took place, therefore, on the eighth day; the last day of the Feast, the "Great Day of the Feast" of John 7:37. "Tabernacles" had eight days including *Simchat Torah*. The Feast of Unleavened Bread had seven days, and Pentecost one, which is an extension of Unleavened Bread. Both have eight, and "eight" speaks of new beginnings in YHWH's order. The Messiah was given during Tabernacles for the Jews and the Holy Spirit was given to the church during Pentecost. This pattern is exactly as per YHWH's order stated in Rom 1:16: "*For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation* (Y'shua) *to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek* (non-Jew = Gentile)"

The Season of Our Joy

The Feast of *Succoth* (Tabernacles) is also called "the season of our joy" and "the feast of the nations". With this in mind, in Luke 2:10 it is written, "*And the angel said unto them, Fear not: for, behold, I bring you good tidings* (basar in Hebrew; otherwise known as the gospel) **of great joy** (*Sukkot* is called the 'season of our joy'), *which shall be to all people* (*Sukkot* is also called 'the feast of the nations')". So, we can see from this that the terminology the angel used to announce the birth of Y'shua were themes and messages associated with the Feast of *Succoth* (Tabernacles).

As said, during the seven days of *Succoth*, people were actually required to build *succas*. Every Jew and his family had to stay for a period of seven days in their temporary booth made of tree boughs, etc., and gazed toward the east hoping to see the star, or phenomenon, that would herald the birth of their Messiah (Lev 23:34, 41). During September/October (Tishri) when this feast is celebrated, the nights in Israel are not cold as the summer only ended, and the winter only starts in November/December.

The prophet Isaiah also bears witness to the occasion of the birth of Y'shua *HaMashiach* during the Feast of Tabernacles when he said, "*They joy before thee according to the joy in harvest*". (Isaiah 9:3). This feast was in the fall of the year (autumn) at the time of ingathering, or harvesting of all things out of the field (Exod 23:16). Isaiah explains this joy in the sixth verse of this ninth chapter when he declared, "*For unto us a child is born, and unto us a son is given*" indicating that the "joy of harvest" was actually the birth of Y'shua, at the time of Harvest, or Ingathering.

The Story of the Star in the East

The Star of Bethlehem is certainly a mystery and a puzzle, involving not only theology and astronomy, but also history.

The actual New Covenant account of the Star of Bethlehem comes from the second chapter of the Gospel of Matthew (told here in the Revised English Bible translation):

"Jesus was born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of Herod. After his birth astrologers (Magi) from the east arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We observed the rising of his star, and we have come to pay him homage". King Herod was greatly perturbed when he heard this, and so was the whole of Jerusalem. He called together the chief priests and scribes of the Jews and asked them where the Messiah was to be born. "At Bethlehem in Judaea", they replied, "for this is what the prophet wrote: 'Bethlehem in the land of Judah, you are by no means least among the rulers of Judah; for out of you shall come a ruler to be the shepherd of my people Israel'".

Then Herod summoned the astrologers to meet him secretly, and ascertained from them the exact time when the star had appeared. He sent them to Bethlehem, and said, "Go and make a careful search for the child, and when you have found him, bring me word, so that I may go myself and pay him homage". After hearing what the king had to say they set out; there before them was the star they had seen rising, and it went ahead of them until it stopped above the place where the child lay. They were overjoyed at the sight of it and, entering the house, they saw the child with Mary his mother and bowed low in homage to him; they opened their treasure chests and presented gifts to him: gold, frankincense, and myrrh. Then they returned to their own country by another route, for they had been warmed in a dream not to go back to Herod".

It is also the only account we have of the star in our Bible. Later, various non-canonical sources did elaborate on it. Books like the Protevangelium of James and an epistle of Ignatius say this star was the brightest star in the sky, brighter than all other stars combined; even including the sun and the moon, which bowed down before it. But Matthew is very matter-of-fact. It has been suggested that this is a commentary by Matthew,

(always fond of referring to Old Covenant prophecies), on Balsam's oracle in the Book of Numbers that "a star shall come forth out of Jacob and a scepter shall rise out of Israel".

The Historical Perspective

To understand this section, we must view it in the context of its time. Who were these Magi? Where did they come from? Magi are the plural of Magus, the root of our word magic—"court astrologer". An astrologer is a person that scientifically studies the position of the stars. With that in mind, "Wise men" is probably the right translation, descriptive in regards to which they were widely held. As mentioned earlier, they were probable Jewish Rabbis. The Hebrew prophet Daniel himself was member of the "court astrologers".

The group of "Wise men" in question came "from the east". They might have been Zoroastrians, Medes, Persians, Arabs, or as said, even Jews. They served as "court advisors" for their royal clients and were quite knowledgeable. These "Wise men" often wandered from court to court, and it was not unusual for them to cover great distances in order to attend the birth or crowning of a king, paying their respects and gifts. It is not surprising, therefore, **that Matthew would mention them as confirmation of Y'shua's kingship, or that Herod would regard their arrival as a very serious matter.**

One difficulty in seeking a precise date is the fact that Matthew reports two separate sightings, **separated by a substantial time**. First, the "Wise men" saw the Star rising "*en anatole*"; best translated as "rising in the east", the ancient technical term for an acronical rising when an object rises at sunset and is visible all night.

We do not know how long it took for them to arrive in Jerusalem (possibly up to a year's journey because of the tremendous distance), and there is no indication that the Star was in any way involved with the journey. They saw the Star again as they travelled the few kilometers to Bethlehem: "*When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child was*". (Matt 2:9)

There was no need for a bright or supernatural guiding light to find Bethlehem from Jerusalem; it lies just five kilometers south on the main road. There is also **no** reference to an **infant** (*breplos* in the Greek) but in fact to a **paidion**, or **toddler**, indicating that **some months may have elapsed since the birth itself**: "*When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, the star, which they saw in the east, went before them, till it came and stood over where the young child* (*paidion*) *was*". (Matt 2:9)

What are the astronomical possibilities? This question has been asked many times since the Christian apologist Origen first raised it around A.D. 250. It is safe to say that every astronomical event known to have occurred during the decade of interest (when Y'shua was born) has at some point been proposed as the Star of Bethlehem.

The key point to answering this question is to note that it is not just any astronomical event that is of interest. We can restrict our inquiry to those appearances that would have had astrological significance to the "court astrologers", who declared: "*We observed the rising of his star, and we have come to pay him homage*".

An astronomical event may not have been very obvious at all—certainly it was not obvious to Herod. Had it been an incomparably bright object, as later writers thought, there would be numerous written records of it. It is much more reasonable that the Star of Bethlehem went unnoticed by all but a few experts such as the "court astrologers".

The Death of Herod

A major key to the chronology is the date of the death of Herod, who figures prominently in our story. Herod was alive when the Star of Bethlehem appeared and the commonly quoted date for his death is 4 B.C. The reference is to Herod the Great. It was his son Herod Antipas who executed *Yochanan* (John) the Baptist and who ruled at the time of the Crucifixion. As said before, dates of 7 B.C. through 4 B.C. are often given for the birth of Y'shua. The political events of this period are best known from the writings of Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian who lived from A.D. 37 to about A.D. 95. His testimony has always been considered vital in determining these dates. **But the accounts of Josephus and the entire history of this period have been reassessed recently with important new results, by Ernest Martin, whose book "The Star that Astonished the World" has become the authoritative source on the subject.**

According to Josephus, on the night of a lunar eclipse, Herod the Great executed two rabbis. They were accused of inciting some young men to climb up on the wall and tear down the golden eagle that the king had ordered placed on the gate to the Temple in Jerusalem. This eagle was, of course, an abomination to

the Jews because it was a graven image. Soon Herod the Great himself died and was buried. One of his sons inherited his throne, shortly after which *Pesach* (Passover) was celebrated. It was long believed that the lunar eclipse in question occurred on March 13 in 4 B.C. But this was only a partial eclipse (40 percent of total) and fairly hard to detect. And it occurred only 29 days before Passover. Here is what would have had to happen in those 29 days:

Herod was sick at the time of the execution of the rabbis and his condition worsened almost immediately. His physicians treated him for a time, but to no avail. Herod then decided to pack up the royal household and move to Jericho to take the baths. He tried the baths unsuccessfully for some days and then returned to Jerusalem. Believing that he soon would die, Herod came up with a diabolical plan to insure that all of Israel would mourn his death, in spite of his unpopularity. He commanded the leading men from around the country to come to Jerusalem—there he imprisoned them in the Hippodrome and ordered the army to execute them as soon as he was dead. Israel would indeed mourn. (Fortunately, the order was not carried out.)

In the meantime, word arrived from Rome that Herod had the Emperor's permission to execute his rebellious son Antipater, and he promptly complied. Five days later he died, but not before decreeing that his was to be the biggest funeral ever held in the history of the world. His body was embalmed. The army was assembled to carry his body in the funeral procession to a burial site some 40 kilometres away. The soldiers walked bare-footed, as was required when in mourning, traveling 1,6 kilometer (1 mile) a day. A legate from Rome, where word of Herod's death had been received, arrived to protect the royal treasury. Finally, Herod's son Archelaus was crowned king and had time to issue a few decrees prior to the celebration of *Pesach* (Passover).

The 29 days between the eclipse of 4 B.C. and the following *Pesach* (Passover) simply do not allow enough time for all of this to have happened. A minimum of ten weeks would have been required. But on January 10, 1 B.C., there was a total lunar eclipse visible in Palestine; and it occurred twelve and a half weeks before *Pesach* (Passover). As Martin points out, there are other compelling reasons to regard 1 B.C. as the true date of Herod's death. For example, the War of Varus, known to have followed Herod's death, can be re-dated to 1 B.C. where it fits the other known facts perfectly.

If we conclude that Herod did die in the spring of 1 B.C., we are free to add the years 3 B.C. and 2 B.C. to our search for the Star of Bethlehem. What was happening then? The year 2 B.C. marked the 25th anniversary of Caesar Augustus's rule and the 750th anniversary of the founding of Rome. Huge celebrations were planned. The whole empire was at peace. The doors of the temple of Janus were closed for only the third time in Roman history. To honour their emperor, the people were to rise as one and name Augustus "pater patriae", or "Father of the Country". Now, getting the people of an empire to do something "spontaneously" requires a great deal of organisation. And so an enrollment, registration or census was ordered. All this probably took place during 3 B.C., allowing one year for planning and preparation for this massive celebration of the 750th anniversary since the founding of Rome:

"In those days a decree went out from Emperor Augustus that all the world should be registered" ... "All went to their own towns to be registered". (Luke 2:1 and 3 NRSV)

This enrollment, described in the Gospel of Luke, which brought Yoseph and Miriam to Bethlehem, always has been a mystery since **no regular taxation census occurred at this time**. But the "pater patriae" enrollment fits perfectly.

The Astronomical Perspective

What astronomical events, possibly in the years 3 B.C. or 2 B.C., might have been related to the Star of Bethlehem?

Novae have been suggested: the unexpected, sudden brightening of a star from invisibility into a bright object for a period of days or weeks. There is no historical record of such a nova, nor is it clear what a nova's astrological significance would be. Comets are candidates, for they appear sporadically, move, and even seem to point down to the earth. (This was Origen's choice.) But the recorded comets around this time (even Haley's Comet in 12 B.C.) were not very impressive; astrologically, they were considered worrying and not a sign. Meteors and fireballs are even less likely candidates.

Conjunctions of planets have long been considered good possibilities. A conjunction is a close apparent approach between two celestial objects. Technically speaking, a conjunction occurs at the moment when both objects have the same celestial longitude—one is due north of the other. The closer the objects, the more visually impressive are the events and the more significant astrologically. In 3 B.C. and 2 B.C., there

was a series of close conjunctions involving Jupiter, the planet that represented **kingship, coronations, and the birth of kings**. In Hebrew, Jupiter was known as "Sedeq" or "**Righteousness**", a term also used for the Messiah.

In **September of 3 B.C.**, Jupiter came into conjunction with Regulus, the star of kingship and the brightest star in the constellation of Leo. **Leo was the constellation of kings and it was associated with the Lion of Judah.** The royal planet approached the royal star in the royal constellation representing Israel. Just a month earlier, Jupiter and Venus, the Mother planet, had almost seemed to touch each other in another close conjunction—also in Leo. Then the conjunction between Jupiter and Regulus was repeated, not once but twice, in February and May of 2 B.C. Finally, in June of 2 B.C., Jupiter and Venus, the two brightest objects in the sky (put aside the sun and the moon), experiencing an even closer encounter when their disks appeared to touch—to the naked eye they became a single object above the setting sun. The “court astrologers” could not have missed this exceptionally rare spectacle.

In fact, we have seen here only the highlights of an impressive series of planetary motions and conjunctions fraught with a variety of astrological meanings involving all the other known planets of the period: Mercury, Mars, and Saturn. **The astrological significance of these impressive events must surely have been seen by the “court astrologers” as the announcement of the impending birth of a great king of Israel.**

September 11, 3 B.C., is perhaps the most interesting date of all. Not only was Jupiter very close to Regulus in the first of their conjunctions, but the sun was in the constellation of Virgo (of obvious symbolism), together with the new moon, in a configuration that fits a plausible interpretation of a passage in the Book of Revelation describing the birth of a male child who is to be the ruler of the universe. Significantly, **September 11, 3 B.C., also marked the beginning of the Jewish New Year (1st of Tishri), traditionally regarded as the anniversary of Noah's landing after the Great Flood and the birth of the world.** Our Messiah Y'shua's birth date was probably fifteen days later with the start of the Feast of *Succoth* (Tabernacles) on 15th of Tishri.

But if the planet Jupiter was the Star of Bethlehem or was a component of the events that triggered the visit by the “court astrologers”, how do we view the final appearance of the Star on their journey to Bethlehem? It would have been in the southern sky, though fairly high above the horizon. Could it have stopped over Bethlehem?

The answer is yes. The word “stop” was used for what we now call a planet’s “stationary point”. A planet normally moves eastward through the stars from night to night and month to month, but regularly exhibits a “retrograde loop”. As it approaches the opposite point in the sky from the sun, it appears to slow, come to a full stop, and move backward (westward) through the sky for some weeks. Again it slows, stops, and resumes its eastward course. It seems plausible that the “court astrologers” were “overjoyed” at again seeing before them as they traveled southward, the star Jupiter, which at its stationary point was standing still over Bethlehem. **We do know for certain that Jupiter performed a retrograde loop in 2 B.C. with their arrival in Jerusalem.** Let’s now put all the pieces together by looking at the table below:

From all this information given, it all makes perfect sense:

Timeline	Left in 3 B.C.	Travelled for almost 2 years	Arrived in 2 B.C.	Day of arrival in Jerusalem	Same day or next day	Day after angel gave warning
Activity Wise men	Wise Men saw star from their country possibly Babylon in the east ±2000 kilometer from Jerusalem – took route next to water resources	Wise men traveled between 1 and 2 years from the east to Jerusalem / Bethlehem to look at the star and to give gifts to the new King	Wise men arrived in Jerusalem just before the feast of <i>Succoth</i>	Herod “required diligently” from the Wise Men (verse 7) when the star appeared for the first time – to make his calculation, up to what age group he need to kill all boys. The wise men informed him they saw the star for the first	Wise men on their way to Bethlehem saw the star again, this time for the second time – on arrival they gave gifts to <i>Yoseph</i> and <i>Miriam</i> for the King in their <i>Succah</i> and left via another route back to	Herod slaughters all boys under the “safe age” of 2 years to ensure that no “king” takes his place

	(Euphrates)			time in 3 B.C., a year ago	their country to avoid Herod	
Activity Y'shua	Y'shua was born in Bethlehem on 15 Tishri 3 B.C., the first day of the Feast of <i>Succoth</i> – Tabernacles and the enrollment took place	Y'shua's redemption ceremony was completed in Jerusalem and they went back to Nazareth (for a year)	Y'shua now a "young child", a <i>piadion</i> , toddler (verse 9) with his family once again back in Bethlehem for the Feast of <i>Succoth</i>		YHWH warned Yoseph and Miriam later in the night through an angel to flee the same night to Egypt	Y'shua and family on their way to Egypt

Let us now carefully look at Matt 2:1-3 again without attempting to read "things" into the verse, which are not factual:

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him". (Matt 2:1-3)

Strong's number 2250 describes the word "days" and one of the meanings is: "a period (always defines more or less clearly by the context), time or years". Let's read the verse again this time in the right contexts:

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days²²⁵⁰ (period, time or years) of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him". (Matt 2:1-3)

This all happened during Herod's "period of reign" and a journey from the east could not have happened "in one day".

"Now when Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judaea in the days (period, time or years) of Herod the king, behold, there came wise men from the east to Jerusalem, Saying, Where is he that is born King of the Jews? for we have seen his star in the east, and are come to worship him. When Herod the king had heard these things, he was troubled, and all Jerusalem with him". (Matt 2:1-3)

Other Bibles give a more accurate translation, such as the New Living Translation and the New Revised Standard Version.

"Jesus was born in the town of Bethlehem in Judea, during the reign of King Herod. About that time some wise men from eastern lands arrived in Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? We have seen his star as it arose, and we have come to worship him". Herod was deeply disturbed by their question, as was all of Jerusalem. (Matt 2:1-3 NLT)

"In the time of King Herod, after Jesus was born in Bethlehem of Judea, wise men from the East came to Jerusalem, asking, "Where is the child who has been born king of the Jews? For we observed his star at its rising, and have come to pay him homage". When King Herod heard this, he was frightened, and all Jerusalem with him". (Matt 2:1-3 NRSV)

They saw the star in 3 B.C. from their own country (probably Babylon) in the east for the first time. This is the day when Y'shua's was born. It took them ±one year to travel to Jerusalem and then eventually they arrived in Jerusalem in 2 B.C., just before the *Succoth* feast of that year started.

As said earlier, Luke gives us great insight that Yoseph and Miriam first went back to their home in Nazareth, immediately after Y'shua's birth when they completed all the *Torah* requirements in Jerusalem, and not to Egypt. This proves that a time lapsed before they returned the next year for the feasts.

(39) "And when **they** (Yoseph and Miriam) **had performed all things according to the law of the Lord** (*Torah* requirements during Y'shua's birth), **they returned into Galilee, to their own city Nazareth**.

(40) **And the child grew**, and waxed strong in spirit, filled with wisdom: and the grace of God was upon him.

(41) ***Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the passover".*** (Luk 2:39-41)

Although the other feasts; i.e., *Shavuot* (Pentecost) and *Succoth* (Tabernacles) are not mentioned here in this verse, it was Law that they would attend them every year in Jerusalem. (**Positive Law 52, Exod 23:14 - On the three annual Festival pilgrimages to the Temple as well as Positive Law 53, Exod 34:23 - On appearing before YHVH during the Festivals Deut 16:16.**)

The Revised English Bible translation confirms what Luke is saying:

*"Jesus was born at Bethlehem in Judaea during the reign of Herod. After his birth astrologers (Magi) **from the east arrived in Jerusalem**, asking, "Where is the newborn king of the Jews? ..." (Matt 2:1-2)*

To finish off, *Succoth* is also called "the Feast of Light". And what a light wasn't it that "court astronomers" arose from the eastern countries to come and see!

2:4 Priests, Scribes, Pharisees and Saducees

*"And when he (Herod) had gathered **all the chief priests and scribes of the people together**, he (Herod) demanded of them where Christ should be born".*

First Herod "demanded" from "**all the chief priests and scribes of the people together**" and then later in verse 7 "**enquired of them** (the Wise Men) *diligently*". Who are the "*chief priests and scribes of the people together*"? For that, let's start with:

The spiritual leadership of YHWH's people in the past

From Adam to Noah:

We know from the Genesis record that the Creator YHWH taught Adam and Eve his sacrificial system of worship. We know also that Cain and Abel were taught YHWH's system of worship as well (Gen 4:1-7). Second Peter 2:5 shows that Noah was called a preacher of righteousness who had the authority from YHWH to pronounce blessings and curses (Gen 9:25-27). Therefore, it can be assumed that from the time of Adam and Eve to the time of Noah, there were men who were sanctioned by YHWH to teach and guide his people in the path of righteousness.

From Noah to Moses:

Gen 14:18-20 shows Abraham being blessed by Melchizedec, who not only had the authority to bless Abraham, but also had the authority to receive tithes from him. The Scriptures say that Melchizedec was a priest of the Most High YHWH and Noah was a preacher of righteousness; therefore, some form of organised spiritual leadership that represented the true YHWH was in existence before Moses.

From Moses to Y'shua:

From the very beginning of the nation of Israel, YHWH sanctioned prophets, priests, and judges to guide and teach his people in the ways of righteousness. They were first taught through Moses, who was the civil and spiritual leader; then, the Creator separated Aaron, his sons, and the tribe of Levi to serve him and his people as spiritual leaders. Moreover, he chose some of the people to serve as judges in civil matters. When one reads the books of the Bible that concern the establishment of national Israel, it becomes clear that the system of civil and spiritual government that YHWH gave them was highly efficient, extremely fair and just.

After the Israelites entered into the Promised Land, they rebelled against the rule of the prophet Samuel and wanted a king to rule over them. Therefore, YHWH adjusted the original government that he had given them and added a king as the civil ruler. However, the king had to remain subject to the spiritual leadership of the priesthood and its authority over Israel. This is an important point, because it shows that, although the civil authority passed from the priesthood and judges to the kings of Israel, the authority and responsibility for teaching YHWH's laws, precepts, and principles and the performing of all rites and sacrifices always remained with those specifically chosen by YHWH for this purpose.

During Y'shua's Lifetime:

During Y'shua's lifetime, the Levitical Priesthood was the spiritual leadership of the Jews, and the Sanhedrin was the Supreme Council and highest Court of Justice in Judah. The *Sanhedrin* had great independence and power under Roman rule; they had the power to arrest and to judge all types of cases, even those involving capital punishment.

Although the origin of the Sanhedrin is obscure, Jewish tradition traces it back to Moses and the seventy elders mentioned in Num 11:16-25. According to the best evidence, the *Sanhedrin* was composed of seventy-one members: the high priest as its president, some of the high priest's close relatives, scribes (professional lawyers), and elders (chief men among both priest and laymen). See Matt 26:3,57,59; 27:41; Mark 11:27; 14:53; 15:1; Luke 22:66). The High Priest and those who served under him predominantly belonged to the orders of Sadducees and the Scribes and Pharisees; thus, these were the two predominant groups of Judaism represented in the *Sanhedrin*.

It is important to note that *Y'shua* accepted this tribunal as the official civil and spiritual authority of the Jews during his lifetime (Mark 15:1).

What were main factions among the religious authority during *Y'shua's* time?

There were two main factions among the religious authority of *Y'shua's* day – Pharisees and Saducees. Unfortunately, the term "Pharisee" has become a synonym for an evil person or a hypocrite. This is due to an improper understanding of history and Scripture as taught in most churches and Bible Studies. No one would say that Paul and Nicodemus were evil, yet they were Pharisees until the day they died.

I can't imagine anyone saying *Y'shua* gave bad advice, but He told the people to follow what the Pharisees taught. In fact, much of what *Y'shua* Himself says in the Gospels is a reiteration of teachings already established and taught by the Pharisees (especially Hillel, the grandfather of Gamaliel (see **Glossary** section for more information)) who taught Paul.

The Pharisees came about as a populist movement shortly after the Saducees gained power. The Saducees were the original Temple authority, made up of priests and Levites, developed around Zadok and his priests who gained control after the return from the exile (Ezra's time period). By the time of *Y'shua*, the Saducees had lost much of their power to the Pharisees. (The history of the Pharisees and Saducees will be covered later, where we study the rise and fall of the Hasmonians – a Saducean family that rose up to control Temple when Judas Macabee fought the Selucid Greeks and restored the Temple and priesthood around 130 B.C.)

Y'shua Himself could best be described as a Pharisee teacher and holding favour with the Essenes. The former is true as He supported the Scriptural doctrines of the Pharisees, told the people to obey them, and upheld their authority (more on all this later). The latter was true because He had the approval of *Yochanan* (John) the Baptist, who was a leader in the Essene community. John had Scriptural authority as well, as he was from the tribe of Levi and destined to be a priest.

It was because of *Y'shua's* relationship with these two groups (who did not necessarily think highly of each other) that he was able to hold together a coalition of His own followers made up of people from each camp (along with the Zealots, who were more political and action-oriented). This new alliance became known as the *Nazarenes*, or *the Way*.

These are the people whom we also refer to as the early or original, "Messianic community". Their faith was not "Christian"; it was a continuation of the faith of Israel, recognising *Y'shua* as the promised Messiah. (Also see the section, "James the Brother of *Y'shua*" under "Matt 13:53-54 "And when he was come into his own country" for more information on the Pharisees.)

The "Chief Priests" and "Prophets" in the Bible

In the next verse, verse 5 of Matthew chapter 2 we read about a "prophet". It will be a good opportunity to explain the priest and the prophet's role at this stage as well as the difference between the two:

A PRIEST is a man who goes to YHWH and speaks on behalf of men.

A PROPHET is a man who goes to the people and speaks on behalf of YHWH.

They are two entirely different functions. In the *Tenach* they did not overlap, except in a few outstanding cases. Priests and prophets often were at loggerheads with one another, because...

The Priest stood for rituals.

The Prophet for righteousness.

The Priest was interested in the Institutional.

The Prophet in the Inspirational.

The Priest was interested in the Externals.

The Prophet was only interested in the Internal.

For these very reasons, priests and prophets were frequently against one another. The Institutional and Ritual can bring corruption.

The Lawyers and Judges: “Scribes” in the Bible

For the most part, the law of Israel is found in the Laws of Moses, the *Torah*. Through the centuries, the elders, priests, and rabbis interpreted it and recorded their rulings in the *Mishna* and *Talmud*.

The interpreters of the law, whom we would call lawyers, were teachers or experts in the law. They acted both as court lawyers, as well as synagogue lawyers in matters of religious law (Matt 22:35; Luke 7:30; 10:25; 11:45, 46, 52; 14:3; Titus 3:13). The scribe acted as the function of a lawyer in his pronouncements of legal decision.

Local government authority was based in the council of elders or judges. Since the time of the exodus, elders were established who were heads of families and rulers of clans. Once the people began to settle in villages, the elders became a more central authority on the local scene with community-wide influence.

During the settlement period, it was the elders who represented the collective wisdom of the community (Prov 31:23). Internal group laws were not written, but formed a tradition passed along by the elders to insure the group's security, integrity, hospitality, progeny, property, family solidarity, and the worship of the one YHWH. The elders supervised legal procedures and were arbiters of local disputes. They formulated legal policy based on the legal traditions and customs of the group and the law given to them in the Sinai (Deut 16:18-20).

In the unwalled villages, their “courtroom” was probably the threshing floor, which was a central meeting place of the people. Later, as the villages acquired walls, the elders could be found at the city gates, where they heard legal cases and arbitrated disputes. For example, when Ruth confronted Boaz at the threshing floor, he went to the city gate and sat with the elders to decide her case (Ruth 4:1-2). This system of “court” was found throughout the biblical period.

In the Bible, the gateway into the walled city was more than the entrance and exit to a city. Figuratively, it represented the place of authority and the glory of the city (Isaiah 3:26). The gate represented the place of authority of a city, where the elders sat. Scripture even refers to supernatural authority as the “gates of heaven” (Gen 28:17) and the “gates of hell” (Matt 16:18).

The biblical term, “to be within the gates”, referred to being under the authority of the elders of the city, who presided in the gates (Deut 22:15; 25:7). In battle, to “possess the gates” was to possess the city (Gen 22:17; 24:60).

The Israelites were instructed to establish this authority with judges at the city gates (Deut 16:18) as a place of judgment to insure justice and obedience to YHWH’s laws by the people.

Another function of the elders at the gate was to protect the city and their people from the outside world. The gate was the most vulnerable point in these ancient, walled cities, and it was necessary to place judges there to interview those entering the city to be sure their presence was welcomed. Evil-doers, who might cheat, steal, or break the laws of the city, were not allowed to enter or stay in the city (Deut 17:2-5).

At Tel Dan, far to the north of the Hulah Valley in the tribal area of Dan, the main city gate was uncovered, and there, the archaeologists found the seat of the chief elder, who sat on a throne-like platform with other elders to evaluate and interview those coming into the city and also hear and judge over the grievances of those within the city.

During the period of the Judges, YHWH gave a wider level of authority to specific Judges raised up for an appointed task. The role of these Judges was different to that of the elders at the gates of each city. The Judges of the Book of Judges were charismatic leaders whose primary role was as deliverers to evict foreign invaders; e.g., Ehud, who drove out the Moabites, Ammonites, and Amalekites; and Gideon, the Midianites. While these Judges could advise on areas of public life, they were not primarily judicial or religious leaders. However, they probably did hear cases that could not be decided by the heads of households or the council of elders.

None of the Judges, except Samuel, were truly national in scope; and most functioned in a regional area with their authority extending to one or more tribal units only. Judges could call upon other tribal groups to assist in a military campaign, but it was up to the tribal leaders to decide whether or not to join. For example, when Deborah called upon the Israelites to join her in a campaign against Jabin, King of Hazor—the clans of Reuben, Gilead, Dan, and Asher chose not to respond (Judges 5:16,17).

While the military function of the Judges was taken over by the kings of Israel, the functional, legal role of a judge continued as judicial judges (2 Chron 19:5); also known as governors (2 Chron 18:25), who were placed in cities to implement the king's laws. The city elders retained their role on a local level throughout the biblical period and it remained so in Y'shua's time.

Were the Pharisees "Legalistic"?

When imprecise terminology is used to denote important concepts, it cannot help but bring confusion. The popular use of the term "legalism" to describe whatever it was that Y'shua found objectionable about his adversaries is a case in point. The term is imprecise; and one suspects that, when readers try to define exactly what it was that Y'shua objected to in the Pharisees' approach to the Law, more often than not they take their cues from preconceived notions of what "legalism" means (the term having already been implicitly admitted as an adequate summary of the issue), rather than from the fine points of Y'shua's specific objections. Most lay readers of the Gospels interpret Y'shua's discussions with and about Pharisees in strict dependence upon the notion of legalism, even to the point of glossing over Y'shua's otherwise very clear language. Terminology is supposed to clarify things, but the imprecision of the term "legalism", combined with the presupposition that this term captures the essence of Y'shua's objection, only makes things unclear.

Many times someone reads a Gospel passage relating Y'shua's arguments with the Pharisees, only to follow it with an exposition **that totally ignores Y'shua's specific objections to the Pharisees**, and **replaces them with objections not found in the text**. The singer's words are sage advice for readers of the Gospels: "Don't try to paint your masterpiece under artificial light!" More about the Pharisees later in the section, "James the Brother of Y'shua", under Matt 13:53-54 "And when he was come into his own country".

Now what is a rabbi?

The traditional rabbinate harks back to ancient practice, but is in fact a changing institution that was first formalised in the fourteenth century.

A rabbi is a teacher of Judaism qualified to render decisions in Jewish law, the *Torah*. The term is derived from *rav*, meaning "great man" or "teacher". The Jews call Moses - Moshe Rabbenu ("Moses our teacher"). The suffix "i", meaning "my", is somewhat strange. Why "my teacher"? It has been suggested that the letters *rbb* (which form the Hebrew word without vowel-pointing) should be vocalised, as they are among Sephardi Jews, as "Ribbi", "great one"; and that the "i" is not, in fact, a (possessive pronoun) suffix at all.

It has also been conjectured that the term *Ribbi* originally denoted a fully ordained teacher, one who received the ordination reaching back to Joshua on whom Moses laid his hands. When full ordination came to an end (in the fourth century B.C.), the title "Rabbi" was given to every teacher of the *Torah* and was a purely honourific one.

There were other religious functionaries in addition to the town rabbi, and these were also usually given the title *Ha-Rav*. The town rabbi, with a few exceptions, only preached sermons on rare occasions—normally on the Sabbath before *Pesach* and the Sabbath before *Yom Kippur*. Preaching was the prerogative of the *maggid*. The *maggid* was usually a wandering preacher who visited various towns (as in the case of Y'shua) where the congregation would give him remuneration for his services. But the larger towns had, in addition to the town rabbi, a permanent town *maggid* who received a regular stipend from the community chest.

With all this as a background, we can clearly see that Herod called the very elite leaders of the Jerusalem (over seventy) together and demanded information from them. He probably did not get much out of the "Wise Men".

2:5-6 The voice of the prophet

"(5) And they (the chief priests and scribes of the people) said unto him (Herod), *In Bethlehem of Judaea: for thus it is written by the prophet,* (6) *And thou Bethlehem, in the land of Juda, art not the least among the princes of Juda: for out of thee shall come a Governor, that shall rule my people Israel*".

It was common Jewish opinion that the Messiah was to come from Bethlehem and of the seed of David. The prophet spoken about in verse 5 is Micah (5:2) "*But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting*".

2:7-10 Herod calls for the “court astrologers” and sends them to Bethlehem

“(7) Then **Herod**, when he had **privily** called the **wise men**, enquired of them diligently **what time the star appeared**. (8) And he sent them to Bethlehem, and said, Go and search diligently for the **young child** (toddler – walking around); and when ye have found him, bring me word again, that I may come and worship him also. (9) When they had heard the king, they departed; and, lo, **the star, which they saw in the east, went before them**, till it came and stood over where the young child was. (10) When they saw the star, they rejoiced with exceeding great joy.”

Herod then consulted with the Wise Men privately, possibly to ensure nobody spread rumors about the “New King”. He must have feared that the word would go out to the people about the arrival of the Messiah of Israel.

If the Wise Men were Jewish rabbis, they would have known from prophecy that the Messiah is to come from Bethlehem. It is very possible that the wise men did not know exactly where the Messiah was in Bethlehem, as YHWH only showed them the star after they left Herod on their way to Bethlehem.

On arrival, they were overwhelmed with joy when they saw the one year old Messiah – “young child”, a *piadion* in Greek, meaning a toddler. It is the age when the child can walk.

2:11 Gold, Frankincense and Myrrh

“And when **they** (the Wise Men) **were come into the house** (not a “stable” anymore), **they saw the young child** (piodion - toddler) with Mary his mother, and fell down, and **worshipped him**: and when they had opened their treasures, **they presented unto him** gifts; **gold, and frankincense, and myrrh**”.

Here is solid proof that they are not in the “manger” (“stable”, “succot” (Luke 2:7)) anymore. Here the word “house” is “*oikia*” in Greek, meaning “a family house”, which definitely indicates to us that they are not in the same place anymore. Why? Simply because it is a year gone past!

If we look at the gifts, there is probably a deeper meaning to these gifts - beyond the scope of this study. The “*gold*” could speak of His Deity, the “*frankincense*” of His purity and the “*myrrh*” of His death. All three, like Y’shua, are associated with the Temple and/or priesthood.

2:12-14 Flight in the Night

“(12) And being **warned of God in a dream** that they (the Wise Men) should not return to Herod, they departed into their own country another way. (13) And when **they were departed, behold, the angel of the Lord appeareth to Joseph in a dream**, saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and flee into Egypt, and be thou there until I bring thee word: for **Herod will seek the young child to destroy him**. (14) When he arose, **he took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt:**”

After the excitement calmed of actually seeing the Messiah, the Wise Men went to sleep. Whilst sleeping, YHWH gave them a warning through a dream to not return to Herod but to flee from Israel. Shortly after that, they woke up and took another road to the country in the east.

By now it must be close to midnight or in the early hours of the morning. An angel appears to Yoseph also in a dream and gives him a firm warning to flee with his family to Egypt. They left shortly after that.

And just how could a family that was so poor that they could only afford young pigeons or doves for a sacrifice, afford to travel to Egypt and live there? Again, we see the providence of YHWH through the gifts of gold, frankincense and myrrh; gifts that would provide a living for the family during this period of time.

2:15 Out of Egypt I have called my son

“And was **there until the death of Herod**: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, **Out of Egypt have I called my son**”.

This is an example of a *Remez*; a hint of a very deep truth—in this case the relationship between the Messiah and Israel, as both are called “YHWH’s son”. The verse being quoted refers to Israel and not the Messiah. Matthew understands that the primary meaning of this passage (from Hosea) is true in an

allegorical sense - Israel is "YHWH's son". He takes this allegorical concept of Israel being the Son of YHWH and says Messiah is literally the first born Son of YHWH. Hos 11:1 "*When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt*".

2:16 Herod slew all the children

"Then Herod, when he saw that he was mocked of the wise men, was exceeding wroth, and sent forth, and slew all the children that were in Bethlehem, and in all the coasts thereof, from two years old and under, according to the time which he had diligently enquired of the wise men".

When Herod realised that the visitors from the East had tricked him, he was furious and gave orders to kill all the boys in Bethlehem and its neighborhood that were two years old and younger.

It was the custom in ancient Israel to count the years of one's age from the date of conception. Therefore, Herod actually killed children one year old and younger, according to the way age is calculated today. When Herod killed the male children in Bethlehem, it was a satanic attempt to kill the "seed of the woman". The Bible describes this attack in this matter: "*and the dragon stood before the woman (Israel) who was ready to be delivered, to devour the Child (Y'shua) as soon as He was born*" (Rev 12:4). But, forewarned by YHWH, Yoseph and Miriam fled to Egypt with the Child.

2:17-18 "A voice was heard in Ramah..."

"(17) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, (18) In Rama was there a voice heard, lamentation, and weeping, and great mourning, Rachel weeping for her children, and would not be comforted, because they are not".

The prophecy from Jeremiah (31:15) "*Thus saith the LORD; A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, and bitter weeping; Rahel weeping for her children refused to be comforted for her children, because they were not*".

Another *Remez* is seen here, as this verse does not refer to Messiah but to the slaughter of the northern tribes by the Assyrians. Just as Rachel from her tomb in Ramah grieves for those lost lives, so the women of *Beit-Lechem* mourn for their slain infants.

There is also a deeper mystical meaning in this verse (at the *sod* level) where Rachel is compared to the *Shekinah* (YHWH's presence in this world) who grieves for her children (of Israel).

These two verses demonstrate a way the New Covenant quotes the Original Testament. This way is called "literal, plus application". If we go back to the text of Jer 31:15 and look at its original context, it is neither history nor prophecy, but something that was already presently happening. It was a present contemporary event of the prophet Jeremiah and is a reference to the Babylonian Captivity.

In this account, young Jewish men were being taken into captivity in Babylon. When they were taken away, they were taken by the town of Ramah, which is near the place where Rachel was buried. Rachel had become the symbol of Jewish motherhood. Rachel was a matriarch of Israel, wife of Jacob, and mother of Yoseph and Benjamin. She died in childbirth on the way from Bethel to Eprath. As she lay dying, she named her son "*Ben Oni*", or "son of my suffering". Yoseph always called him Benjamin. Jacob did not bury her in the ancestral patriarchal cave at Machpelah, but interred her at the place of her death and set up a monument over her grave.

As the young men went by Ramah, the mothers of the town came outside and were weeping for the sons of Israel that they would never see again. Jeremiah pictures this as Rachel (Jewish motherhood) weeping. When Herod ordered the male children to be killed, Jewish mothers were weeping again for sons that they would never see again.

2:19-21 The return to the Promised Land

"(19) But when Herod was dead, behold, an angel of the Lord appeareth in a dream to Joseph in Egypt, (20) Saying, Arise, and take the young child and his mother, and go into the land of Israel: for they are dead which sought the young child's life. (21) And he arose, and took the young child and his mother, and came into the land of Israel".

Notice that the family does not return to Jerusalem. The reason for the move was because the one that was appointed as head of Judea was Archelaus, the son of Herod the Great. He, as much as it may be hard to believe, was even worse than his father. He was so bad that he was eventually banished by Rome altogether.

In order to avoid problems with Archelaus who may have inherited the paranoia of his father, the family chose to move to Galilee which was outside of his jurisdiction. It was under the jurisdiction of Herod Antipas. Although Herod Antipas was also the son of Herod the Great, he was very different than Archelaus.

2:22-23 "... that He should be called a Nazarene"

"(22) *But when he heard that Archelaus did reign in Judaea in the room of his father Herod, he was afraid to go thither: notwithstanding, being warned of God in a dream, he turned aside into the parts of Galilee:* (23) *And he came and dwelt in a city called Nazareth: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophets, He shall be called a Nazarene".*

On a literal level, this would clearly be another "error" on Matthew's part, as no prophet ever made this prediction. Some scholars explain that Isaiah refers to the Messiah as a "branch" (*netzer*) which is word play on Nazarene (*Natzeret*). Isaiah 11:1 "*And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch* (*netzer*) *shall grow out of his roots*", but this connection is very farfetched.

Note: The Hebrew, Aramaic and Syrian versions of Matthew all have the singular "prophet" in verse 23, whereas the Greek has the plural "prophets".

Another category of how the New Covenant quotes the Original Testament is called a "summation" or "summary". In this verse, the specific quotation in question is, "He should be called a Nazarene". As said, try as you may, you will not find a single prophecy that states, "He should be called a Nazarene".

Verse 23 uses the plural term "prophets", but there is not even a single one that says this. This category does not have a direct quotation from the *Tanach*, but a summary of what the *Tanach* taught. The clue is when the word "prophets" is used in the plural here. In the first three categories the word "prophet" is, in most cases, singular. In the fourth category, it is used in the plural. The author is not quoting but summarising what the prophets said.

There are two schools of thought concerning Y'shua's lifestyle and looks:

- 1) The first, as per most pictures of Y'shua where he has a short beard and very long hair and blue eyes.
- 2) The less famous one of which very few students know or would like to know – the Y'shua that has no beauty that we should desire him.

Which one is right? Both theories will be given—you decide for yourself.

The good-looking Y'shua?

Let's start with the good-looking Y'shua. References to Y'shua being a Nazarene relate only to His growing up and coming from the town of Nazareth and not belonging to the *nazir* religious group.

In English, the town (Nazareth) and the vow in Numbers (Nazarite) for the *nazir* religious group seem to be similar. But in Hebrew they are two totally different words. The town, transliterated, would be: *Nats-raht*. While the vow would be: *nah-zear*.

It becomes very clear then, that what the Gospels are doing is not making Y'shua out to be the "vow taker" but "the Branch", for the meaning of Nazareth is "branch", a very powerful Messianic title used by a number of prophets:

"In that day shall the branch of the LORD be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel". (Isaiah 4:2)

"And there shall come forth a rod out of the stem of Jesse, and a Branch shall grow out of his roots." (Isaiah 11:1)

"Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever, the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (Isaiah 60:21)

"Behold, the days come, saith the LORD, that I will raise unto David a righteous Branch, and a King shall reign and prosper, and shall execute judgment and justice in the earth". (Jer 23:5)

"In those days, and at that time, will I cause the Branch of righteousness to grow up unto David; and he shall execute judgment and righteousness in the land" (Jer 33:15)

"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant **the BRANCH**". (Zech 3:8)

"And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaketh the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is **The BRANCH**; and he shall grow up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD:" (Zech. 6:12)

These are the major cites where the Coming One, Y'shua the Messiah, was entitled "*Branch*". There is much to this and it all began when YHWH put an end to the rebellion of Israel in the Wilderness, specifically concerning who installed Aaron as High Priest. For the rebel Korah said it was because Aaron was Moses' brother, that Moses made Aaron High Priest. And YHWH instituted a dead branch (also known in English as a staff or rod), to be His witness as to whom He had chosen to be High Priest. It was when this dead branch came to life, sprouted and grew almonds on it (Num 17:5ff), that YHWH revealed to Israel whom He had chosen.

It was when Y'shua, a dead 'branch' came back to life, glorified, that all Israel could know that YHWH had made Y'shua both Lord and Messiah (Acts 2:36).

It was out of the turbulence of rebellion that YHWH established who was to be His anointed one, Aaron. And now the concept of a branch would become a symbol for the Messiah, used by many prophets. So, when Matthew (2:23) and others call Y'shua a 'Nazarene', they are not referring to the vow which will be explained later; but to the place where He grew up in, for they are also very well aware of the prophecies that say the Messiah will be a "*Branch*", which is the meaning of the name of Nazareth.

It gets very interesting when we read John 19:19, which says: 'Pilate also wrote an inscription and put it on the crucifixion stake. It was written, "Y'shua the Nazarene, the King of the Jews". It can equally be translated like this: "Y'shua My Branch, the King of the Jews".

As far as the pictures with short beard and long hair is concerned, Y'shua, not being a Nazarite, would have had a very long beard and fairly trimmed hair, hidden under the 'turban...wound' around the head and 'hanging gracefully behind' (Edersheim, Alfred: Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, 1994, p. 198). This would have been worn by all men of His time and would have protected their heads and the back of their neck from the scorching heat of the sun, much like the cowboy hat of today.

Giving Y'shua long hair is actually anti-scriptural, for the Apostle Paul assumes this when he states: 'Does not the very nature of things teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a disgrace to him?' (1 Cor 11:14).

Among the Jews, long hair was a symbol of rebellion.

The Y'shua that has no beauty that we should desire him

Assuming Y'shua was a *nazir*, taking from a literal point of view:

A *nazir* was a man who would isolate himself from certain material luxuries for purposes of spiritual heightenings. (A female *nazir* was called a *nezirah*.) A *nazir* (pronounced NAH-zee-er) or *nezirah* is a *nazirite*, but what's a *nazirite* (other than a poor translation of the word *nazir*)?

These Hebrew words both mean "marked out one". They come from the root word *neizer* (pronounced NAY-zehr) which means "marked out" or "designation". The *nazir* or *nezirah* would mark out certain things as off-limits, the absence of which would enhance their spiritual sensitivity and deaden their cravings for physical pleasures.

Here's a excellent definition of "nazir" by Encyclopedia.com: "In the Bible, a man dedicated to God. The Nazarite, after taking a special vow, abstained from intoxicating beverages, never cut his hair, and avoided corpses. An inadvertent breach of these rules called for purificatory rites. His vow was for a fixed term (though it could also be for life), at the end of which he was released. Samuel, the prophet, and Samson were Nazarites. The name is also spelled Nazirite".

Anybody who is still wants to become a *nazir* after looking at the "job description" below, must really be a dedicated person.

The following collection of singular commandments in the *Torah* applies specifically to the *nazir*. For that reason, they are allowed to have long hair, etc. Again, only technically speaking, here's what *nezirut* would take:

Nothing "from the vine", meaning alcoholic drinks (**Negative Law 202, Num 6:3 - A Nazir may not drink wine or any beverage from grapes**) in addition to any grape (**Negative Law 203, Num 6:3 - A Nazir may not eat fresh grapes**), raisin (**Negative Law 204, Num 6:3 - A Nazir may not eat dried grapes**), grape seed (**Negative Law 205, Num 6:4 - A Nazir may not eat grape seeds/kernels**) or grape rind (**Negative Law 206, Num 6:4 - A Nazir may not eat grape peels/husks**), may be ingested.

The *nazir's* hair may not be cut (**Negative Law 209, Num 6:5 - A Nazir must not shave his hair**) and must be allowed to grow unhindered (**Positive Law 92, Num 6:5 - The Nazir letting his hair grow during his separation**).

To stay within that bubble of spirituality, the *nazir* cannot enter a building or facility – a "tent" as the *Torah* puts it – in which a dead body is located (**Negative Law 208, Lev 21:11 - Nazir must not become tameh entering house with corpse**), and neither can he come into physical contact with the dead (**Negative Law 207, Num 6:7 - Nazir may not rend himself tameh (unclean) for the dead**). (*Y'shua* never entered Lazarus' tomb, in fact he instructed Lazarus to come out. Other miracles with the dead; i.e., the 12 year old girl – *Y'shua* said that she was only sleeping; the miracle happened already before he entered, etc.) And upon completion of the accepted term of *nezirut*, the *nazir* must bring certain sacrifices to the Temple and shave his head (**Positive Law 93, Num 6:18 - Nazir completing vow shaves his head & brings sacrifice**).

Also from **Negative Law 43, Lev 19:27 - Not shaving the temples/sides of your head** and **Negative Law 44, Lev 19:27 - Not shaving your beard** we know that He could never have trimmed his beard or shaved.

Now we sit with a picture of *Y'shua* with a long hair and a beard that has never been shaved according to the Nazarite Vow (Num 6:1ff) and the *Torah*, certainly not a good-looking site.

The myth that *Y'shua* was a person with good looks and stood out amongst the crowds is absolutely false, in fact the opposite is true – Isaiah 53:2-3 taken from various translations:

"*For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he hath no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him.* He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not". (KJV)

"*My servant grew up in the LORD'S presence like a tender green shoot, sprouting from a root in dry and sterile ground. There was nothing beautiful or majestic about his appearance, nothing to attract us to him.* He was despised and rejected-a man of sorrows, acquainted with bitterest grief. We turned our backs on him and looked the other way when he went by. He was despised, and we did not care". (NLT)

"*For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, And like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty That we should look upon Him, Nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him.* He was despised and forsaken of men, A man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; And like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him". (NASB)

A Nazarene was someone who was despised and rejected. This attitude is reflected in John 1:45-46. Nathaniel's question, "*Can anything good come out of Nazareth?*" is reflecting the negative viewpoint people had of the Nazarenes. People who were Nazarenes were people who were **despised** and **rejected**. It is as if they told Nazarene jokes back in those days. And what did the prophets say about the Messiah? The prophets did predict that the Messiah would be a despised and rejected individual. The best way of labeling that is to call a person a Nazarene.

There is also not one Scripture referring to where *Y'shua* drank wine or ate grapes, not even at the Last Supper. (It must be noticed that the Nazarite vow according to the Encyclopedia.com clearly says "**His vow was for a fixed term (though it could also be for life), at the end of which he was released**".) And with this I do not say that *Y'shua* ever used wine, perhaps grape juice but not wine. It will be explained later in this exegesis.

It is also interesting to note that *Y'shua* even refused the "*wine*" (vinegar, sour wine) when He was thirsty on the crucifixion stake (Matt 27:34)

Summary of the Customs and Traditions of a Nazarite:

The Hebrew term "*Nazir*" signifies one who is dedicated to YHWH by a vow involving abstinence from intoxicants and cutting one's hair. The person who took the Nazarite Vow for a certain specified period of time (30 days was the minimum) did not become a loner. He continued to live in human society without being necessarily an ascetic (a person who practises rigorous self-denial as a religious discipline).

He was under an obligation to abstain from wine and all other products of the vine, and to let his hair grow long. From the time of the nomadic ancestors, the vine was the symbol of the settled life and a culture removed from the ancient simplicity of manners, though quite right in themselves. The free growth of hair represented the Nazarite's consecration to YHWH in the visible form. The hair was the glory (*nezer*) of the head. If the period of the vow was not specified, Rabbinic law fixed it at thirty days. During the period of the vow, he was forbidden to touch a dead body.

At the end of the period of the vow the Nazarite appeared at the Temple before a priest, made certain prescribed offerings, shaved off his hair and burned it. Following this, he was again permitted to use the products of the vine and to return to ordinary life.

That brings us to the end of the two theories—as said, the reader must self-decide if *Y'shua* was a literal *nazir* or not.

Let's now continue with *Y'shua*'s upbringing and education. Other Gospels have been made use off because very little is said about this in the Book of Matthew. Please read the section "Was *Y'shua* a carpenter?" under "Mat 3:55-58 Is not this the carpenter's son?" before reading the section below.

Y'shua's childhood and upbringing

And *Yoseph*, *Miriam* and *Y'shua* arrived in Nazareth...

"And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him".
(Luke 2:40)

With this one statement, the development of *Y'shua* until the age of twelve is summarised by stating that physically He waxed strong; mentally He was filled with wisdom; and spiritually the grace of YHWH was upon Him. The question is: what kind of an upbringing did *Y'shua* have?

Although the Bible does not give that much information concerning *Y'shua*'s early years, the *Mishnah* gives the breaking down of the ages of development of a Jewish child. "*At five years of age, a child is put to the text of the Scripture; at age ten, to the Mishnah or traditions; at age thirteen, to the commandments (Bar Mitzvah); at age fifteen, for the study of Talmud; at age eighteen, for marriage; at age twenty, for pursuing a vocation; at the age of thirty, for entering into one's full vigor*".

Here we have in a nutshell the early life of any Jewish boy growing to manhood, including *Y'shua*. Textbooks were simply not available during this period of time. So all learning was done by memorisation. This will come into evidence later on in the way *Y'shua* taught His disciples, using what is called in the Hebrew "re^mez", which means, "an alluding to".

However, there are some other indications that we can go by that tell us something about the nature of His education. One thing that we can refer to is the fact that He had a Jewish upbringing in a home with parents who were members of the believing Jewish remnant of that day. He lived in a spiritual home, a home where mother and father both were very much committed to YHWH. He received a Jewish upbringing, learning much about the *Tanach* (Old Covenant) and the Jewish religion of that time.

While in His deity, *Y'shua* had a mission and knew everything. But in His humanity, He had to undergo a learning process just like every other human being. Some scholars believe that for this kind of learning, He probably underwent a special training by YHWH the Father. So that when the period of training was over with, and when His mission finally began to be opened up in the course of His public ministry, He was not rebellious. When a time of suffering came, because of the nature of this training He had and that He understood that He was trained for that very suffering, He was not rebellious and willingly gave His cheeks to them that plucked out the hair.

It is no accident that Luke will tell us later when *Y'shua* begins to move towards Jerusalem for the final time when He knows He will be crucified, we are told that He will set His face like a flint in order to go to Jerusalem for the purpose of fulfilling is mission.

Y'shua in the Temple

"Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover". (Luke 41)

A term in Hebrew used for festival or feast is "mo'ed", and it means a "set time" or an "appointed time". YHWH has appointed seasons during the year that He would require the men of Israel to be present in

Jerusalem. The implication here is that YHWH has an appointment to perform something with Israel on those dates.

Another Hebrew word used in connection with the festivals is “*mikrah*”, which is translated as convocation in most Bibles. It literally means “rehearsal” or “recital”. The implication of this is that the festivals are times that Israel rehearses various aspects of the plan of YHWH. This is good preparation for the time that YHWH fulfils the appointments He has set with Israel. As the pilgrims travelled year by year to Jerusalem for these festivals, the Rabbis taught and speculated on the Messianic aspects of these appointments and rehearsals.

Although the other feasts; i.e., *Shavuot* (Pentecost) and *Succoth* (Tabernacles) are not mentioned here in this verse, it was Law that they would every year attend them in Jerusalem. (**Positive Law 52, Exod 23:14 - On the three annual Festival pilgrimages to the Temple; as well as Positive Law 53, Exod 34:23 - On appearing before YHVH during the Festivals Deut 16:16.**)

“And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom”. (Luke 2:42)

Y’shua is taken at *Pesach* (Passover) time to Jerusalem when He is twelve years old, according to tradition. He is taken there in preparation for His *Bar Mitzvah* at thirteen years of age. It is also at age twelve that a son is officially apprenticed to his father. This is the probable meaning of Y’shua’s words, “*I must go about My Father’s business*”. At the age of thirteen the boy goes through a special ceremony. From that time on, he is under the Law and is responsible for his own sins. Up until this time, in Judaism, the parents are responsible for the sins of the child.

However, the Rabbis said, “*The first Passover after the twelfth year, and then the preparation for Bar Mitzvah which will happen on the thirteenth year, the son is taken to Jerusalem*”. And so in keeping with that Jewish tradition, the parents take Y’shua at the age of twelve to Jerusalem for the first Passover in that city, and in preparation for His Bar Mitzvah that will come at the age of thirteen.

“...and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day's journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances”. (Luke 2:43-44)

The events in this short segment cover a period of seven days. His parents took Him to Jerusalem, but because they were not travelling alone, but travelling with a group, when the group left Jerusalem the assumption they made was that He was with someone else in the group. Only after travelling a full day’s journey and staying the first night of encampment, they discovered that He was not there.

“and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him. After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers”. (Luke 2:45-47)

After they returned to Jerusalem, it took three days to find Him. The place where they found him was the Temple compound, where we are told that He was “sitting in the midst of the teachers”. These were the experts and interpreters of the Mosaic Law. Y’shua was sitting among them, both “*listening to them*”, meaning He understood their in-depth teaching; but also He was answering their questions, the kind of questions that go beyond a normal twelve-year old boy. It is also evident that Y’shua was very well-schooled in the Scriptures.

All that heard Him were amazed at His understanding and His answers. And they were all the more amazed in the light of the fact that He was from Galilee, and even more significant that He was from the city of Nazareth.

“And when they (Yoseph and Miriam) saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously. And he said to them, “How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father’s house? And they did not understand the saying which he spoke to them”. (Luke 2:48-50)

Another thing that we notice at age twelve, and the result of His training from Isaiah 11, is that He recognised His Sonship with YHWH the Father. He reminds His mother of who He is; and that rather than spending three days looking all over Jerusalem, they should have known where He was because of who He is. The place where He would be found is in His Father’s house. And so, at the age of twelve, not only does He have an exorbitant amount of knowledge for His age, but also He recognises His Sonship with the Father. At this point in time, **He also knows that He is the Messiah of Israel.**

Y'shua at Twelve – getting ready for his *Bar Mitzvah* – the third of the Jewish Lifecycle customs

- (42) “And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom”. (Luke 2:42)
(46) “After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions;
(47) and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers”. (Luke 2:46-47)
Josephus' Life 1.2.8 (speculative): “I made mighty proficiency in the improvements of my learning, and appeared to have both a great memory and understanding. Moreover, when I was a child, and about fourteen years of age, I was commended by all for the love I had to learning; on which account the high priests and principal men of the city came then frequently to me together, in order to know my opinion about the accurate understanding of points of the law”.

This parallel is one I have not seen pointed out before. Both passages probably refer to a demonstration of a boy's learning around the time of his *Bar Mitzvah*, which in modern tradition takes place when he turns thirteen; here Josephus speaks of “about fourteen years of age” and Y’shua is said to be twelve (thus going on thirteen). So both passages may simply be conventional boasts drawn from the memories of the proud Jewish parents.

But there is an odder similarity: both passages imply that the scholars of Jerusalem actually learned things from the boys! This is an extraordinary boast. Was this also part of traditional *Bar Mitzvah kvelling* of the time as laid out below?

Bar Mitzvah ritual

Ask any under 13-year-old Jewish boy which date he anticipates with the most excitement and he'll undoubtedly say “my *Bar Mitzvah*”. (Under 12-year-old Jewish girls would say “*Bat Mitzvah*”). The boy's *Bar Mitzvah* is the date on which he reaches his religious majority - on his 13th birthday.

Bar or Bat Mitzvah literally means “son or daughter of the commandment”, the thirteen year-old male (*bar*-Aramaic for “son”) or twelve year-old female (*bat* is Hebrew for “daughter”) become responsible for the commandments. The phrase also refers to the ceremony itself – “subject to the commandments”.

Bar Mitzvah then simply means “coming of age”. A *Bar Mitzvah* in a nutshell is “a Jewish person who is responsible for his or her own actions”. The *Torah* considers a mentally stable male of thirteen years to be responsible for his own actions. Women reach this stage of maturity a year earlier. When the *Torah* says that a person must do such-and-such and must not do such-and-such, it is speaking to the *Bar Mitzvah*.

Is it true that the idea that a boy becomes a man at thirteen is a holdover from agrarian times? Establishing adulthood at thirteen is progressive to this day. Thirteen is when a boy begins to develop his own mind. The reason boys are generally considered men at around eighteen are because that is the age they can carry arms and go to war. The Jewish nation is not based on the power of battle, but on the power of the mind.

Is it true that *Bar Mitzvah* training consists of at least one year learning how to read the *Torah*? This could be the reason why Y’shua went to the Temple at the age of twelve, one year before his *Bar Mitzvah*.

The custom of making a feast is very old, but varies from community to community. In Jerusalem, the custom was to make a feast on the day the boy first put on tefillin (connection – mark on forehead and hand – Deut 6:4-9, 11:13-21, Exod 13:1-16), **several months before he became thirteen**. This day was called, “*Yom Hatefillin*”, the “day of the connection”. *Bar mitzvah* training consists of thirteen years of learning how to do *mitzvahs* (commandments) and why. And it continues on from there for the rest of life.

Can putting on a *tallit* (prayer shawl) for the first time ever be as exciting as being tossed the keys to the car? Chanting the *Torah* or *Haftorah* (section) portion demonstrates serious preparation. And doing so publicly – before friends and family – provides an opportunity to overcome stage fright and embarrassment that will serve the celebrant well as he or she increasingly moves into the public arena. To become *Bar Mitzvah*, you have to read the *Torah* portion in public. The tradition that the boy is called to the *Torah* is a universal custom that is mentioned in the ancient *Midrash*.

In traditional society, focused (for men) on the synagogue, a 13-year-old boy's ability to lead the service, to read from the *Torah* and to count in the *minyan*, marked him as a participant in society. He was truly a man.

Jewish fathers recite a short blessing traditionally when their sons reached the age of *Bar Mitzvah*. “*Barukh she’petarani mi-onsho shel zeh - Blessed is He who has freed me from the punishment due this child*”. (*Genesis Rabbah 63:14*). The blessing is recited today in traditionalist and some liberal synagogues, though many other liberal communities have eliminated it. In those communities that have retained it and in which girls have equivalent ceremonies to boys, parents recite the blessing for their daughters as well.

While the term "bar mitzvah" occurs in the *Talmud* to describe one who is subject to the commandments, early rabbinic literature provides no reference to an occasion or rite under that name. However, there is some suggestion that the 13th birthday did not pass unnoticed, for it was marked by a blessing.

"Rabbi Phinehas said in Rabbi Levi's name: They [Jacob and Esau] were like a myrtle and a wild rose-bush growing side by side; when they reached the age of maturity, one displayed its fragrance, and the other grew its thorns. So for 13 years both went to school. But after turning 13, one went to the study hall and the other to idolatrous shrines. Rabbi Eleazar ben Rabbi Simeon said: A man is responsible for his son until the age of 13: thereafter he must say, 'Blessed is He who has now freed me from the responsibility of this boy'" (*Genesis Rabbah 63:10*).

Aaron ben Jacob Hakohen of Provance wrote in the 14th century when: "*It is written in Genesis Rabbah that he whose son reaches the age of 13 must say the blessing*, 'Blessed is He who has now freed me from the responsibility of this boy'. There are those who say it the first time that the boy receives his aliyah to read the Torah. The [eighth-century] Gaon Rabbi Yehudai rose in the synagogue and said this blessing the first time that his son read the Torah". (Aliyah - being called up to recite blessings over the Torah reading.)

The customary understanding of this blessing accordingly is that "up until now, the father has been punished when the son sinned because he had not educated him [as it is assumed that it is the father's responsibility to teach the child]".

Church, how do you avoid losing young people aged 15-20?

In many of the churches around the world, including some with congregations of well over 100, there is absolutely nobody aged 15-20. It seems that people in that age group have decided that church has nothing to offer, even if they have been associated with the church in some way since early childhood. The congregation consists of old people, middle aged people, and parents with young children. There might be people aged 21-30 who have been to University and come back; but in the 15-20 year age group, there is absolutely nobody.

The absence of this age group is self-perpetuating. There needs to be a critical mass to attract new people. Most young people complain that there is no point going to church because there is nobody there of his age. There are plenty of friends outside the church, but none of them have any kind of spiritual interests.

What Happens at Age 15?

Children and young teenagers are quite happy to learn from adults, as long as they are given something interesting. Up to the age of about eight or nine, they are happy with simple things like crayons and colouring books. After that they want videos and computer games. From about 11-14 they want outdoor pursuits like sailing and canoeing, and maybe some visits to theme parks; and as long as you give them some of these things they are happy to sit around for half an hour and discuss the Bible. Then from 15 onwards, they disappear completely and become pre-occupied with money and part-time jobs so they can buy CDs, driving lessons and ultimately cars.

During July 1999, there was a conference organised by the British Messianic Jewish Alliance (BMJA). The theme was "Passing on the Baton to the Younger Generation". The Messianic Jewish congregations appear to have the same problems as the churches, with hardly anyone aged 15-20. There was nobody of that age group at the conference. The first speaker was aged about 90 and had a plastic baton, which he passed on to the next speaker aged 39, who said he was quite flattered to be considered young. The third speaker talked about the latest generation of Israel supporters, which included anyone born after the State of Israel was founded in 1948.

After lunch they had a panel discussion with some people who were mostly in their twenties, although one of them was aged 31. They each gave their stories about how they had become believers in *Y’shua* during their teens or early twenties, and because they were Jewish they had the additional difficulty of being the only Jewish believer in a Gentile church. They talked about how they felt isolated, and sometimes doubted whether they had done the right thing, and then felt reassured when they first came into contact with another Jewish believer and realised they were not alone. These are stories that have been repeated throughout the

entire 150-year history of the BMJA, and the movement was actually founded for this very purpose, to bring together Jewish believers who were feeling isolated.

After giving their personal stories, the panel attempted to answer a written question someone submitted about two hours earlier. The question was "*What can we do for people aged 15-20 to avoid losing them?*" Most of them didn't have any clear answer, although they tried really hard because they knew how important the question was. One of them said the family is very important, and there needs to be a strong father figure, but he didn't consider it to be a complete answer. Finally there was a girl who talked about the church youth group she had been involved in, from the age of 14-17. The reason this group survived is because the church leaders kept their distance and allowed the young people to run it themselves, but at the same time gave the assurance that they were available to offer help and advice when needed. This worked well because the young people were made to feel that they were being treated like adults and the group flourished. Then, unfortunately, a new preacher came who didn't have the same hands-off approach. Instead he tried to run the group himself and it disintegrated.

After the meeting someone asked her a bit more about the group and wanted to know if they had any charismatic characters among the young people, or were they just ordinary type of folk. She said they did have the active support of people who had recently been to University and came back; so there were some capable, educated people in the group—but the older church members stayed away.

The answer came to light, but to implement it, the church needed a complete revolution in its thinking. In many churches, not even the adults are allowed to organise things themselves—never mind the young people.

After some discussion, they came to the conclusion that the hands-off approach would work, but only if the young people had been taught something already throughout their entire childhood up to the age of 13.

This brings us to the Jewish idea of *Bar-Mitzvah*. When a Jewish child reaches a certain level of understanding of the Bible, usually at the age of about 13, they are asked to read a passage of the Bible in the *synagogue*, and then they go out for a meal to have a celebration. This is their coming of age ceremony, so that they participate in the congregation as adults and not as children. Of course, the whole process depends on the quality of regular instruction that they are given throughout their childhood. If the instruction is irregular and fragmented, they will not be capable of a *Bar-Mitzvah* at the appropriate age; and if it is left until too late, it becomes meaningless. There is no point giving a *Bar-Mitzvah* to someone aged 25.

The reason why many churches are unable to run youth groups for people aged 15-20, even with the hands-off approach, is because they have never given regular instruction up to the age of 13. Instead, they have conducted social experiments and played political games with each other, so that the youth work gets neglected. If they tried the hands-off approach with the 15-20 age group, there would certainly be chaos; because you can't expect people to organise themselves to do something constructive if they have never been taught anything.

The solution, therefore, is to teach them regularly up to the age of 13, the "*Bar-Mitzvah*" age, and then treat them as adults and let them organise themselves.

Overview: Why Lifecycle Rituals?

The Jewish life-cycles are the rhythm of Jewish life from birth to death. They are the cultural continuity of their people. They give them their identity and their beliefs to pass down from generation to generation. Jewish lifecycle ceremonies and rituals bring about transformation; and they celebrate, reflect, and channel changes that are taking place.

When a baby is born, the circumcision ceremony functions to reinforce his identity for his family and community. A child reaches adolescence; the ritual reminds him and his congregation of his new responsibilities. A couple falls in love, the ceremony under a wedding canopy transforms them from mere lovers to committed, covenantal partners. When a person dies, the preparation of his body for burial expresses core beliefs of his people among them; that they are responsible for deep acts of caring for each other; that the human body is to be treated with sanctity; and that the transition from life to death has meaning.

By and large, since the destruction of the ancient Temples with their functioning priesthood, Judaism does not have "sacraments" that must be carried out only by authorised individuals, and without which a person cannot be considered part of a covenantal community. A Jewish boy uncircumcised is still fully a Jew (albeit

one not in compliance with traditional Jewish law); a Jewish boy at 13 who has not publicly celebrated becoming a *Bar Mitzvah* is still fully subject to all the expectations for a Jewish adult. The *mikveh* or ritual bath and water generally is a part of many lifecycle events. Converts to Judaism immerse in the *mikveh*, as do many brides (and grooms) before their weddings. Being born Jewish carries with it an identity that ritual can reinforce but does not create from whole cloth.

Jewish lifecycle ritual is a separation of ritual generally, which among other things communicates and strengthens group values and norms, helps relieve tensions in moments of transition, promotes family and group bonds, and provides public expressions for personal life passages.

At their best, the Jews say Jewish lifecycle ceremonies can:

Guide to see the deeper meaning, even YHWH's presence, in the ordinary, and sanctify it.

Help to respond to life changes as more than biological or legal events, and enable Jews to sanctify their days and years.

Tell what to do and say at important moments.

Bring out of a focus only on self and family into connection with YHWH, with the Jewish people, and with Jewish tradition.

Connect Jews to the unseen presences of those that have come before them, and even those who will come after them.

Foster not just personal or family identity, but also Jewish identity.

Connect them with what they believe as a people to be of lasting and profound significance.

It is particularly striking the extent to which many requirements for Jewish lifecycle events reinforce finding personal and family meaning in the context of community. Ritual circumcision, marriage, recitation of the Mourner's *Kaddish* – even celebrating becoming a *Bar* or *Bat Mitzvah* (for a boy or girl) in the context of congregational worship services, as is very common in most communities – all these require a *minyan*, a quorum of 10 grown ups, which transforms a group of Jews into a symbolic – and actual – community.

Life Cycles Include:

Brit Milah – *Bris* (Circumcision)

This is the Covenant that was made with Abraham in Gen 12. To bless the Jewish people, and through them, all nations.

Baby Naming:

This is the naming and dedication of a child, with vows to pray for and support this child in the community of faith.

Pidyon HaBen (Redemption of the first born):

The ceremony of redemption whereby the child is seen as belonging to YHWH, but borrowed for awhile.

Upsheren:

It isn't clear exactly when the custom of upsheren started. There are those who say that the practice of upsheren is alluded to in *Talmud Yerushalmi*, *Pe'ah* 1:4 and *Midrash Tanchuma*, *Kedoshim* 14.

The *Shalos Utshuvos Arugas Habosem* (*Responsa* 210) explains that "A person is compared to the tree of the field (*Devorim* 20:19)". Just like it is forbidden to benefit from the fruit of a tree for the first three years, the fruit is considered *Orlah*; so, too, we do not cut the hair of a child until he is three years old.

The Jews attach such importance to *upsheren* because that is when the child wears *peyos* for the first time. *Peyos* physically distinguishes the Jew from the non-Jew, so by celebrating the *upsheren* we are showing how happy we are that they are Jews and distinct from all the other nations. Additionally, the *upsheren* is the time when we start educating the child with other *mitzvos* (commandments) as well (*tzitzits*, *yarmulke*, *brachos* and more). This, too, is a cause for celebration.

There are no customary prayers to be said at an *upsherin*. It's really pretty simple. A party is arranged and the boy is dressed in *tzitzis* and *kippah* and everyone takes a turn at cutting his hair and leaving *payos*. As by every Jewish function, someone is honoured to speak words of *Torah*.

Bar & Bat Mitzvah:

At the age of 13 (12 for girls), children become obligated to observe the commandments of the *Torah*. This is the rite of passage for a young boy or girl to become a son or daughter of the commandments – taking on the responsibility of adulthood in the religious community.

Mikveh (Immersion):

The immersion is for entrance into the community of faith, purification, symbol of death and resurrection; and renewal of covenant.

Wedding:

The traditional marriage under the "Chupah" or canopy (Gen 2:24, Gen 1:28.)

Death and Mourning:

Judaism requires prompt burial. *Shiva* begins on the day of burial and continues until the morning of the seventh day after burial. *Shloshim* lasts until the 30th day after burial. *Avelut* is observed only for a parent and lasts for twelve months after the burial. For eleven months of that period, starting at the time of burial, the son of the deceased recites the mourner's *Kaddish* every day.

Kaddish (Memorial Service – Funeral):

The Jewish funeral is complete with Mourners' *Kaddish* (Prayer of sanctification of YHWH's name in the face of death) And the *Al Moley Rachamim* (A prayer about YHWH's mercy).

Yarzeit (Unveiling):

A year after the burial the tombstone is put into place and there is a closing of the mourning period.

Y'shua's childhood

"And he went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them; and his mother kept all these things in her heart". (Luke 2:51)

Again, Luke alone records this element because he is the one who has special interest in the humanity of *Y'shua*. These two verses (51-52) summarise the development from the age of twelve until roughly the age of thirty. *"Then He went down with them and came to Nazareth, and was obedient to them, but His mother kept all these things in her heart"*.

This is one of the best verses to show that submission does not mean inferiority. Here we have not an equal in submission to another equal, but we have a superior (YHWH Incarnate) subjecting Himself to inferiors, a sinful man and woman. Biblical submission does not mean inferiority. It means a point of order, a chain of command that YHWH has ordained. When the Bible speaks of the wife being in submission to her husband, it is not a matter of inferiority, but simply the divine order that YHWH wants.

"And Jesus increased in wisdom and in stature, and in favor with God and man". (Luke 2:52)

We are told that He developed in four areas:

- 1) Wisdom (mental development);
- 2) Stature (physical development);
- 3) In favour with YHWH (spiritual); and
- 4) In favour with man (social).

Y'shua was well-respected in His community and among His fellow Jews. This would not have been the case were He in rebellion against the *Torah* and the traditions and customs of the Jewish people.

From all of the above, it is evident that YHWH chose to send our Saviour and Husband to earth as a Jew, living among other Jews while participating fully in the Covenant that YHWH had made with the children of Israel (Hebrew people). As His Bride, it behooves Christians to learn as much as they can about the traditions and customs of *Y'shua's* people (the Jews), for His people are now the Christian people as well.

Hebrew schools from Biblical times till today

A *shul* (pronounced SHOOL) is a *synagogue* (assembly). The word "shul" comes from the same root word for school: the Old German schule, or place of learning, a throwback to the days when *synagogues* doubled as community *Torah* learning centres (as many do today, though informally).

A *shul*'s centrepiece is the *aron kodesh*, or Holy Ark, containing the *Torah* scrolls. The ark is usually ornately decorated with intricate woodwork and gold-trimmed, tapestry-like curtains; and placed along the eastermost wall of the main room, the sanctuary. This is because prayers must be said facing the Western Wall in Jerusalem, which is east in most Jewish-populated countries.

Often, the *aron* sits on a raised platform to lend it honour and prominence—like a judge's bench in a courtroom. Directly in front of the *aron*, in the symmetrical centre of the *shul*, stands the podium for the *chazan* (cantor)—though it is sometimes to one side. Filling the rest of the room are congregational seating arrangements, chairs or the traditional pews; and the *bimah*: the large, velvet-decked table upon which the *Torah* scroll is opened and read thrice weekly and on holidays – in the centre. Along other walls, one will find bookcases holding prayer books, *chumashim* (the Five Books of Moses), and other Jewish books.

There are many *mitzvos* (commandments) associated with the good ol' *shul*. Funding a *shul*'s décor is a *mitzvah* (law); and generally, the more decorative the furnishings, the greater the *mitzvah*. The secondary obligation of a Jewish community as a whole regarding finances is to construct for itself a *shul* (building a *mikvah* (purification bath) comes first). And as with the décor, donating the various construction and interior decorating costs of the *shul* itself is a great *mitzvah*.

On the flip side, destroying a *shul* is a *Torah* prohibition: if a *shul* must be removed, it must be dismantled carefully—not bulldozed. Any sacred Jewish object or item, for that matter—such as Jewish books, must also not be destroyed.

What do I do inside a *shul*?

1) Pray

Jews go to *shul* for *tefillah*; which, of course, means connection—commonly known as prayer. The three regular daily prayer services are held at *shuls* in every Jewish community, every day, and on Shabbat and Jewish holidays too. *Yom Kippur* is a biggie, usually seeing more attendee's stream out of the woods and through the front doors than any other occasion throughout the year. Prayers are held with a *minyan* (a quorum of ten) and led by a *chazzan* who keeps everyone together.

2) Celebrate

Prayer isn't the only use for a *shul* - Jewish holidays are celebrated there, too. There's the blowing of the *shofar* on *Rosh Hashanah*, the circling of the *bimah* with the *lulav* and *etrog* on *Succoth*, and some pretty snappy dancing on *Shmini Atzeret* and *Simchat Torah*. The community gathers there at *Chanukah* to light the *menorah*, at *Purim* to hear the reading of the *Megillah*, on *Pesach* for a community *seder*, and on *Shavuot* to commemorate the giving of the *Torah*.

3) Socialise

Throughout the centuries, the *shul* was the nerve centre of the Jewish community. Each morning, and after a hard day's work, the menfolk gathered for the three daily services. Before and after each, if they had a few seconds, they no doubt did the water-cooler thing: talk! Some things never change. The *shul* is still a community *linchpin* as much as it is a haven for the sacred.

Whenever Jews gather at *shul*, whether for services or special occasions (*bris*, *Bar Mitzvah*, wedding), they share their triumphs, tragedies, and authoritative opinions on the daily news. People make new friends, catch up with old ones, discuss and debate. Any *shul* event is a community event; and when the community comes together, the words flow.

SECTION I INTRODUCTION TO MESSIAH MATTHEW 3:

TEXT:

- (1) *"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea,*
(2) *And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*
(3) *For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*
(4) *And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.*
(5) *Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan,*
(6) *And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins.*
(7) *But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?*
(8) *Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance:*
(9) *And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.*
(10) *And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*
(11) *I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire:*
(12) *Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.*
(13) *Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.*
(14) *But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?*
(15) *And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him.*
(16) *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:*
(17) *And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".*

3:1 John the Baptist

"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea".

John in Hebrew is Yo-chanan and means, "YHWH was gracious, showed favour".

Judaea was the settlement area allocated by YHWH for the tribe of Judah and stretches all the way from Jerusalem with its surrounding areas to the Jordan River in the east. John is referred to as being "*in the wilderness*", an area near the Dead Sea which was inhabited by a number of people—including certain religious groups seeking to get away from the established authority in Jerusalem. One group, the Essenes, broke away from the Pharisees and Saducees (see 3:7 below) and established themselves in the wilderness, forming their own system of sacrifices (due to corruption of the Saducees), somewhere between 200 B.C. and 100 B.C. Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist) was probably an Essene who eventually broke away from the main group and formed his own.

Discoveries in the Dead Sea Scrolls (also called the Qumran documents/scrolls) have shown a very Messianic-oriented community that had certain ways of communicating. For the purpose of this study, we agree with the scholars who believe these people included Essenes. A later group that broke away from the Essenes was the Ebionites. They were isolated very much after the destruction of the Temple.

The Wilderness was a very spiritual place – perhaps more so than Jerusalem at that time. We also know from Scripture that John the Baptist was raised in the Wilderness area and had a following of his own. (Matthew chapter 11 and Acts 18:25; 19:3.) Extra-Biblical writings say that Yochanan was saved from the slaughter of the innocents (Matt 2:16) by hiding in the wilderness. We also know that Y'shua and Yochanan were cousins and were aware of each other. Luke chapter 3 and Josephus' writings give us more insight in the year of the appearance of Yochanan the Immerser:

The Fifteenth Year of Tiberius: Pilate, Herod, Philip, "Lysanius", Annas, and Caiaphas

"Now in the fifteenth year of the reign of (Emperor) Tiberius Caesar, Pontius Pilate being governor of Judaea, and Herod being tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of Ituræa and of the region of

Trachonitis, and Lysanias the tetrarch of Abilene, Annas and Caiaphas being the high priests, the word of God came unto John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness". (Luke 3:1-2)

Antiquities 18.2.2 35: "Tiberius sent Gratus to be procurator of Judea... **This man deprived Ananus of the high priesthood**, and appointed Ismael... ...Joseph **called Caiaphus was made his successor**. When Gratus had done those things, he went back to Rome, having tarried in Judea eleven years, and **Pontius Pilate came as his successor**".

War 2.6.3 94 (Ant. 17.11.4 318); "**Caesar...gave one-half of Herod's kingdom to Archelaus with the title of Ethnarch, and promised to make him king also afterward, if he rendered himself worthy of that dignity. But he divided the other half into two tetrarchies, and gave them to two other sons of Herod, the one of them to Philip, and the other to that Antipas who contested the kingdom with Archelaus.** Placed under Antipas were Perea and Galilee, with a revenue of two hundred talents. Batanea, Trachonitis, and Auranitis, and certain parts of Zeno's house about Jamnia, providing a revenue of 100 talents, were made subject to **Philip**".

Antiquities 20.7.1 137: "**Claudius bestowed upon Agrippa...Abila, which had been the tetrarchy of Lysanius**".

This information given establishes the year of the appearance of Yochanan the Immerser, and hence of the subsequent public career of Y'shua (Mark 1:1). The 15th year of Tiberius was A.D. 28/29, as he reigned for 22 years and some 5 or 6 months, from A.D. 14-37. Pontius Pilate was procurator from A.D. 26-36, and Caiaphas was high priest over almost the same period, A.D. 26-35. Herod Antipas ruled Galilee from 4 B.C. to A.D. 40, and Philip his assortment of lands from 4 B.C. to A.D. 34.

As to "Lysanius", Luke is at disagreement with Josephus. Marc Antony killed Lysanius during the reign of Herod the Great. The small territory of Lysanius was leased by Zenodorus (or "Zeno", War 1.20.4 398), and was later given by Caesar to Philip as quoted above in one of the passages. After Philip's death, this little region that had belonged to Lysanius along with other pieces of Philip's territory was given to Agrippa by the Emperor Claudius circa A.D. 40 (also cited above).

This little territory never had a name; it was just referred to familiarly, something like "that piece of land that used to belong to Lysanius". This is the only way Josephus refers to the property throughout his works. There is no evidence of a ruler named Lysanius at the time Luke speaks about. In any case, the land is too small for anyone to bother identifying its ruler as a means of specifying a moment in history.

Two explanations present themselves. The more interesting of these is that Luke worked from a written source he did not quite understand; he could have read about the time "when Herod was tetrarch of Galilee, and his brother Philip tetrarch of the region of Ituraea, and Trachonitis, and Abilene the tetrarchy of Lysanius". He could have misinterpreted the last clause as identifying another ruler of the time, rather than continuing the list of Philip's lands; particularly, if the grammar had become a little garbled in transmission—perhaps during translation from the original Aramaic/Hebrew texts. This would indicate that Luke did not know enough about Judea to recognise that the "tetrarchy of Lysanius" was the way the local inhabitants referred to a little piece of land.

The second, more ordinary explanation, is that Luke originally wrote the version we just surmised; but his text has become slightly corrupted during transmission to us.

3:2-6 General overviews

"(2) And saying, **Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.** (3) For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.* (4) And the same **John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey.** (5) Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan, (6) And **were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins**".

Also from Mark chapter 1:

- (1) "The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God;
- (2) **As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.**
- (3) *The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*
- (4) **John did baptize in the wilderness, and preach the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins.**
- (5) *And there went out unto him all the land of Judaea, and they of Jerusalem, and were all baptized of him in the river of Jordan, confessing their sins*". (Mark 1:1-5)

And from Luke chapter 3:

- (3) "And he came into all the country about Jordan, preaching the baptism of repentance for the remission of sins;
- (4) As it is written in the book of the words of **Esaias the prophet**, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.
- (5) Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth;
- (6) And **all flesh shall see the salvation of God**". (Luke 3:3-6)

In this segment we have the Synoptic Gospels coming together for the first time. They are called Synoptic Gospels because they all tell basically the same story, though the wording of their story is based upon their particular theme. The reason that they tell basically the same story is that Matthew, Mark and Luke (unlike John) are far more interested in what Y'shua did than what He said. John's Gospel does not fully parallel the other three because he is more interested in what Y'shua said and what the others left out. That is why in this commentary all four Gospels are included, so the story is complete.

The sources concerning *Yochanan the Immerser* are the New Covenant and the writings of Josephus. Josephus' interpretation of the significance of *Yochanan's* baptism is almost identical to the theology of baptism in the Dead Sea Scrolls. It appears that there was indeed infinity between *Yochanan the Immerser* and the Essenes; and scholars assume that *Yochanan* was once a member of the Essenes and had left for ideological reasons.

Baptism, for both *Yochanan the Immerser* and for the Essenes, had the same significance as the Jewish ritual immersion in a *mikveh* (a special pool of rainwater used for purification purposes). The Essenes and also *Yochanan* adopted the idea that immersion purified the body. But, they believed that a person's body was defiled not only through contact with objects which were ritually unclean, but also through sin. When someone sinned, his body was defiled; and therefore, a man who had not repented before his immersion would not become pure. While the immersion might purify the body, it would immediately become defiled again because of the person's sins. *Yochanan the Immerser* adopted this approach. Numerous people flocked to him, since he did not require them to abandon their usual way of life to give away their property to a communal fund or form a separate sect. They simply hoped to redeem their souls through confession and immersion. There were even some who mistakenly believed that immersion itself would purify them from their sins. These people did not grasp the idea that repentance purified a man from sin, and water only purified the body.

The Biblical concept of forgiveness presumes in its oldest strata that sin is a force adhering to the sinner; and that forgiveness is the divine means for removing it. It is not enough to hope and pray for pardon. A man must humble himself, acknowledge his wrong, and resolve to depart from sin. The many symptoms for repentance testify to its primacy in the human effort to restore the desired relationship with YHWH: seek YHWH (2 Sam 12:16; 21:1), search for Him (Amos 5:4), humble oneself before Him (Lev 26:41), to direct the heart to Him (1 Sam. 7:3), and lay to heart (2 Kings 22:19).

At the same time, inner contrition must be followed by outward acts. Remorse must be translated into deeds. Two substances are involved in this process. First, the negative one of ceasing to do evil, and then the positive one of doing good. This doctrine implies that YHWH has endowed man with the power of "turning". He can turn from evil and to good, and the very act of turning will activate YHWH's concern and lead to forgiveness.

Yochanan was preaching a baptism of repentance unto remission of sins. In essence, the word "baptism" means "to submerge" (to go under water), and it was to identify those who were baptised by *Yochanan* as with the "back to YHWH" movement. The baptism of *Yochanan* is not the same as the baptism of the Messiah, although the mode was the same. That is why those who were baptised by *Yochanan*, and later received Y'shua as Messiah, had to be baptised all over again in Y'shua's name (Acts 19:1-8).

Some were possibly familiar with the ritual immersion done by the priests in the Temple, but this was different from *Yochanan's* teaching. What *Yochanan* was evidently patterning his teaching after was the practice called "tevilah". When a proselyte converted to Judaism, he was required to perform this "tevilah" or ritual immersion as part of his "coming back to YHWH". It was required to be performed in a natural spring (living water). *Yochanan* used the Jordan River. It was then said that the convert has experienced a "new birth".

Scholars continue to debate the exact location along the Jordan River where Yochanan baptised Y'shua. The traditional site has come to be known as *Bethabara*, which means "house of the ford". It is just north of the Dead Sea. Some scholars feel the real *Bethabara* was further up the Jordan River near Galilee. Regardless of the exact location, what is more interesting is the Aramaic verb "abar" found in *Bethabara*. *Abar* (eber in Hebrew) indicates a movement, "the thought that one person CAUSES or MOTIVATES another to move".

Gilbert Sindon, in his article "John the Baptist, Jesus and the Jordan", explains the concept of *abar* this way: "*In concrete terms, John was challenging his fellow Jews to go across to the east bank of the Jordan, out of the land. This was an act of confession, admitting in this dramatic fashion that they had forfeited their right, not so much to live in the land, but to be God's people. John then literally "turned them around, (shav in Hebrew, which is the root of the Hebrew word for repentance). John then led the people back through the river into the land. This is a dramatic example of God's sure promise of restoration of our relationship with Him.*"

3:2 Repent

"*And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.*"

"*Repent*" is "*T'shuvah*", (teh-SHOO-vah) and it means turning from sin and returning to YHWH. YHWH "grants repentance", but it still requires "action" on our part (see Lam 5:21). Biblical repentance and turning from sin involves turning toward YHWH. As we are all easily deceived, how do we know we are in fact turned "toward YHWH?" What revelation has He given us as a guideline? He has given His *Torah* for this purpose (see 3:6 below).

The Kingdom of Heaven

Matthew uses the term "Kingdom of Heaven" in place of "God" in 32 of 36 places. It refers not to a time or place, but a condition in which YHWH's promises of a restored universe are fulfilled. In Hebrew, it is *Tikun Olam*. For followers of Messiah, the Kingdom is both present and to come. This is similar to our salvation. We may be "saved" now, but our full salvation is yet to come.

Notice that this verse here uses the term "*Kingdom of Heaven*". This same phrase is used all through Matthew's Gospel. Yet, Mark and Luke use the phrase "*Kingdom of God*". Why? Are there two different "*kingdoms*" being talked about in the Gospels? We must remember that Matthew was writing to the Jews. The Jews will not pronounce the name of YHWH, so they use the term "*Kingdom of Heaven*". The Greek word used here is "Theos", which in itself is not a proper name. But, if you look further into your concordance, you will see that the Hebrew word most often translated by "Theos" is "Elohim", or "El" which is a shortened version of Elohim. Mark and Luke, being non-Jews (as some claim), had no such compunction for using YHWH's name in their writings. It is the very same Kingdom that all three Gospels are talking about.

Is near or is at hand

When you read Matt 3:2, "*And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand*", you sense that the Kingdom of heaven was getting pretty close. The Hebrew word used here actually means that it is actually here and you have a part in it.

A more appropriate translation would be, "*the Kingdom of Heaven is offered to come*". The Kingdom of heaven was actually being "offered" by YHWH at this time, similar to how it was offered at Mount Sinai. At that time, the sin of the golden calf caused the offer to be "withdrawn" by YHWH; and the opportunity to usher in the Messianic era was bumped into the future—at a time predicted by the prophet Daniel. The next opportunity arrived some ±1,500 years later, when Yochanan the Immerser announced the arrival of the Messiah Himself. Although a large minority of the Jews at that time accepted Yochanan's message about Y'shua, the greater majority did not; and again, the offer of the Kingdom was withdrawn.

3:3 Spoken of by the Prophet

"*For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias, saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight.*"

Matthew, Mark and Luke quotes Isaiah 40:3 "*The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God*" and Mark quotes Mal 3:1: "*Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly*

come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts".

Both of these Old Covenant passages predict that before the Messiah is made known, He will be preceded by a forerunner. A forerunner will come, announcing the soon coming of the King. This literal prophecy was fulfilled in a literal way by *Yochanan* the Immerser. That is the reason for the quotation of these two verses.

"Every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill shall be brought low; and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough ways shall be made smooth"; (Luke 3:5). This is one of the prime examples of how modern translations have erred. In this instance, it is a simple little punctuation mark that makes all the difference.

Two questions must be answered in order to open our understanding:

- 1) Why was *Yochanan* starting his ministry out in the wilderness instead of Jerusalem or some other heavily populated area?
- 2) Why would people travel such a long distance to hear him?

The answer to both of these questions is found in the correct translation of Isaiah 40:3. The *Tanakh* (DuTillet Hebrew Matthew) correctly reads:

"A voice rings out:

clear the desert road for the Lord. Level in the wilderness a highway for our God".

(The same is also true for Matt 4:17 and 10:7.)

From this verse, the Jewish people always expected that the first appearance of the Messiah was to be in the desert regions where *Yochanan* was. This is also probably the reason for the establishment of the community at Qumran, which is nearby. This is also another reason why scholars believe that *the Essenes raised Yochanan*. *Yochanan* was there announcing the fulfillment of prophecy, and the people went out fully expecting to see the Messiah. It would not be long until their expectations were realised.

If there is any doubt in someone's mind as to who *Y'shua* is, this same verse in Isaiah explains it very well. In Judaism, there are two primary names for God: "*Elohim*" for Creator; and "*YHWH*" for Covenant Maker. Again, the proper translation of Isaiah 40:3 is quoted in the correct Hebrew.

"A voice rings out:

clear in the desert a road for YHWH. Level in the wilderness a highway for Elohim".

Y'shua the Messiah was and is *YHWH*. *"For in him dwelleth all the fulness of the Godhead bodily"* (Col 2:9).

In the wilderness

Y'shua challenges the crowd of onlookers by saying, *"But what went ye out for to see?"* (Mat 11:9) Why were these people going *out to the Wilderness*? The answer lies, as explained, with the commonly mistranslated verse above and also in John 1:23, which usually reads:

"The voice of one crying in the Wilderness, 'Make straight the way of the Lord'".

The problem lies with the punctuation, which is shown to be different in the Masoretic text, which reads:

"The voice of one crying: 'In the Wilderness make straight the way of the Lord'".

The Hebrew shows that the message is being cried out to the people who are in the Wilderness. Why are they there? Because there was an understanding based on Scripture that the Messiah would first come there – which He did. The "crier" may or may not be in the desert - but the Messiah definitely is. *Y'shua* appeared to this community (Essenes?), was baptised by *Yochanan*, and only then came to Jerusalem. For anyone wondering where *Y'shua* was between the ages of 13-30, this might offer some insight.

An excellent new book on the Messianic view of the Qumran community is, *"The First Messiah"*, by Michael O. Wise.

3:4 Yochanan's appearance

"And the same John had his **raiment of camel's hair**, and a **leathern girdle about his loins**; and his meat was locusts and wild honey".

"And John was **clothed with camel's hair**, and with a **girdle of a skin about his loins**; and he did eat locusts and wild honey". (Mark 1:6)

The Essenes were known to wear white garments. It is very possible that Yochanan dressed the same and over and above the white garments he had priestly gear on, as explained below. His appearance is a direct association with Elijah (2 Kings 1:8).

Yochanan's clothing and food – a sign of priestly lineage

In ancient Israel, men wore four-cornered outer tunics, with fringes/tassels called "tzitziyot" or "tzitzit" in Hebrew, tied to the four corners as instructed by YHWH (Num 15:37-41). This outer garment became known as a "tallit", and evolved into the more formal prayer shawl.

YHWH designed the "tallit", and he commanded all Jews of every generation to wear it. The border of blue is a reminder that YHWH is in heaven. The first colour in the Tabernacle was blue, and the first line in the Lord's Prayer is 'Our Father, who art in heaven'. The Jews and the Christians are never to forget that YHWH is above us, watching our comings and goings, and caring about every aspect of our lives.

The fringes are also called tassels, means "tzitzit" in Hebrew, which is specifically mentioned in Num 24 and is a very important part of the "tallit". The wearing of "tzitzit" is considered to be equal to all the other commandments together. The threads are called cords; and as Alan Unterman says, "bind man to God".

Using the practice of gematria, in which each letter of the Hebrew alphabet corresponds with a number, we discover that the "tzitzit" upon a "tallit" represent the name of YHWH. The 'tallit' was every Jewish man's tabernacle.

But, why tassels/fringes? These "tzitzit" were to remind each Jewish man of his responsibility to fulfill YHWH's commandments. In fact, these "tzitzit" are tied into 613 laws knots, to constantly remind them of the 613 laws of Moses. Because the "tzitzit" were hanging on the four corners of the "tallit", in full view of everyone including the person wearing it, they would be a constant reminder to walk according to YHWH's laws. The Hebrew word we translate as law is "halacha", and it literally means, "walk". You see, following YHWH's law is a daily walk; and to stay on his path of righteousness, we all need constant reminding. This actually explains the continuation of the verse, which states: "*that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD*". (Deut 15:39).

Jews do not view the commandments as a mechanical ritualistic formula that ensures the 'world to come', but rather as an exposition of YHWH's divine will. Just as with any loved one that clearly expresses his or her desire, they attempt to fulfil that will completely, and they view the fulfillment of YHWH's will as their way of showing their love for him. Rather than the law hindering spiritual closeness, it actually prepares the groundwork for it. Wrapping themselves in the prayer shawl is actually the act of wrapping themselves in the will of YHWH, and it becomes their own personal "holy of holies". Thus, wearing these "tzitzit" is comparable to the Christian wearing a large Bible on a rope around their necks. How would a Christian act in public and speak to others and where would they go with a big Bible tied around their neck? YHWH intended them to be a constant reminder of his word when he instructed the Israelites to wear these "tzitzit".

The thread of the "tallit" through the Old Testament

In 2 Kings 1:7-8 we read of the messengers of king Ahaziah that said that Elijah was "an hairy man" and had a "leather girdle"—this is speaking of priestly gear. Elijah had a priestly leather belt and a "tallit" made out of camel's hair: "And he said unto them, What manner of man was he which came up to meet you, and told you these words? And they answered him, He was an hairy man (tallit), and girt with a girdle of leather about his loins. And he said, It is Elijah the Tishbite". In 1 Kings 19:12-13 we read where Elijah put his face in a 'mantle', his "tallit" when YHWH spoke to him: "And after the earthquake a fire; but the LORD was not in the fire: and after the fire a still small voice. And it was so, when Elijah heard it, that he wrapped his face in his mantle (tallit), and went out, and stood in the entering in of the cave. And, behold, there came a voice unto him, and said, What doest thou here, Elijah?"

This was when Elisha was called to be anointed by Elijah as a prophet, because YHWH called Elijah home! "And Jehu the son of Nimshi shalt thou anoint to be king over Israel: and Elisha the son of Shaphat of

Abelmeholah shalt thou anoint to be prophet in thy room". (1 Kings 19:16). Elijah was strolling through the countryside and then found Elisha plowing in the field: "So he departed thence, and found Elisha the son of Shaphat, who was plowing with twelve (pay attention to this number) yoke of oxen before him, and he with the twelfth: and Elijah passed by him, and cast his mantle (tallit) upon him. And he left the oxen, and ran after Elijah, and said, Let me, I pray thee, kiss my father and my mother, and then I will follow thee. And he said unto him, Go back again: for what have I done to thee? And he returned back from him, and took a yoke of oxen, and slew them, and boiled their flesh with the instruments of the oxen, and gave unto the people, and they did eat. Then he arose, and went after Elijah, and ministered unto him". (1 Kings 19:19-21).

Elisha knew exactly what it meant when Elijah the prophet threw his "tallit" on him! What is very interesting is before Elijah and Elisha crossed the Jordan when YHWH wanted to take Elijah home, Elijah stood on the banks of the river Jordan, took his "tallit" by the four corners, the "tzitzit", wrapped it around his hand and hit the river. (2 Kings 2:2-8a). The Bible says that they crossed then on dry land... (2 Kings 2:8b)

They then went to the Mount Nebo area, the place where Moses was also last seen. (Deut 34:1) These two great men of YHWH spend the last minutes of their lives at the exact same place.

"And it came to pass, as they still went on, and talked, that, behold, there appeared a chariot of fire, and horses of fire, and parted them both asunder; and Elijah went up by a whirlwind into heaven. And Elisha saw it, and he cried, My father, my father, the chariot of Israel, and the horsemen thereof. And he saw him no more: and he took hold of his own clothes, and rent them in two pieces. He took up also the mantle (tallit) of Elijah that fell from him, and went back, and stood by the bank of the Jordan". (2 Kings 2:11-13a)

Before Elijah's departure, Elijah asked Elisha what he requested. *"And it came to pass, when they were gone over, that Elijah said unto Elisha, Ask what I shall do for thee, before I be taken away from thee. And Elisha said, I pray thee, let a double portion of thy spirit be upon me".* (2 Kings 2:9)

When Elisha returned to the river Jordan, he hit the river the same way Elijah did with the "tallit", and he passed through on dry ground (2 Kings 2:13-14). All the prophets from then on knew that Elisha had a double portion of Elijah's spirit and power (2 Kings 2:15). The moment Elisha received the "tallit" he received a double portion of Elijah's spirit! A double portion! Check the Scriptures: he performed twice as many miracles...

Elijah went home in a whirlwind...but when Elisha died, he was still one miracle short of double. During the course of their lifetimes, each one of them raised a twelve-year old boy from the dead. Scriptures say that Elisha laid himself on the dead body: *"And when Elisha was come into the house, behold, the child was dead, and laid upon his bed. He went in therefore, and shut the door upon them twain, and prayed unto the LORD. And he went up, and lay upon the child, and put his mouth upon his mouth, and his eyes upon his eyes, and his hands upon his hands: and he stretched himself upon the child; and the flesh of the child waxed warm. Then he returned, and walked in the house to and fro; and went up, and stretched himself upon him: and the child sneezed seven times, and the child opened his eyes".* (2 Kings 4:32-35). Please note, it is not kosher for a Jew to touch a dead body. The custom is to use the "tallit" as insulation between them, with the four "tallit" wrapped around the hands.

Many years passed and Elisha eventually died. One day, Jewish soldiers came from a battle carrying a dead comrade and wanted to bury him, not knowing that it was Elisha's grave. When they pitched the body, the body touched the bones of Elisha, and he was raised to life. You see, even in death, YHWH always keeps His promises; and with that, making it exactly double in miracles.

Elisha was gone and the priests looked for somebody worthy to wear the "tallit" and priestly girdle, but no one was found...

Jewish history tells us that they took the "tallit" and leather girdle and put it on **the right hand side of the golden incense altar inside the Temple**. A special place was made to put it on the right side of the altar, and they said... *"It will stay here until he whose it is, returns to use it"*.

Judaism firmly believes that Elijah will return to usher in the Messiah: *"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments. Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD: And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse".* (Mal 4:4-6)

Year after year they wait for Elijah to arrive at *Pesach* (Passover). A chair, plate and cup is specially prepared for Elijah at every Passover meal, and at every Passover a door is left slightly open and a child must go to see if Elijah is at the door. Well in 606 B.C. the Babylonians came, and in 578 B.C. they burnt Solomon's Temple down; and the story breaks off there of Jewish history as nobody knows what happened to Elijah's "tallit". It is kind of sad that we lost the story there, isn't it?

The “*tallit*” penetrates the New Testament

In Matthew chapter 3, we shall find the continuation on this story of the “*tallit*” penetrating the New Covenant, but let's first look at Luke 1:5-22:

- (5) “*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judaea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the course of Abia* (doing priesthood course in Temple): and **his wife was of the daughters of Aaron** (priesthood lineage), and her name was Elisabeth.
- (6) And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless.
- (7) And they had no child, because that Elisabeth was barren, and they both were now well stricken in years.
- (8) And it came to pass, that while he executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course,
- (9) According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was **to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord**.
- (10) And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense.
- (11) And **there appeared unto him an angel of the Lord standing on the right side of the altar of incense** (where Elijah's 'tallit' was originally left).
- (12) And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.
- (13) But the angel said unto him, Fear not, Zacharias: for thy prayer is heard; and thy wife Elisabeth shall bear thee a son, and thou shalt call his name John.
- (14) And thou shalt have joy and gladness; and many shall rejoice at his birth.
- (15) For he shall be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink; and he shall be filled with the Holy Ghost, even from his mother's womb.
- (16) And many of the children of Israel shall he turn to the Lord their God.
- (17) And **he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias** (Elijah), **to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.**
- (18) And Zacharias said unto the angel, Whereby shall I know this? for I am an old man, and my wife well stricken in years.
- (19) And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stand in the presence of God; and am sent to speak unto thee, and to shew thee these glad tidings.
- (20) And, behold, thou shalt be dumb, and not able to speak, until the day that these things shall be performed, because thou believest not my words, which shall be fulfilled in their season.
- (21) And the people waited for Zacharias, and marvelled that he tarried so long in the temple.
- (22) And when he came out, he could not speak unto them: and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple: for he beckoned unto them, and remained speechless”.

Thirty years later! Yochanan the Immerser shows up on the banks of the river Jordan, in the same area where Elijah was last seen, and what was he wearing? Our Bible says he was wearing a leather girdle and a coat of camel's hair. Matt 3:4: “*And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey*”.

It is crucial to understand the importance of Yochanan, to fully understand the role of Y'shua. For that, we will have to go all the way back to Genesis; but let's take it step by step.

“*If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?*” (Heb 7:11)

Who or what was Melchizedec? Melchizedec is transliterated from two Hebrew words, “*malki*” meaning king and “*tsedek*” meaning righteousness. We also find this name six times in three chapters of Hebrews. Now Gen 14:18-19 tells us that Melchisedec, the first priest of YHWH, was priest over all the Gentiles because Israel was not formed yet at that stage; and he blessed the Gentile 'Abram', the father of the nations. Abram's name changed to Abraham before the covenant.

"And Melchizedek King of Salem brought forth bread and wine: and he was the priest of the most high God. And he blessed him, and said, Blessed be Abram of the most high God, possessor of heaven and earth:" (Gen 14:18-19) This was the first priesthood.

YHWH then changed the priesthood as confirmed in Heb 7:11-12: "*If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron?*" This second priesthood was the Aaronic priesthood. The priesthood was introduced as seen in Exod 28:1: "*And take thou unto thee Aaron thy brother, and his sons with him, from among the children of Israel, that he may minister unto me in the priest's office, even Aaron, Nadab and Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar, Aaron's sons*".

It is important to note that the high priest can only come out of the descendants of Aaron. This was now the priesthood according to the order of Aaron, a high priest not for the Israelites. The rest of the priests that served in the Temple came from the tribe of Levi. When YHWH starts something, He always accomplishes His objectives! Moses ordained Aaron for the order of the second priesthood. The lineage was then passed on from Aaron to his four sons Nadab, Abihu, Eleazar and Ithamar.

But Heb 7:11-12 states clearly that this priesthood will also be changed: "*If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood, (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchisedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law*".

The priesthood of the Old Covenant will be improved to introduce a new one, the third and final priesthood. This Priest will be after the order of Melchisedec; in other words, "the king of righteousness". But this Priest will not be a normal priest and He will not be a High Priest; in fact, He will be the Great High Priest! Heb 4:14: "*Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession*".

It is interesting to note that the book of Hebrews portrays Y'shua as all three. So here we have the three orders of priesthood.

The first: after the order of Melchisedec – for all,

The second: after the order of Aaron – for the Israelites,

And the third and final: our Great High Priest Y'shua HaMashiach – for Jews and non-Jews coming into covenant.

If we look at Heb 5:10-11, we see that the writer wants to tell enough, but not everything. "...and **God declared him** (Y'shua) **to be high priest, in the priestly order of Melchizedek**. There is **much we have to say about this matter, but it is hard to explain to you, because you are so slow to understand**".
(GOOD NEWS BIBLE)

By law, Y'shua could not become a priest because he was from the tribe of Judah. As said earlier, you can only become a priest if you are from the tribe of Levi or the lineage of Aaron.

Luke 7:24-28 Y'shua speaking: "*And when the messengers of John were departed, he began to speak unto the people concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness for to see? A reed shaken with the wind? But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? Behold, they which are gorgeously apparelled, and live delicately, are in kings' courts. But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and much more than a prophet. This is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee. For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he*".

Why was Yochanan the greatest? The answer is in Matt 3:13-15: "**Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.** But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And **Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.** Then he suffered him". The reason: the water baptism brought Y'shua into full ministry. Also in Mark 1:9: "*And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan*", and YHWH said... Mark 1:10-11 "*And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*".

Why did Y'shua have to get baptised in the river Jordan? Jordan has always been a point of change; i.e., Israel crossed from the wilderness into the Promised Land at the Jordan; and also the Elijah/Elisha factor as discussed earlier, etc. Even today, if you come from the Kingdom of Jordan and you reach Mount Nebo, the land changes from desert to green, lush land!

Why was Y'shua baptised specifically by Yochanan?

The church does not understand the transition from the Old Covenant to the New Covenant and has missed the point. Zacherias was supposed to be the high priest in the office of the Temple in Y'shua's time according to YHWH's law. He was "of the course of abia", from the Aaronic bloodline. Yochanan had the blood lineage of Aaron, the high priest bloodline from **both** parents in him; his father and mother are both descendants from Aaron as we have seen. Caiaphas was not legally appointed by YHWH's law as the high priest, although he was in the authority of the office. According to Josephus, Caiaphas was not in the blood lineage; he was appointed by Rome, the government of that time.

The priesthood had to change from Aaronic to Melchisedec, which is why Yochanan from the Aaronic priesthood had to baptise Y'shua!!! Heb 7:12: "**For the priesthood being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law**".

It is also interesting to note that Y'shua is Yochanan's cousin and they knew each other for almost thirty years, and when Yochanan saw Y'shua he said... John 1:29b: "...Behold the **Lamb of God**, which **taketh away the sin of the world**". Why did he say this? Answer: Because he was raised in a priestly family and knew the significance of a sacrifice. Yochanan saw Y'shua on the riverbanks of Jordan; not as his cousin, but as the perfect sacrifice.

Y'shua was then baptised at the place of change: he went under the water as King of the Jews; but when he got up, he was King of Righteousness. The priestly order changed from the order of Aaron (the Old Covenant order) to the order of Melchisedec. Yochanan was never recognized; but if we look at his genealogy, we can now appreciate what an important role he played in the introduction of the "new priesthood".

Do you now understand the importance of Yochanan and his father's history, and from where they came? Now that we understand the importance of Yochanan, let's get back to the continuation of the "tallit".

Matt 3:1-4: "*In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, And saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. For this is he that was spoken of by the prophet Esaias (Isaiah), saying, The voice of one crying in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the Lord, make his paths straight. And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey*".

Please note that there is no Greek word for the Hebrew word "tallit", and sometimes various words are used. Also, for thousands of years, Christians had no background in Judaism and the rabbis were not forthcoming with a lot of good information. The New Covenant is full of "tallits" and we read over them without even knowing it. As we continue with this study, it will be pointed out.

Camel's hair (wool) was likely the wool used to make the priests' garments. Camels were bound to have been the most popular and the most plentiful animals used during the Exodus. It is interesting to note that "Sha'atnez" in Judaism is the prohibition of wearing clothing made of any combination of linen and wool. The reason for this prohibition was that this kind of cloth was reserved to make the garments of the priests for wearing in the Tabernacle and Temple. As said earlier, it is very possible that Yochanan wore white linen and a woollen "tallit", as he was in the lineage of a high priest.

Yochanan's food

"*And the same John had his raiment of camel's hair, and a leathern girdle about his loins; and his meat was locusts and wild honey*". (Mat 3:4). "*And John was clothed with camel's hair, and with a girdle of a skin about his loins; and he did eat locusts and wild honey*". (Mark 1:6)

The tribes of Israel wandered in nomadic fashion for forty years in the wilderness, never staying long at any one place. Because of this, it was very difficult for them to grow the grains needed to make flour used in baking, especially for such things as the Shewbread in the Tabernacle which the priests ate. According to the Encyclopaedia Judaica, the most popular substance used in that day by the nomadic tribes was dried locusts ground into a fine meal – locusts, some of which are kosher (Lev 11:21,22). Water was also a scarce

commodity in the desert, so wild honey was used in its place, especially in making the shewbread. To tie this all together, we need to take another look at *Yochanan* the Immerser.

His clothes were made of camels' hair (not skins), and his food was locusts and wild honey. *Yochanan* was of the priestly lineage. It is said that the priest represented YHWH to the people and the people to YHWH. He fit this role perfectly in his introduction of the Messiah.

He may have had extremely long hair because of his Nazarite vow, as this was a sign of his consecration to YHWH. In preparing himself for his assigned task, his clothing was made of the cloth reserved for the priest (as he was of the lineage of Aaron), and his food was two of the principle ingredients of the shewbread which was the food of the priests. *Yochanan* was not the wild, hairy mountain man that so many have tried to picture him as.

3:5 They went out to him

"Then went out to him Jerusalem, and all Judaea, and all the region round about Jordan".

This verse points out the tremendous response *Yochanan* begins to receive from all around the country of Judea and there in Jerusalem. Keep in mind that there were no telephones, radios or televisions to spread the news. News traveled by word of mouth. Remembering that will put this more in perspective. *Yochanan* had a message that really got the people's attention.

3:6 They were baptised by him

"And were baptized of him in Jordan, confessing their sins".

Dr. David Flusser of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem said that *Yochanan*'s method of baptism was almost identical to that written in the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Confessing their sins

"Confessing sins" is saying the same thing about sin that YHWH says. Sin is defined as a violation of YHWH's *Torah*, which is typically translated as "transgressing the Law" (1 John 3:4). Unfortunately, "Law" is an incorrect translation of "*Torah*"—yet is used in all Christian Bibles. A correct translation of *Torah* is "revelation" or "instruction" from YHWH. *Y'shua* Himself said that **none** of the *Torah* is done away with (Matt 5:17-21) as does Paul (Rom 3:31). This will be covered in detail in Matt 5:17-21. Scripture also tells us that *Y'shua* and the Father's will are both one; that YHWH does not change; and that *Y'shua* is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.

If our trust is in YHWH's provision for sin (*Y'shua*), then our sins are forgiven and the "curse of the *Torah*" is removed - it is "nailed to the cross" with Him. (This is what Paul talks about in several of his epistles - Romans cover this in detail.) The *Torah*'s condemnation of us and its role as a "tutor" (or "guardian") comes to an end once we come to faith. However, the *Torah* (all of it) remains as our guideline to determine what sin is and if we are "living right" with YHWH. We shall discuss this as we go along in this study.

The Hebraic Roots of Baptism

There is no question that the church is indebted to Judaism for its main structure—including such items as Messiah, Scripture, canon, liturgy, altar, pulpit, church offices, songs, offerings, the Lord's Supper—as well as baptism itself. Dr. Merrill Tenney, the editor of the Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible said, "Baptism as a rite of immersion was not begun by Christians but was taken by them from Jewish and pagan forms..." Since early Christianity was a part of the Judaism of *Y'shua*'s day, it is without question that baptism in today's church was originally Jewish. Further evidence comes from Scholars like William Lasor and David Daube who tell us of the early church's practice of baptism by self-immersion after the custom of the Jews.

History of the Jewish Mikveh:

The term *mikveh* in Hebrew literally means "any gathering of waters", but is specifically used in Jewish law for the waters or bath for the ritual immersion. The building of the *mikveh* was so important in ancient times it was said to take precedence over the construction of a synagogue. Immersion was so important that it occurred before the High Priest conducted the service on the Day of Atonement, before the regular priests participated in the Temple service, before each person entered the Temple complex, before a scribe wrote the name of YHWH—as well as several other occasions.

The *Mishnah* attributes to Ezra a decree that each male should immerse himself before praying or studying. There were several Jewish groups that observed ritual immersion every day to assure readiness for the coming of the Messiah. The Church Fathers mentioned one of these groups called Hemerobaptists, which means "daily bathers" in Greek. Among those used to regular immersion were the Essenes and others that the *Talmud* calls *tovelei shaharit* or "dawn bathers".

On the third day of creation we see the source of the word *mikveh* for the first time in Gen 1:10 when the YHWH says, "...to the gathering (*mikveh*) of waters, He called seas". Because of this reference in Genesis, the ocean is still a legitimate *mikveh*.

The Mikvaot around the Temple:

The New Covenant tells us that many of the early church's daily activities were centered on the Temple. Historically, we know that there were many ritual immersion baths (*mikvaot*) on the Temple Mount, including one in the Chamber of Lepers, situated in the northwest corner of the Court of Women (Mid. 2:5). Josephus tells us that even during the years of war (A.D. 66-73), the laws of ritual immersion were strictly adhered to (Jos. Wars, 4:205). The Temple itself contained immersion baths in various places for the priests to use, even in the vaults beneath the court (Commentary to Tam. 26b; Tam. 1:1). The High Priest had special immersion pools in the Temple, two of which are mentioned in the *Mishnah*. We are told that one of these was in the Water Gate in the south of the court and another was on the roof of the Parva Chamber (Mid. 1:4; Mid. 5:3). There was an additional place for immersion on the Mount of Olives which was connected with the burning of the red heifer (Par. 3:7). A special ramp led to the *mikveh* on the Mount of Olives from the Temple Mount, which was built as an arched way over another arched way to avoid uncleanness from the graves in the valley below. Recent archaeological excavations have found forty-eight different *mikvaot* near the Monumental Staircase leading into the Temple Complex.

Three Basic Areas:

According to Jewish law, there are three basic areas where immersion in the *mikveh* is required.

Immersion is required for both men and women when converting to Judaism. There were three prerequisites for a proselyte coming into Judaism: Circumcision, baptism, and sacrifice (Maimonides, Hilk. Iss. Biah xiii. 5).

Immersion is required after a woman has her monthly period (Lev 15:28).

Immersion is required for pots and eating utensils manufactured by a non-Jew (Encyclopaedia of Jewish Religion p-263).

Besides these, there are other times when it is customary to be immersed in the *mikveh* such as the occasion before *Yom Kippur* as a sign of purity and repentance and before the Sabbath in order to sensitise oneself to the holiness of the day.

The Six Descending Orders of Ritual Immersion:

There are six descending orders of ritual baths in the *Mishnah* (Oral Laws of how to accomplish the written Law) and the highest order is that of a spring or flowing river. We see Y'shua understanding and fulfilling this order in Matt 3:16 as He comes to be baptised in the Jordan River "fulfilling all righteousness". This highest order was called Living Water and illustrated the forgiving of sins; therefore, we hear Y'shua using this term concerning Himself (John 4:10-11).

The Water Restrictions:

There were also six basic restrictions on the water used in the *mikveh* including such rules as:

- 1) The *mikveh* can not contain other liquid besides water.
- 2) The water has to be either built into the ground or be an integral part of a building attached to the ground.
- 3) The *mikveh* can not be flowing except for a natural spring, river or ocean.
- 4) The water can not be manually drawn.
- 5) The water can not be channelled to the *mikveh* by anything unclean.
- 6) The *mikveh* must contain at least 40 sa'ah or approximately 757 litres of water.

The term *sa'ah* is an ancient Biblical measurement equivalent to approximately nineteen liters. All six requirements come from the original Hebrew words found in Lev 11:36. Rabbi Yitzchok ben Sheshes said the amount of 40 *sa'ah* was derived from the idea that the largest normal human body has a volume of 20 *sa'ah*, therefore the amount of water needed to "nullify" this body is double this amount or 40 *sa'ah*.

Why Be Immersed?

To the ancient Jew, the *mikveh* was a process of spiritual purification and cleansing, especially in relation to the various types of *Turmah* or ritual defilement when the Temple was in use. Although YHWH has not

revealed all the meaning of the *mikveh*, it is obvious because of the amount of space given to it in Scripture and the effort of *Y'shua* to fulfill it that the command is of utmost importance. All commands of YHWH fall into three categories:

- 1) The moral or ethical laws that are necessary for man to live in harmony are known as *Mishpatim* and are literally translated as *judgments*.
- 2) The rituals and festivals which reawaken us to important religious truths such as Sabbath, holidays, the *Tefillin* and the *Mezuzah* that remind us of YHWH's presence are known as *Edos* and are literally translated as *witnesses*.
- 3) The third group often has no explicit reason given for their existence, except for Israel's identification as YHWH's chosen people to the other nations (Deut 4:6). This group of laws are known as *Chukim* and are literally translated as *decrees*. Among the decrees of this group are the dietary laws as well as ritual immersions.

How Immersion Was Done:

Jewish baptism has never been taken lightly, but in ancient times immersion was to be performed in the presence of witnesses (Yebam. 47b). The person being baptised made special preparations by cutting his nails, undressed completely and made a fresh profession of his faith before the designated "fathers of the baptism" (Kethub. 11a; Erub 15a). This is possibly where churches, sometime later, got the term "Godfathers". The individual stood straight up with the feet spread and the hands held out in front. The candidates would totally immerse themselves by squatting in the water with a witness or baptiser doing the officiating. Note the New Covenant points out the fact that *Y'shua* came up straightway out of the water (Matt 3:16).

The earliest drawing of Christian baptism was found on the wall of a Roman catacomb in the second century showing *Yochanan* standing on the bank of the Jordan helping *Y'shua* back to shore after self immersion.

Ancient sages teach that the word *mikveh* has the same letters as *Ko(v)Meh*, the Hebrew word for "rising" or "standing tall"; therefore, we see the idea of being baptised "straightway".

Although it is the Jewish belief that repentance is necessary, purification from defilement is done primarily through water, while other effects of sins are covered by blood (Rom 4:7; note the "almost all things" in Heb 9:22). The concept of immersion in rabbinic literature is referred to as a new birth (Yeb. 22a; 48b; 97b; Mass. Ger. c.ii). Note six other important aspects of ancient Jewish immersion:

- 1) Immersion was accompanied by exhortations and benedictions (Maimonides Hilk. Milah iii.4; Hilk. Iss, Biah XIV .6). A convert would reaffirm his acceptance of the *Torah* by declaring, "*I will do and I will hear*" which was a phrase from the oath that was originally taken by the priests not to forsake the *Torah* (Deut 29:9-14). This ritual demonstrates the willingness of the convert to forsake his Gentile background and assume his Jewish identity by taking on the status of one who keeps the commandments.

According to a number of Jewish sages, *mayim*, which is the Hebrew word for water, shares the same root as the word "mah", meaning "what". This teaching points out that when a person immerses in water, he is nullifying the fleshly ego and is asking, "What am I?" in the same manner that Moses and Aaron did in Exod 16:7 when they said to YHWH, "we are what?"

- 2) The Jewish baptism candidates were often immersed three times. The idea of total immersion comes from the Scripture in Lev 15:16 when it says, "*he shall wash all his flesh in the water*". One reason it was customary to immerse three times was because the word *mikveh* occurs three times in the *Torah*.

3) According to Jewish law, the immersion had to have a required witness. Dr. William LaSor in the Biblical Archaeology Review says, "Apparently the Biblical phrase '*in the name of*' was an indication of the required witness". In several New Covenant references such as 1 Cor 1:13, 15; Matt 21:25; Acts 1:22; and Acts 19:3 we see early baptism mentioned in conjunction with the name of individuals such as John and Paul. Further information on this can be found in Jewish literature concerning proselyte baptism where it indicates his baptism required attestation by witnesses in whose name he was immersed.

- 4) The immersion candidate was not touched by the baptiser in *Y'shua*'s day. Because Lev 15:16 says "*He shall wash all his flesh in the water*", Judaism stresses that the entire body must come in contact with the water of the *mikveh*. To insure the immersion was valid, no clothing or individuals could touch the candidate. Any such intervention that prevented the water from reaching a part of the body was known as *Chatitzah* and rendered the immersion invalid. Although the *mikveh* was more spiritual than physical, often the bath had two sets of steps, one entering and another leaving so as not to defile what had been purified.

5) The baptismal water (*Mikveh*) in rabbinic literature was referred to as the womb of the world, and as a convert came out of the water it was considered a "new birth" separating him from the pagan world. As the convert came out of these waters, his status was changed and he was referred to as "a little child just born" or "a child of one day" (Yeb. 22a; 48b; 97b). We see the New Covenant using similar Jewish terms as "born anew", "new creation", and "born from above". According to Dr. Arnold Fruchtenbaum, rabbinic literature

uses the term "born again" to refer to at least six different occurrences. Note each of these life-changing experiences:

- a) When a Gentile converts to Judaism.
- b) When an individual is crowned king.
- c) At age 13 when a Jewish boy chooses to embrace YHWH's covenant and be numbered with the believers.
- d) When an individual gets married.
- e) When an individual becomes a rabbi.
- f) When an individual becomes the head of a rabbinical school.
- 6) Jewish law requires at least three witnesses made up of qualified leaders to be present for certain immersions (Yebam 47b). Ordinarily, a member of the Sanhedrin performed the act of observing the proselytes' immersion; but in case of necessity, others could do it. Secret baptism, or where only the mother brought a child, was not acknowledged.

Repentance Without Baptism:

One of the most important teachings in Judaism is that of repentance. According to both Scripture and rabbinic literature, no matter how great the sin, if a person repents and forsakes the sin before YHWH, he can be forgiven. As we see in the case of *Yochanan*, *Y'shua* and all New Covenant writers, repentance was always involved. The Jerusalem *Talmud* states, "nothing can stand before repentance" (Yebamos 47b). According to Dr. David Flusser, the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as the New Covenant, teach that water can purify the body only if the soul has first been purified through repentance and righteousness.

Water and Blood Both Illustrate YHWH's Cleansing In Judaism:

Both water and blood are used constantly in the *Torah* and the New Covenant as the two main agents to illustrate YHWH's cleansing. The Jews believe that uncleanness is not necessarily physical, but rather a spiritual condition as related in Lev 11:44 where it states by wrong actions one can make the "soul unclean". Therefore, the purification through ritual immersion as commanded in Scripture, is basically involved with the soul rather than the body. Note how both water and blood are cited in Scripture:

- 1) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the Passover Lamb (Exod 12).
 - 2) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the Day of Atonement (Lev 16).
 - 3) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the Feast Offerings (Lev 23).
 - 4) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the five Levitical Offerings (Lev 1-7).
 - 5) Blood is used in cleansing in relation to the atonement for the soul (Lev 17:11-14).
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- 1) Water is used in cleansing in relation to the separation and the ashes of the Red Heifer (Num 19).
 - 2) Water is used in cleansing in relation to the consecration to priestly ministry (Lev 8:6).
 - 3) Water is used in cleansing in relation to the cleansing of the leper (Lev 14:1-8).
 - 4) Water is used in cleansing in relation to the different washings of the Law (Heb 9:10).
 - 5) Water is used in relation to the remission of sins (Acts 2:38; Titus 3:5; Mark 16:16; Acts 22:16; Rom 6:3; 1 Peter 3:20-21; Eph 5:26; John 19:34; I John 5:6; Heb 9:19- 23).

Summary:

A detailed study of the Hebraic roots of Believers baptism shows that it is vitally important. Obviously, the convert must repent to have a part in the life to come. The emphasis seems to be pointing to the adoption of a new "believer" status illustrated as a "new birth" by immersion. In any covenant with YHWH, the three items of YHWH's Word are always present (Gen 17:11). *Y'shua* also was always cautious to have three witnesses in everything He did. "**For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one. And there are three that bear witness in earth, the Spirit, and the water, and the blood: and these three agree in one**". (1 John 5:7-8).

For more information on Baptism, *Mikveh*, and other related topics—please see information following the exegesis of Matt 3:17

3:7-8 The Pharisees and Sadducees

"(7) But when he saw many of the **Pharisees and Sadducees** come to his baptism, he said unto them, O generation of vipers, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come? (8) **And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father:** for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham".

(7) "Then said he to the **multitude** that came forth to be baptized of him, O **generation of vipers**, who hath warned you to flee from the wrath to come?

(8) ***Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham***". (Luke 3:7-8)

There were two main religious factions in Israel. The Saducees, who held to a strictly literal, *Torah*-only view, became the Temple power and they became corrupt. The Pharisees, who were the Heirs of Ezra (fathers of Rabbinic Judaism), believed in extrapolating from *Torah* according to the Oral tradition which was believed to also have been given to Moses at Sinai. These oral teachings, many predating *Y'shua*, were finally put into print in the form of the *Talmud* between the second and fifth centuries. As shown earlier in this study, *Y'shua* Himself quoted from the *Talmud* regularly.

First Century Jewish sources provide no direct forerunner for or parallel to *Yochanan*'s baptism. Cleansing ceremonies using the waters of purification are prescribed in the *Torah*, and the priest-prophet Ezekiel declared that YHWH at the end time will purify the people from their defilement with clean water and give them a new heart and a new spirit.

The custom of baptising Gentile converts to Judaism is close to *Yochanan*'s rite; although it cannot be proved that proselyte baptism foreruns *Yochanan*. If the practice was current, it is possible that *Yochanan* deliberately applied to the children of Abraham (Jews) "a rite devised by them to benefit pagans". Thus evidencing his conviction that the whole Jewish nation needed to be reconstituted as the people of YHWH as explained below.

Yochanan warns the Pharisees and Sadducees about saying, "we have Abraham as our father". This was a reflection on the Rabbinic teaching that all of Israel has a share in the world to come (*Olam haBah*) found in Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1. Some Rabbis taught that the Jews did not have to be concerned about losing out with YHWH because of the merits of the fathers: Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. Also Bereshith Raba 48:8 records, "*In the hereafter Abraham was set at the gates of Hades and would not let any circumcised Israelite to descend into it*". *Yochanan* was contradicting this teaching.

Yochanan further drove home his point when, upon seeing the legalistic Pharisees and Sadducees approaching him, called them snakes and vipers. They would have known about snake's venom being compared to slanderous and evil talk, and that is something that they had probably accused the Gentiles of many times before.

Whenever there was any kind of Messianic movement of note, the *Sanhedrin* had a legitimate two-fold responsibility they had to carry out. In Matt 5:2, *Yochanan* began preaching a message that the King and the Kingdom were near at hand. And so in that sense, *Yochanan* was beginning a Messianic movement of some sort. The *Sanhedrin* was obligated to do two things because he was creating such a great amount of attention.

First, they were to send a group for the purpose of observing. This is called the "stage of observation". Unlike the Luke account where the multitude came to be baptised, the Pharisees and Sadducees merely "came forth to" the baptism to carry out the first element of observation. They were not allowed to ask any questions, but merely observe what was being said and done. After a period of observation, this group would go back to Jerusalem and report to the *Sanhedrin* their conclusion as to whether this movement was significant or not. If the movement was judged insignificant, the whole thing would be dropped right there. But, if the movement was significant, then the *Sanhedrin* would begin the second stage—the stage of investigation. A second delegation would be sent to investigate. They were to ask such questions as:

- 1) Who are you?
- 2) Who do you claim to be?
- 3) What do you plan to be doing? and
- 4) Why are you doing it?

3:8-10 Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance

"(8) ***Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance: (9) And think not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, that God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham. (10) And now also the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: therefore every tree which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire***".

(8) ***"Bring forth therefore fruits worthy of repentance, and begin not to say within yourselves, We have Abraham to our father: for I say unto you, That God is able of these stones to raise up children unto Abraham.***

- (9) And now also **the axe is laid unto the root of the trees: every tree therefore which bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.**
- (10) And the people asked him, saying, What shall we do then?
- (11) He answereth and saith unto them, He that hath two coats, let him impart to him that hath none; and he that hath meat, let him do likewise.
- (12) Then came also **publicans** to be baptized, and said unto him, Master, what shall we do?
- (13) And he said unto them, **Exact no more than that which is appointed you.**
- (14) And the soldiers likewise demanded of him, saying, And what shall we do? And he said unto them, Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and **be content with your wages**. (Luke 3:8-14)

The phrase, “*to bring forth fruit*” in a Hebraic, spiritual context means more than simply, “doing good deeds”. It refers to spiritual insight and teachings.

Yochanan’s eschatological message of imminent judgment closely resembles that held by the Dead Sea sect (Essenes). And *Yochanan’s* rite of baptism only differs **in meaning** from the “purifying waters” of the Essenes. *Yochanan’s* preaching was intensely eschatological. He heralded the imminent Day of Judgment; YHWH’s retributive punishment would soon fall upon the apostasy of Israel. The merits of the patriarchs would provide no escape and descent from Abraham would offer no advantage. Only sincere repentance would avert the “wrath to come”, and this must lead to baptism. Moreover, those who confessed their sins and received *Yochanan’s* baptism as a sign of this repentance, were commanded to “bear good fruit” following in “the way of righteousness” taught by *Yochanan*.

Sharing

Luke 3:10 It goes contrary to the nature of individuals to share their wealth. People who have extras tend to hoard those extras and not share them with others. And yet, *Yochanan’s* instructions to the multitude were to do just that.

Luke 3:12, 13: Publicans were Jews who bought the office of tax collector. This meant they were putting themselves in the position where the Jewish community would dislike them because they would be reckoned as working for the enemy; and therefore, traitors. Why would Jews seek that office in light of the reaction of the community? The reason that people sold this office that paid only a very small salary was something that the Roman law allowed. If the Roman government determined that an individual owed five shekels, the publican would charge ten shekels. He would then give Rome five shekels and keep five for himself. It was through this kind of extortion that the publicans became wealthy. Here *Yochanan* is telling them to do honest work and to be fair in all their dealings instead of taking advantage of people.

Luke 3:14: Why did non-Romans want to enter the Roman army that was responsible for the defeat of their nation? The answer, again, lies in what the Roman government allowed. The soldiers in the army had the right to take the spoil of the subjugated people even after peace had come. This was the way they were able to gain wealth. *Yochanan* is telling these soldiers to abandon this practice and rather to be honest.

3:11-12 *Yochanan* prepares the way

“(11) I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance: but he that cometh after me is mightier than I, whose shoes I am not worthy to bear: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost, and with fire. (12) Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and gather his wheat into the garner; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire.”

- (15) “And as the people were in expectation, and all men mused in their hearts of John, **whether he were the Christ**, or not;
- (16) John answered, saying unto them all, I indeed baptize you with water; but one mightier than I cometh, the latchet of whose shoes I am not worthy to unloose: he shall baptize you with the Holy Ghost **and with fire**:
- (17) Whose fan is in his hand, and he will throughly purge his floor, and will gather the wheat into his garner; but **the chaff he will burn with fire unquenchable**.
- (18) And many other things in his exhortation preached he unto the people”. (Luke 3:15-18)

Luke 3:15: The verse speaks of the expectation of the people. When they came to hear *Yochanan*, they fully expected to see the long awaited Messiah. History records that in the period shortly before, and for a brief time after the First Century A.D., the Messianic expectation had reached its greatest peak. The prophet Daniel, over four hundred years before the time of *Y’shua*, had foretold that the Messiah would appear in the midst of the fourth kingdom from the time of his prophecy. The Messiah, according to Daniel 7, would then

establish His own Kingdom that would be without end. Four kingdoms had successfully risen on the earth from the days of Daniel. They were the Babylonian, Medea-Persian, Greek and Roman Empires. In another prophecy (Dan 9:24-27), Daniel had foretold the time of the Messiah's coming as being approximately four hundred years after the return of Nehemiah and Ezra. That time was here.

Luke 3:16a: When we look at the term, "*baptise with fire*", most people think Y'shua is talking about the baptism of the Holy Spirit. We associate this with the "*cloven tongues of fire*" on the Day of *Shavuot* (Pentecost). But the fire being spoken of here by Yochanan is the fire of judgment—and directly translated from the Greek, it says: "*submerged in fire*". People are going to be judged according to how they respond to the words of Y'shua. The consequences for those who ignore His words (Torah) will be terrible.

3:13-16 Y'shua's baptism

"(13) **Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him.** (14) *But John forbade him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me?* (15) *And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness.* Then he suffered him. (16) *And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him:*"

(9) "And it came to pass in those days, **that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan.**

(10) And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and **the Spirit like a dove descending upon him:**

(11) And there came a voice from heaven, saying, *Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".* (Mark 1:9-11)

(21) Now when all the people were baptized, it came to pass, **that Jesus also being baptized**, and praying, the heaven was opened,

(22) **And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him**, and a voice came from heaven, which said, *Thou art my beloved Son; in thee I am well pleased".* (Luke 3:21-22)

Messianic baptism is different because with it we are identifying ourselves with the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah. The meaning of the act is identification. But the type of identification is determined on what kind of baptism it is. Proselyte baptism is identification with Judaism. Yochanan's baptism was identification with his "back to YHWH" or Repentance movement. Y'shua's baptism is still yet another identification. The basic meaning of the word is immersion. Any other kind of baptism is not Biblical baptism. Immersion was the Jewish mode and also the mode of the early church. Later in church history, it was changed to pouring; and then still later, to sprinkling. These two modes are not Biblical. See the segment, "The Hebraic roots on Baptism" for more information.

The purpose of baptism (ritual immersion), according to Jewish Law even to this day, was for the forgiveness of sins and spiritual cleansing into a right relationship with YHWH. Y'shua had a need to be baptised, but it was not because He had sin in His life. In Mal 4:2, the Messiah is called the "*sun of righteousness who would come with healing in His wings*". According to Ezek 34:11-16, the salvation that the Messiah would bring was in four ways:

- 1) He would seek out the lost;
- 2) Return them to the fold;
- 3) Heal the sick; and
- 4) Strengthen the weak.

In other words, He would usher in the Kingdom of YHWH. The reason that Y'shua was so insistent on being baptised was "to fulfil all righteousness" so that He might be the "*sun of righteousness*". The importance of this will be demonstrated later on in another segment.

In Jewish literature, the dove is a symbol of the Holy Spirit. The Babylonian Hag. 15a commentary on Gen 1:2, where the Spirit of YHWH moved upon the waters, says the Spirit of YHWH hovered like a dove over her young without touching them. The Babylonian Ber. 3b connects the *Bat Kol* from heaven with the Holy Spirit.

3:17 My beloved son – the fourth of the Jewish Lifecycle customs

"*And lo a voice from heaven*, saying, **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".**

"*And there came a voice from heaven*, saying, **Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased".** (Mark 1:12)

"And the Holy Ghost descended in a bodily shape like a dove upon him, and a voice came from heaven, which said, Thou art **my beloved Son**; in thee I am well pleased". (Luke 3:22)

Before we continue, please read the section "Y'shua and Jewish Education" under "Matt 13:55-58: Is not this the carpenter's son?" to get a better understanding of the fourth Jewish lifecycle.

In Rabbinic literature, a reference is made to "a voice from heaven" called "Bat Kol"; which literally means a "daughter of a voice". This is understood to be an oracle, a declaration of the Divine Will. Many people use these verses to establish the doctrine of the Trinity, but this has absolutely nothing to do with that. Perhaps an over-simplification of its description is to say that the *Bat Kol* is heaven's public address system.

It is important to remember that the people witnessing these events were Jews, and things were being done so that they would understand what was happening. It was not written for our Hellenistic mindset. If we want to understand these things, we have to learn to think like a First Century Jew.

My beloved Son

From the Hebrew Scriptures (*Tanach* – Old Covenant):

- (7) I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou **art my Son**; this day have I begotten thee.
- (8) Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.
- (9) Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.
- (10) Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.
- (11) Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.
- (12) **Kiss the Son**, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him". (Psalm 2:7-12)

From the Rabbinic Writings:

"Our rabbis have taught that this concerns **the Messiah-King**..". (Rabbi Shlomo Yitzhaki)

"If it [Psalm 2] be interpreted of **the Messiah**, the matter is clear". (Aben Ezra)

"Our Rabbis taught, The Holy One, blessed be He, will say to **the Messiah**, the son of David (May he reveal himself speedily in our days!), "Ask of me anything, and I will give it to thee", as it is said, I will tell of the decree etc. this day have I begotten thee, ask of me and I will give the nations for thy inheritance".

(Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 52a)

The Exegesis:

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him. And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is **my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**". (Mat 3:16-17)

- (1) "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
- (2) And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
- (3) And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.
- (4) Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
- (5) While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, **This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased**; hear ye him". (Matt 17:1-5)
- (1) "Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,
- (2) (Which he had promised afore by his prophets in the holy scriptures,)
- (3) **Concerning his Son Jesus Christ our Lord**, which was made of the seed of David according to the flesh;
- (4) **And declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead**: (Rom 1:1-4)

Technical note on the translation, "kiss the Son".

Some scholars dispute the translation, "kiss the Son". They claim that this is an unwarranted rendering of the Hebrew phrase "*nashqu bar*", translated by Christians in order to apply the passage to Y'shua. The Tanakh – The Holy Scriptures: The new JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew text, translates *nashqu*

bar as “pay homage in good faith”; but acknowledges in a footnote that the meaning of the Hebrew is uncertain. Why, then is “kiss the Son” (a reference to the “Son of God” mentioned in verse 7) a more preferable reading?

When a Jewish boy reaches the age of 13, he becomes *Bar Mitzvah*, a son of the commandment. However, *ben* is the usual Hebrew word for “son”, whereas *bar* is Aramaic. Nevertheless, there are several places in the Hebrew Scriptures which have *bar* for “son”, where any other reading would not make sense. Most are in Ezra and Daniel, for example:

“Then the prophet Haggai and Zechariah the son of (bar) Iddo, prophets, prophesied to the Jews who were in Judah and Jerusalem, in the name of the God of Israel, who was over them. So Zerubbabel the son of (bar) Shealtiel and Jeshua the son of (bar) Jozadak rose up and began to build the house of God which is in Jerusalem; and the prophets of God were with them, helping them.” (Ezra 5:1-2)

“So the elders of the Jews built, and they prospered through the prophesying of Haggai the prophet and Zechariah the son of (bar) Iddo. And they built and finished it, according to the commandment of the God of Israel, and according to the command of Cyrus, Darius, and Artaxerxes king of Persia.” (Ezra 6:14)

However, Ezra also uses the Hebrew *ben*, just as Psalm 2:7

cf.: “And whatever they need--young bulls, rams, and lambs for the burnt offerings of the God of heaven, wheat, salt, wine, and oil, according to the request of the priests who are in Jerusalem--let it be given them day by day without fail, that they may offer sacrifices of sweet aroma to the God of heaven, and pray for the life of the king and his sons (benim)”. (Ezra 6:9-10)

“Whatever is commanded by the God of heaven, let it diligently be done for the house of the God of heaven. For why should there be wrath against the realm of the king and his sons (benim)?” (Ezra 7:23)

It might be argued that the Ezra and Daniel references, being exilic and post-exilic, might employ the Aramaic *bar*. But the word is used twice in Proverbs, a much earlier work:

“My son (bar), pay attention to my wisdom; lend your ear to my understanding, that you may preserve discretion, and your lips may keep knowledge. (Prov 7:1-2)

The words of king Lemuel, the prophecy that his mother taught him. What, my son (bar)? and what, the son (bar) of my womb? and what, the son(bar) of my vows? (Prov 31:1-2)

Proverbs is definitely pre-exilic, as is Psalm 2. As Ezra and Solomon both employ *ben* and *bar*, so may David in Psalm 2. “Kiss the Son” is the best rendering of *nashqu bar* in Psalm 2. Aramaisms were in use in Israel long before the exile and, because the psalm is poetry, to use *ben* in verse 12 would make the verse very clumsy. *Nashqu bar* preserves the poetic beauty of the psalm.

Because Psalm 2 is a poem, the translation “kiss the Son” retains the parallel structure (essential to Hebrew poetry) which would be broken by any other translation:

“YHWH and his Messiah...” (verse 2)

“YHWH has said ... you are my Son”. (verse 7)

“Serve YHWH... (verse 11) Kiss the Son”. (verse 12)

The context makes sense of the rendering “kiss the Son”. In the first three verses of the psalm, the nations and their kings as well as the rulers of Israel, plot against YHWH and his Messiah, whom YHWH refers to as “my Son” (verse 7). In verse 10, YHWH commands the rulers to be wise, to accept his discipline, to cease rebelling and to serve YHWH. Not only that, he commands them to “kiss the Son”—the Messiah they have previously rejected.

By reading the psalm in this way, it not only makes more sense of the passage but also makes YHWH’s way of salvation plain to us all, Jew and gentile alike.

Why was Yochanan the greatest?

The answer is in Matt 3:13-15: *“Then cometh Jesus from Galilee to Jordan unto John, to be baptized of him. But John forbad him, saying, I have need to be baptized of thee, and comest thou to me? And Jesus answering said unto him, Suffer it to be so now: for thus it becometh us to fulfil all righteousness. Then he suffered him”*.

The reason: the water baptism brought Y’shua into full ministry. Also in Mark 1:9: “And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in Jordan”, and YHWH

said... Mark 1:10-11 "*And straightway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the Spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, Thou art my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased*".

Yochanan denies being the Mashiach

(19) "And this is the record of John, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?

(20) *And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.*

(21) *And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.*

(22) *Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. What sayest thou of thyself?*

(23) *He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.*

(24) *And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.*

(25) *And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?*

(26) *John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;*

(27) *He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.*

(28) *These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing". (John 1:19-28)*

"(20) *And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.* (21) *And they asked him, What then? Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not. Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No*". This is the first, but not the last, time that we see the term "the Prophet". In this context, it is a Messianic term based on Deut. 18:18: "*I will raise them up a Prophet from among their brethren, like unto thee, and will put my words in his mouth; and he shall speak unto them all that I shall command him*". They were asking Yochanan if he was the Messiah.

"(23) *He said, I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias*". When they finally ask Yochanan simply who he is, he quotes Isaiah 40:3. He is the forerunner of the Messiah. It is because of this verse that the Essenes migrated to the wilderness, thinking the Messiah would first appear there around Qumran. They would not be disappointed.

"(26) *John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not*". This verse tells us that Y'shua has returned from the wilderness temptation and is standing there in the crowd. But, the Pharisees did not know who he was. How many religious people attend synagogue or church meetings today, but do not know that Y'shua is in their midst?

Y'shua the Lamb of God

(29) "The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.

(30) *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.*

(31) *And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.*

(32) *And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.*

(33) *And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.*

(34) *And I saw, and bare record that this is the Son of God". (John 1:29-34)*

"(29) *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*". One day later we have the first public identification of the Messiahship of Y'shua by Yochanan. With the expression "the Lamb of God", Yochanan was identifying this person with three Old Covenant concepts. First was the Paschal Lamb of Exodus 12. Second was the Suffering Lamb of Isaiah 53. The third is a little more obscure to our way of thinking, but may have been very obvious to the Jewish people of that day. Genesis 22 contains the story of Abraham's attempt to offer Isaac as a sacrifice (Akedah). In verse 7, Isaac asks where the lamb is for the burnt offering. In verse 8 Abraham tells him that

YHWH will provide for Himself a lamb. As the story goes on, an angel of YHWH prevents Abraham from slaying Isaac. Abraham then sees a ram (not a lamb) caught in the bushes and sacrifices it. Until this day, YHWH had not provided for Himself a lamb. With *Yochanan's* words, he identifies *Y'shua* as the Lamb of Abraham and the prophecy is fulfilled.

"(30) *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me*". *Y'shua* comes after *Yochanan* in that He is six months younger in His humanity. However, in His deity, *Y'shua* is pre-existent to *Yochanan*.

"(31) *And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water*". If the thought line is true that *Yochanan* spent most of his years in the care of the Essenes, it is very possible that he did not recognise *Y'shua* as his cousin. However, the main point of this verse is that up until this point *Yochanan* did not know that *Y'shua* was the Messiah.

"(32) *And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him*". The reason that *Yochanan* knows without a doubt that this is the Messiah is because while he was in the desert he received a revelation from YHWH that the One whom *Yochanan* sees the Holy Spirit descending and resting on will be the One who will baptise with the Holy Spirit, a Messianic task.

The "Yohanan 1:29-34, Online Kitvei Talmidei HaMashiach" explains it well:

"1:29 On the next day, he saw Yeshua coming to him, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world! 1:30 This is he of whom I said, 'Behind me comes one who has passed ahead of me because he existed before me'. 1:31 I did not know him, but for this reason I came immersing in water: that he would be revealed to Yisra'el". 1:32 Yohanan testified, saying, "I have seen the Spirit descending like a dove out of heaven, and it remained on him. 1:33 I did not recognize him, but he who sent me to immerse in water, he said to me, 'On whoever you will see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he who immerses in the Holy Spirit'. 1:34 I have seen, and have testified that this is the Son of God".

We need to get the picture of *Yochanan* the Immerser almost 2,000 years ago was by the River Jordan, who was a prophet and one who came in the spirit of Elijah. He was down along the hot desert area of the Jordan. It was a Jewish community that was coming out because only the Jewish community knew anything about a Messiah. It wasn't the Greeks; it wasn't the Romans, or any other nation; because no other nation had been promised a Messiah. Israel was the chosen nation. Today, we can be thankful that His mercy and grace has been extended to all nations. But until that time, the only people who knew the YHWH of Israel, outside of Israel, were those who had become converts or proselytes to Judaism. They were down along the River Jordan because they knew the prophecies, saw the signs of the times, and recognised there was going to be a Messiah who should come at that time.

Let us reflect on why *Yochanan* was immersing. It was not just a *mikveh* for a woman from her season. It was not for a man with a skin disease or a running sore. It was not for the high priest at *Yom Kippur*. In fact, it was for something different and special. It was for repentance! This was a *mikveh* for repentance.

According to history, in the First Century, there were many men who were prophesying and many of those claimed to be the Messiah. Many prophets rose up talking about the coming of Messiah. When *Yochanan* was baptising, he said, "*The reason I came is that the Messiah might be revealed to Israel*".

You might think that if you were watching that *mikveh* along the river Jordan and the Messiah came out of the water, you would recognise him as the Messiah. But many did not recognise *Y'shua* as the Messiah. Many of *Yochanan's* disciples continued as his disciples, but a few of them left *Yochanan* and began to follow *Y'shua*. There was another baptism *mikveh* that followed and *Y'shua* and his disciples began to immerse and disciple more than *Yochanan*. Yet *Yochanan* continued with his disciples; so, we see that not everyone recognises when YHWH makes a move. The Messiah was before all the people who were there; and these were sincere and honest people who were looking for Messiah, but they still didn't see or recognise him.

T'vilah and Mikveh: immersion ceremony

Although John the Baptist immersed people repenting of their sins in the Jordan River, the normal facility for immersion would have been a man-made pool of water called a "*Mikveh*". The name is derived from the Hebrew word for 'collection or gathering' and speaks of a place where the waters of immersion are gathered. The Greek word for *Mikveh* is Baptism and it is where the Christian custom came from. ("Baptism as a rite of

immersion was not begun by Christians but was taken by them from Jewish and pagan forms" – Dr. Merrill Tenney, editor of the *Zondervan Encyclopedia of the Bible*).

The *Mikveh* was used to satisfy the biblical laws that required a person to be cleansed by water. The actual immersion ceremony was called "*T'vilah*" (to totally immerse). One of the requirements for a Gentile proselyte to Judaism was the *T'vilah* ceremony, signifying a "born again" experience. The *T'vilah* immersion ceremony played a very important part in the spiritual life of the Jewish people.

Two deeper, underlying themes are evident on the spiritual meaning of the *T'vilah* -Immersion Ceremony; the spiritual significance from a Jewish perspective, and the importance of water immersion to *Y'shua* and His Jewish followers. The water is not washing away any filth. Rather, the *Mikveh* is changing the individual's status from that of "*Tomeh*" (unclean) to that of "*Tahor*" (clean), Seen in this light, we see that the *Mikveh* represents the womb. When an individual enters the *Mikveh*, he is re-entering the womb, and when he emerges, he is as if born anew. Thus he attains a completely new status... The womb is a place that is completely divorced from all concepts of "*Tumah*" and uncleanness. Thus, when an individual enters the *Mikveh*, he leaves all uncleanness and ***Tumah*** behind, and emerges a new, purified person.

It marks the beginning of the ascent to an elevated religious state. This function of *mikveh* goes beyond the basic purpose of purification. Anthropologists refer to this threshold of higher social status as "liminality". The person at this moment of transition is a "liminal" or "threshold" person. The liminal state is common to virtually all persons and societies, ancient and modern; and it marks a move to an altered status or to a life transition. Entering adulthood from adolescence, for example, requires a tunnel of time, a rite of passage; a liminal state that acknowledges by symbolic acts the stark changes taking place in one's self-identity, behaviour and attitude.

In a sense, it is nothing short of the spiritual drama of death and rebirth cast onto the canvas of the convert's soul. Submerging into waters over one's head, one enters into an environment, in which he cannot breathe and cannot live for more than moments. It is the death of all that has gone before. As one emerges from the gagging waters into the clear air, he begins to breathe anew and live anew—as a baby struggling to be born.

If we take this graphic metaphor a step further, we can sense that the *mikveh* is a spiritual womb. The human fetus is surrounded by water. It does not yet live. The water breaks in a split second and the child emerges into a new world. The Jews say: "As soon as the convert immerses and emerges, he is a Jew in every respect" (*Yevamot* 47b).

This to me is the essence of the *T'vilah* (Immersion) Ceremony. To voluntarily, with a humble and contrite spirit, immerse yourself in a body of water, is to die to your old self. "*Don't you know that those of us who have been immersed into the Messiah *Y'shua* have been immersed into his death?*" (Rom 6:3) Through being immersed, we connect with *Y'shua*'s death and burial, the sacrifice of YHWH's only Son and claiming that sacrifice for forgiveness of sin. "*So that just as through the glory of the Father, the Messiah was raised from the dead, likewise we too might live a new life*". (Rom 6:4) Our coming out of the water is a manifestation that we share in the resurrection of the Messiah and can make the claim to being born again to a new life in him!

As we rediscover and participate in this ancient biblical ceremony, it is completely clear that our Redeemer *Y'shua* fulfills the promises of the *T'vilah* ceremony. It is both deliverance and also recognition of how much we owe to YHWH our Father and *Y'shua* the Messiah as we are born again to a new life through him. This also prefigures what delivers us now, which is not the removal of dirt from the body; but one's pledge to keep a good conscience toward YHWH through the resurrection of *Y'shua* the Messiah.

The origin of *T'vilah*?

T'vilah is the Biblical act of totally immersing oneself in a natural water source. In ancient times a stream or river was used, but in modern times a specially constructed pool called a *mikveh* is normally used. In Judaism today, the terms are used somewhat interchangeably; with *mikveh* emerging as the more familiar term. As believers in Messiah *Y'shua*, the term *baptism* plays a significant part in our walk with our Messiah. How can the *t'vilah* and *mikveh* of Judaism become important concepts in our lives today? Let's examine the origins of the *t'vilah* and *mikveh* and discover the rich symbolism that is available to us as believers.

Water baptism (immersion) was not originally a Christian act. All through the *TaNaCH* (Old Covenant), the children of Isra'el, whenever they would have to come before YHWH, would cleanse themselves. The priests had to cleanse themselves, and what they went through was the *mikveh*, or a cleansing. A woman went

through a *mikveh* once a month. There are many reasons for a *mikveh* in Scripture. It was not uncommon for the people of Israel to be immersed in water.

The three types of ritual washing (ablution) mentioned in Biblical and *Talmudic* literatures are:

- 1) Complete immersion (*t'vilah*) in a natural water-source or in a specially constructed *mikveh*, prescribed for married women following their periods of menstruation or after childbirth as well as for proselytes (gerim) on being accepted into Judaism;
- 2) Washing of the feet and hands, prescribed for the priests in the Temple service at *Yerushalayim* Jerusalem;
- 3) Washing of the hands (*netilah yadayim*) before sitting down to a meal and before prayer, upon rising from sleep and after the elimination of bodily wastes; and also after being in proximity to a dead human body.

Apart from ritual purification, the Jewish people have always regarded bathing and physical cleanliness as implicitly important because, as Hillel taught, the human body reflects the divine image of YHWH.

Maimonides (an ancient rabbinical teacher) finds a symbolical significance in *tevilah*: "The person who directs his heart to purify his soul from spiritual impurities, such as iniquitous thoughts and evil notions, becomes clean as soon as he determines in his heart to keep apart from these courses, and bathes his soul in the water of pure knowledge".

So when *Yochanan* the Immerser (John the Baptist) was down along the river Jordan and there were multitudes that came down to him, it wasn't unusual that so many of those Judeans had come out of *Yerushalayim* and Judea.

Before you go into the water or *mikveh*, you should know why you go into the water. You don't go into the *mikveh* to join a church. You go into the water as an outward manifestation of an inward work that's happened in your life, a change in your life. That day was for repentance.

When does *t'vilah* take place from a traditional Jewish point of view?

When a Jew goes into the *Mikveh*, he or she is symbolically starting afresh; hence the parable used by *Y'shua* as he conversed with *Nak'dimon* (Nicodemus). The symbolism is surprisingly similar to being baptised, where the convert identifies publicly with the death and burial of *Y'shua*. Various life cycles in the life of the Jew are marked by such an immersion to include marriage and conversion.

On conversion from a traditional Jewish point of view:

Once a person has decided to convert, the proselyte must begin to learn Jewish religion, law and customs and begin to observe them. This teaching process generally takes at least one year, because the prospective convert must experience each of the Jewish holidays; however, the actual amount of study required will vary from person to person (a convert who was raised as a Jew might not need any further education, for example, while another person might need several years).

After the teaching is complete, the proselyte is brought before a *Beit Din* (rabbinical court) which examines the proselyte and determines whether he or she is ready to become a Jew. If the proselyte passes this oral examination, the rituals of conversion are performed. If the convert is male, he is circumcised (or, if he was already circumcised, a pinprick of blood is drawn for a symbolic circumcision). Both male and female converts are immersed in the *mikveh* (a ritual bath used for spiritual purification). The convert is given a Jewish name and is then introduced into the Jewish community.

On marriage from a traditional Jewish point of view:

According to the *Torah*, a man is forbidden from having sexual intercourse with a *niddah*; that is, a menstruating woman. The law of *niddah* is the only law of ritual purity that continues to be observed today. At one time, a large portion of Jewish law revolved around questions of ritual purity and impurity. All of the other laws had significance in the time of the Temple; but because of the absence of the Temple, many are not applicable today.

The time of separation begins at the first sign of blood and ends in the evening of the woman's seventh "clean day". This separation lasts a minimum of twelve days. The rabbis broadened this prohibition, maintaining that a man may not even touch his wife or sleep in the same bed with her during this time. Weddings must be scheduled carefully, so that the woman is not in a state of *niddah* on her wedding night.

At the end of the period of *niddah*, as soon as possible after nightfall after the seventh clean day, the woman must immerse herself in a *kosher mikveh*, a ritual pool. The *mikveh* was traditionally used to cleanse a person of various forms of ritual impurity. Today, it is used almost exclusively for this purpose and as part of

the ritual of conversion. It is important to note that the purpose of the *mikveh* is solely ritual purification, not physical cleanliness; in fact, immersion in the *mikveh* is not valid unless the woman thoroughly bathes before immersion. The *mikveh* is such an important part of traditional Jewish ritual life that a new community will build a *mikveh* before they build a *synagogue*.

The *Torah* does not specify the reason for the laws of *niddah*, but this period of abstention has both physical and psychological benefits.

Why immerse three times from a traditional Jewish point of view?

Why, when one is immersing (performing ritual baptism), is it customary to go under three times? It is taught that immersion is a picture of birth (or rebirth), as it symbolises the re-entry into the womb and re-entry into life. It is also taught that immersion is a picture of death and resurrection. It symbolises entering into the grave and then being resurrected from the grave. Upon reflecting upon these representations, I realised that they must be the reason for two of the dunkings—but what about the third?

The ideas of birth and resurrection are connected in this passage:

Deut 6:4-9:

- 4) *Hear, O Israel: YHWH our Elohim, YHWH is one!*
- 5) *You shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.*
- 6) *And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.*
- 7) *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.***
- 8) *You shall bind them as a sign on your hand, and they shall be as frontlets between your eyes.*
- 9) *You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates.*

This is, of course, the *Shema* (Deut 6:4-9 morning and evening prayer/statement), the hallmark of Judaism faith. The phrase rendered “*when you sit in your house*” is referring to being in the womb. The phrase “*when you lie down, and when you rise up*” is referring to death and resurrection. This leaves the phrase “*when you walk by the way*”. This is speaking of your daily life. Together, these phrases teach us that a child should be brought into the world with the words of *Torah*, should walk in *Torah* his/her entire life, and should expect to experience the *Torah* in Its fullness in the World to Come.

The first dunk of the immersion represents birth (or rebirth), “*when you sit in your house*”. The last dunk represents death and resurrection, “*when you lie down, and when you rise up*”. This leaves the middle dunk, “*when you walk by the way*”. This dunk is our daily life. It represents a life immersed in *Torah*. When the Orthodox Jew completely immerses himself three times, he has declared “YHWH is echad” or “YHWH is one”. They recognise that YHWH is responsible for (and in control of) EVERYTHING in their lives, from before their birth to their resurrection! The traditional Hebraic immersion and the *Shema* go hand in hand.

For the Messianic Jew and non-Jew, immersion should also be done three times: once in the name of YHWH the Father, once in the name of *Y'shua HaMashiach*, and once in the name of the Holy Spirit.

What is a Mikveh, Halakhically?

The *mikveh* must comply with a number of precise *halakhic* (Jewish legal) qualifications. The *mikveh* must be built into the ground or the structure of the building. It must hold a minimum of 757 liters of water. The depth must be such as to enable an average adult to stand upright and have the water reach at least 28 centimeters above the waist, so that immersion can be performed without back-breaking contortions.

The water must originally have been transported to the *mikveh* in a manner resembling the natural flow of waters. The general practice is to build cement channels at the sides of the *mikveh* roof, which will enable rainwater to flow directly into the *mikveh*. Done right the first time with the required initial amount of water, other piped waters may be added later in whatever quantities and at any time, and the *mikveh* will still retain its religious validity.

The waters must be stationary and not flow (not even the flow caused by a filter) while the *mikveh* is in use. The water, by all means, should be chlorinated to assure its meeting the highest standards of hygienic cleanliness. (While the chlorinated water may be somewhat discolored, it does have to retain natural water colour.)

Water deriving from a natural spring is considered a valid *mikveh* if it complies with *halakhic* conditions. Also quite proper is immersing in the ocean, where there is no *mikveh* available, given the satisfaction of certain *halakhic* conditions.

Parameters of the Mikveh Experience

The ceremony must take place on a weekday (and not on *Shabbat*, the Sabbath) and during daylight, as do all other Jewish court procedures. In cases when a full circumcision has to be performed (unlike the touch of blood for previously circumcised males), enough time will have to elapse to be certain that the wound has healed completely.

The only assurance that the immersion will accord with halakhic requirements for a male convert is the presence of the rabbi at the *mikveh*; a female is to be accompanied by a person familiar with the practice (such as a rabbi's wife), the *mikveh* escort, or a very knowledgeable friend who herself uses the *mikveh*.

The body must be thoroughly cleansed immediately before the immersion. The convert should be careful that there are no adhesions such as bandages, Band-Aids, or ointment; that the hair is thoroughly brushed; the nails of the hands and feet are pared; and that no traces of cosmetics or nail polish remain. The whole body must be immersed at one time (not sequentially); and the submerging must be total without even a single hair remaining above the water.

The custom in Y'shua's days

The ancient Jewish sages also taught that the word *Mikveh* has the same letters as *Ko Meh*, the Hebrew word for "rising" or "standing tall"; therefore, we have immersion or being completely submerged in water followed by standing straight up out of the water.

The custom of *Mikveh* in Y'shua's days was that the *Mikveh* was to be performed in the presence of a witness—usually a priest or someone from the *Sanhedrin*. The person being immersed or baptised prepared themselves by praying and focusing on YHWH. The candidate would completely undress and make a fresh profession of their faith before the designated "witnesses of the immersion". The candidate entered the water, standing straight up with their feet spread and hands held out in front of them. The candidate would totally immerse themselves by squatting in the water three times with the witness or immerser doing the officiating.

The New Covenant points out that Y'shua came up straightway out of the water in Matt 3:16 "And Jesus, when he was baptized, went **up straightway out of the water**: and, lo, the heavens were opened unto him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting upon him" (KJV). Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist) was Y'shua's witness and was of priestly lineage (Luke 1:8-23).

The performance of *Mikveh* is an ancient Jewish custom that is referred to as a new birth and is the basis of today's modern Baptism. *Mikveh* or Baptism is a powerful spiritual act that we as believers can perform as a testimony of our faith in Y'shua, as a commitment to YHWH's Word, and as a spiritual re-birth into the Kingdom of YHWH. Contrary to many theologies, salvation cannot be found in the *Mikveh* or Baptism. Salvation only comes from the acceptance of Y'shua as one's Saviour and acknowledging that His blood has washed away your sins.

Most of today's Baptism customs are taken directly from the *Mikveh*. In Y'shua's time, the *Mikveh* candidate preceded their immersion with exhortations and benedictions. They would declare their acceptance of the *Torah* (YHWH's Word) by declaring, "*I will do and I will hear*" portions of an oath spoken by the priests not to forsake the *Torah* (Deut 29:9- 14). The concept of total immersion comes from Lev 15:16 when it says, "*he shall wash all his flesh in the water*". The *Mikveh* candidates immersed themselves in the water three times because the word *Mikveh* occurs three times in the *Torah*—and also because it is explained in the section, "Why immerse three times from a traditional Jewish point of view?"

Through this we see the pattern of repentance, cleansing, and in-filling of the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit) and the Triune nature of YHWH in these three submergings! The person performing *Mikveh* was not touched in Y'shua's day because Lev 15:16 says, "**He shall wash all his flesh in the water**".

Mikveh in rabbinical writings, as said, gives us the concept of *Mikveh* as the "womb of the world". As the *Mikveh* candidate comes out of the water, they are considered a "new birth", separating them from the world and worldly ways. They are referred to as "a little child just born" or "a child of one day". The New Covenant

uses similar terms such as "born anew", "new creation", and "born from above". The Rabbis teach that at the moment of immersion, you are as close as you can ever be to YHWH here on earth.

Mikveh (Baptism) is a very holy and special act a person can perform, bringing themselves closer to YHWH and in infilling of the Holy Spirit. Read Peter's advice to those Jews asking what they should do concerning YHWH and Y'shua when Peter was preaching after being filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. Acts 2:38-39: "*Peter answered them, "Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the Authority of Yeshua the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Holy Spirit!" For the promise is for you, for your children, and for those far away- as many as the Lord our God may call"* (CJB).

Paul also gives a very strong teaching on the *Mikveh* in Acts 19:1-8 "*While Apollos was in Corinth, Paul traveled through the interior provinces. Finally, he came to Ephesus, where he found several believers. "Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?" he asked them. "No", they replied, "we don't know what you mean. We haven't even heard that there is a Holy Spirit". "Then what baptism did you experience?" he asked. And they replied, "The baptism of John". Paul said, "John's baptism was to demonstrate a desire to turn from sin and turn to God. John himself told the people to believe in Jesus, the one John said would come later". As soon as they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then when Paul laid his hands on them, the Holy Spirit came on them, and they spoke in other tongues and prophesied.*"

Peter and Paul's teachings concerning Y'shua hold true today! The promise is for you, your children, and all those YHWH may call! Are you in a rut or a spiritual famine? Are you not filled with the Holy Spirit? Have you not felt YHWH's presence in a long time? Rededicate yourself to YHWH through the blood of Y'shua, confessing your sins to Him and perform a *Mikveh* (Baptism); and be re-born spiritually fresh and anew in the Kingdom of YHWH! Be re-born and become filled with the Holy Spirit!

Because of this, Biblical *mikveh* is not something for infants but for believers who are mature enough to have repented of past sins and who desire to walk in the newness of life given them by the power of their risen Messiah.

According to Y'shua's instructions, all new believers are to be *mikvehed*. Therefore, the believer who discovers that he or she has not been properly *mikvehed* (immersed) should take appropriate steps to rectify this.

The *Talmud, Mishnah* tells us that the High Priest immersed himself five times and washed his hands and feet ten times during the sacrifices and ministering of the office on *Yom Kippur* (Moed, Yoma 3 Mishneh 3).

The question has been regarding "effusion" or the pouring of water over the initiate. There are references to this in the *Torah* (Exod 29:7, Lev 14:18 and in the writings of the Kings—2 Kings 9:3, etc.) Although these references are using oil instead of water, it shows the purpose of demonstrating the anointing of YHWH on the one who is undergoing the ceremony. It is assumed this could be extended to ceremonial cleansing; although I know of no such custom in Judaism, either currently or historically.

An interesting reference is found in Acts 8:27-39. The Ethiopian eunuch was Jewish. He was returning from Jerusalem after a Holy Day (v. 27). Notice that Phillip did not say, "You must be baptised". It was the eunuch's idea. It also says they went into the water and came up out of the water.

We can draw certain conclusions from this experience because this is a Jewish rite. First, as said previously, it is normal to undergo ritual immersion in *mikveh* (a large body of living water) after learning something that changes one's life. Secondly, they both went into the water and came up out of the water. Thirdly, In Jewish immersion, the one being immersed is not assisted in the rite, but immerses him or her self in water (see 2 Kings 5:10-14). The other participant is for witness only to make sure that all the hair and body parts go completely under. Immersion is traditionally done in the nude when a secluded place is available. The witness is of the same gender as the initiate. If a secluded place is not available, a sheet is normally used to block the view of others (not the witnesses) who might look on as was the case for the High Priest at *Yom Kippur* services (Yoma 3 Mishnah 4).

The objection has been made that if an initiate immerses him or herself, it does not properly represent the death, burial and resurrection of the believer. I say that it is a more exact representation of this nature, because unlike the natural death where someone is buried, we volunteer ourselves to this death and bury ourselves willingly. The change that takes place is a choice. We are also picturing Y'shua's death, burial and

resurrection. He said, “*No man takes my life but I give it willingly*”. He also said, “*Destroy this temple and I will raise it up*”. This is more fully pictured by our coming up out of the water by our own strength.

It is rumoured that there is a painting in the catacombs of the Vatican of the immersion of Y’shua with Yochanan (John the Immerser) watching from the bank of the river Jordan. I have not verified it personally (if it can be verified), but the sources seem to be reliable.

Mikveh facts

It is the clear command of Messiah Y’shua that every believer of the Gospel be *mikvehed* (Matt 28:19-20, Acts 2:37-38). He Himself was *mikvehed* in the Jordan in order to set us a perfect example (Mark 1:9-10, Matt 3:13-17).

Mikveh is an important part of salvation. (Mark 16:16)

The requirement for *mikveh* is faith in Y’shua. (Acts 8:35-37)

The leaders of the early Messianic community obeyed the Master’s command in Matt 28:19-20 and *mikvehed* all new believers (Acts 2:41, Acts 16:33).

Mikveh, by immersion, was the method they normally used (Acts 8:38-39, John 3:23).

Water *mikveh* is a symbol of burial and a rising again to walk in newness of life in Messiah through the power of the *Ruach haKodesh* (Set-apart Spirit.) (Rom 6:3-5, 1 Peter 3:20-21).

At his or her *mikveh*, the believer in Y’shua becomes a member of Messianic Israel-also called the Bride and Body of Messiah (1 Cor 12:13).

At *mikveh*, the believer “puts on Messiah”, is divinely reckoned (if not actually!) and recognised as a child of Abraham; and is thereafter regarded as a true Israelite; Biblical Israel is Abraham’s extended family of faith. (Gal 3:27-29)

Believers in Y’shua the Messiah should not needlessly delay being *mikvehed* in water (immersed). (Acts 22:16)

To understand baptism, we need to ask the following question. Which came first, the grave or the crucifixion stake? The answer is obvious: the Crucifixion stake. After our salvation, we practice Holy Communion publicly to confess that the body of Y’shua was broken and His blood shed for us to atone for our sins. If we refuse, we deny the fact that Y’shua died on the crucifixion stake. “*For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord’s death till he come*” (1 Cor 11:26).

Y’shua was buried after being taken down from the crucifixion stake. His resurrection from the grave sealed His Godliness. Read carefully what Rom 6:3-6 says, “*Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptised into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection: Knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin*

In other words, by being baptised publicly, one acknowledges the fact that our old man is buried and that one now lives as a new person in Y’shua HaMashiach. By baptism, we publicly acknowledge that Y’shua was buried and that He also arose.

“*Baptizo*” is the Greek word for immersion and is used with every baptism verse in the New Covenant.

“*Rantizo*” is the Greek word for sprinkle and is NOT used with ANY baptism verse in the New Covenant.

Peter knew exactly the meaning of these words as is proved by the following two verses.

“*Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace unto you, and peace, be multiplied*”. (1 Peter 1:2)

“...while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water. The like figure whereunto even **baptism** doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Peter 3:20-21).

Take note that sprinkling was first practised in the 13th century by the Roman Catholics.

Nowhere in the Bible do we find that children/babies had to be baptised. Cornelius and his family are cited (Acts 10:47-48); but let us analyse Acts 10:2, “*A devout man, and one that feared God with all his house...*”

Have you ever seen a devout, God-fearing baby?

Read these Scriptures for YHWH’s way to be saved (Mark 16:16; Titus 3:5).

Is Y’shua not our perfect example? He walked ±70km to be baptised.

The root meaning of “*baptizo*” is to immerse so that what is dipped takes on the qualities of what it has been dipped in.

The mystical perspective of 40 se'ah water in a *mikveh*

Immersion in a *mikveh* must be total and all-encompassing. The entire body must be submerged at one time in the water. The *mikveh* must therefore be at least one square cubit by three cubits high. This equals 40 "se'ah" of water.

From a mystical perspective, the number 40 is significant in rebirth. Forty is the number signifying the span of time necessary for creation: In the development of an embryo, the human form is established after forty days (Talmud, Bechorot, 21b).

So after immersing in the *mikveh*, the convert becomes "like a baby just born"—a new being. Similarly, it is customary to immerse in a *mikveh* before the onset of Shabbat, recreating ourselves for Shabbat when we become "new" people.

The 40 se'ah of the *mikveh* bring about a rebirth for one who immerses in it.

The flood of Noah served as a cosmic *mikveh* that purified the world – hence the 40 days of rain, paralleling the 40 se'ah of water necessary for a *kosher mikveh*. Indeed, after the flood, Noah "beheld a new world".

SECTION I INTRODUCTION TO MESSIAH MATTHEW 4:1-25

TEXT:

- (1) "Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil.
- (2) And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred.
- (3) And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread.
- (4) But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God.
- (5) Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple,
- (6) And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.
- (7) Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God.
- (8) Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them;
- (9) And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.
- (10) Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve.
- (11) Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.
- (12) Now when Jesus had heard that John was cast into prison, he departed into Galilee;
- (13) And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim:
- (14) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,
- (15) The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles;
- (16) The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up.
- (17) From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- (18) And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.
- (19) And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men.
- (20) And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.
- (21) And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.
- (22) And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him.
- (23) And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people.
- (24) And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought unto him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy; and he healed them.

(25) And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan".

4:1 The devil and the wilderness

"Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit **into the wilderness** to be **tempted of the devil**".

"And immediately the Spirit driveth him **into the wilderness**. And he was there in the wilderness forty days, **tempted of Satan**; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him". (Mar 1:12-13)

"And Jesus being full of the Holy Ghost returned from Jordan, and was led by the Spirit **into the wilderness**, Being forty days **tempted of the devil**. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered". (Luke 4:1-2)

The Scriptures say that Y'shua "returned **from** Jordan, and was led by the Spirit **into the wilderness**". This indicates to us that Y'shua was led away from the Jordan River area, possibly into the Judean wilderness (towards Jerusalem's way). The Hebrew for "devil" is "haSatan" also known as the adversary, opponent or rebel. References:

Isaiah 14:11-15 is a taunt of the king of Babylon with a "hidden" reference to Satan

Ezek 28:11-19

Job 1, 2, 40, 41, 42:6 – a created being opposed to YHWH

Gen 3 & Rev 12:9

Satan is the background source of all sin, evil and opposition to YHWH. The *Tenach* and "New Testament" take for granted a supernatural realm of good and evil, angels who serve YHWH and those who serve Satan. The temptation of Y'shua follows the Spirit's descent at His baptism. After the high spiritual experience at the waters of the Jordan River, Y'shua comes into direct conflict with the powers of evil. Satan dramatically appears on the scene and presents Y'shua with an opportunity to achieve the higher purpose of redemption without the pain of the crucifixion stake.

4:2 Forty days and forty nights

"And when **he had fasted forty days and forty nights**, he was afterward an hungry".

"And he was there in the wilderness **forty days, tempted** of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and the angels ministered unto him". (Mark 1:13)

"**Being forty days tempted** of the devil. And in those days he did eat nothing: and when they were ended, he afterward hungered". (Luke 4:2)

This is one of many "New Testament" comparisons between Y'shua and Moses. Moses received all the *Torah* after fasting forty days. Y'shua was tempted to break the *Torah* after fasting forty days.

The Temptation of Our Lord

The two events—the baptism and temptation of Y'shua—cannot be separated. They are linked together both chronologically and logically. Chronologically, the temptation of Y'shua immediately follows His baptism. Matthew connects the two events by the word, "then"; Mark and Luke with "and". Logically, the two events are inseparable.

Y'shua's calling and testing is told at the baptism. Y'shua's fitness for such a mission is tested in the wilderness. Satan never attacks the identification of Y'shua as Israel's Messiah in the temptation. He simply attempts to divert Him from His task.

4:3 The Son of YHWH

"And when the tempter came to him, he said, **If thou be the Son of God**, command that these stones be made bread".

"And the devil said unto him, **If thou be the Son of God**, command this stone that it be made bread". (Luke 4:3)

In the original text, the expression "if you are the Son of God" is a first-class condition and casts no doubt on the fact of Y'shua's Sonship. It could accurately be rendered, "Since You are the Son of God".

The *Tenach* hints at such a person – "the Son of God:"

Isaiah 9:5-7

Mic 5:1-2

Psalm 2:7

Prov 30:4

Dan 7:13

When did Y'shua become the Son of YHWH?

The exact moment in time when Y'shua became the Son of YHWH is a subject that has perplexed many people throughout the centuries. We know that Y'shua came from YHWH the Father (John 3:13, 6:44, 16:28) and that He is qualified to be our Saviour by living a sinless life and freely giving His life as the perfect sacrifice to pay the penalty for our sins. However, when did He become the Son of the One he called Father?

In order to answer this question, there are four events that must be analysed: 1) Y'shua's conception, 2) birth, 3) baptism, and 4) resurrection from the dead (the last section is discussed under Matthew chapter 28).

1) The conception of Y'shua:

*"(18) These are the facts concerning the birth of Jesus Christ: His mother, Mary, was engaged to be married to Joseph. But while she was still a virgin she became pregnant by the Holy Spirit. (19) Then Joseph, her fiancé, being a man of stern principle, decided to break the engagement but to do it quietly, as he didn't want to publicly disgrace her. (20) As he lay awake considering this, he fell into a dream, and saw an angel standing beside him. "Joseph, son of David", the angel said, "don't hesitate to take Mary as your wife! For the child within her has been **conceived** by the Holy Spirit" "(Mat 1:18-20 LBP).*

In verse 20, the word "conceived" is a translation of the Greek word 'gennao'—which can mean to 'regenerate', 'bear', 'beget', 'be born', 'bring forth', 'conceive', 'be delivered of', 'engender', 'make' and 'spring'. *"(21) And she shall bring forth (Greek, 'tikto'. English, 'bear') a son, and you shall call his name Jesus: for he shall save his people from their sins. (22) Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, (23) Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Immanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us"* (Mat 1:21-23 KJV).

The Greek word for "God" is 'theos'. In these verses, it is 'ho-theos', which means a 'Deity', 'the Supreme Divinity'.

Notice that Y'shua was also called 'God with us'. This Scripture shows that Y'shua was unique. He was not just any man; he was YHWH in human flesh and he came to save humanity from the penalty of sin.

"And the angel said to her, Fear not, Mary: for you have found favor with God. And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Jesus". (Luke 1:30-31)

Here, the word "conceive" is the Greek word "sullambano", which literally means "to conceive" as in conception of children. The difference in the usage of this Greek word by Matthew and Luke seems to be in the past and future tenses of the verb. In Matthew, the child had already been conceived, in Luke, the child was yet to be conceived.

"He shall be great, and shall be called the Son of the Highest: and the Lord God shall give to him the throne of his father David". (Luk 1:32)

Y'shua is called "the Son of the Highest". The English word "Highest" is translated from the Greek word "Hupsistos". In this case, "Hupsistos" denotes the Sovereign of the Universe, the Most High; the Highest and Supreme YHWH. This spirit-being is the Supreme Sovereign above all that exists; this Sovereign YHWH is the Father of Y'shua HaMashiach.

"And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end. Then said Mary to the angel, How shall this be, seeing I know not a man?" (Luk 1:33-34)

The Power of the Highest:

Mary asks the angel how she could give birth to the Saviour, because she had not had intercourse with a man:

"And the angel answered and said to her, The holy spirit shall come upon you, and the power of the Highest shall overshadow you: Therefore also the holy thing which shall be born of you shall be called the Son of God". (Luk 1:35)

Notice that it was the power (i.e., Holy Spirit) that came from the HIGHEST that impregnated Mary and performed the process of conception. We are not told how this was accomplished; we are just told it was performed by the Father's power.

Clearly, the Scripture says that Y'shua was conceived by the Holy Spirit; but, was the Holy Spirit the Father of Y'shua?

Nowhere in the Bible do we find Y'shua or anyone else referring to the Holy Spirit or the Spirit of YHWH as the Father. Therefore, it should be obvious that the Holy Spirit was not the Father of Y'shua, but that it was through YHWH the Father's Spirit-power and energy that the process of conception was performed within Mary.

Physical Conception:

Both Matthew and Luke record the following facts about the conception of Y'shua:

The Sovereign Father of all that exists was the Father of Y'shua. See Matt 1:32; 7:21; Mark 1:9-11.

YHWH the Father performed the process of impregnation and conception within Mary's womb through his spirit power. See Matt 1:35.

Y'shua became a physical Son of YHWH at conception. See John 1:14, 18.

2) The human birth of Y'shua:

"Therefore the Lord himself shall give you a sign; Behold a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel (God with us)" (Isaiah 7:14 KJV). See also Isaiah 8:8-10.

How a physical human could be both YHWH and human is a question that many people ask. The answer to this question is that Y'shua was the Creator YHWH who voluntarily gave up his immortality and power to become a human being; therefore, he was both YHWH and man.

As the YHWH of Israel, Y'shua inspired many prophecies that foretold his human birth. The New Covenant writers record that Y'shua was in fact a human and the Creator YHWH:

"And the word (the Creator God) was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten (only born) of the Father), full of grace and truth" (John 1:14 KJV)

Evidence:

The scriptural evidence shows beyond a shadow of a doubt that YHWH the Father is the father of Y'shua and that the Father used his Spirit-power and energy to cause the conception of Y'shua within the womb of Mary.

The YHWH who became human:

Although many Scriptures show that Y'shua is a member of the divine family, many people still feel that Y'shua did not exist before his birth as a human. The following are some of the many clear statements made by Y'shua and others about his pre-existence and his return to the place where he came from.

Y'shua the Creator:

John records Y'shua telling the Jews of his pre-existence: "***Jesus said to them, Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM".*** (John 8:58 KJV)

Y'shua told these Jews very bluntly that he had existed before Abraham. By using the term "*I Am*", he indicated to them that he was the Creator YHWH of Abraham. This made the Jews so angry that they immediately tried to kill Him for speaking what they considered to be blasphemy.

Y'shua Came From YHWH:

"I came forth from the Father and am come into the world: again, I leave the world, and go to the Father" (John 16:28; 3:13 KJV).

Y'shua said that he came forth from the Father into the world and would leave it "*again*", but what did he mean by "*again*"? If it is understood that Y'shua is the Creator, this statement will not be a mystery. "*Again*" is translated from the Greek word "*palin*" which means 'once more', 'repetition', or '*again*'. As the Creator YHWH, Y'shua came to this planet many times. Remember that the Biblical record shows that Abraham, Jacob, Moses, and many others saw, talked with, ate with, and communicated face-to-face with the Creator.

The Word Was YHWH:

"In the beginning was the Word and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. The same was in the beginning with God. All things were made by him; and without him was not anything made that was made. In him was life; and the life was the light of men. And the light shined in the darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not... He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not". (John 1:1-5,10 KJV)

There can be no doubt that prior to his human birth, Y'shua was the Creator YHWH.

The Word Made Flesh:

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father) full of grace and truth". (John 1:14 KJV). See also Matthew chapters 1 through 4; 1 John 4:14-15; Heb 1:1-6.

YHWH in the Flesh:

"And without controversy great is the mystery of godliness: God was manifest in the flesh, justified in the spirit, seen of angels, preached to the gentiles, believed on in the world, received up into glory". (1Tim 3:16 KJV)

In verse 16, the word "manifest" is translated from the Greek word "phaneroo" which means 'appear', 'declare', or 'show'.

Here, Paul speaks of the multitude of witnesses of the fact that Y'shua, who was the Creator YHWH, became a flesh and blood human being. But when did YHWH manifest himself in the flesh?

Only in the New Covenant do we find the conditions that fit all the descriptive terms used in 1 Tim 3:16, and the only person in the Bible who claims to represent and come from the Father is Y'shua. So, logic tells us that YHWH (the Creator/Y'shua) manifested himself in the flesh at his physical birth. Moreover, at the time of his physical conception, Y'shua became the Son of YHWH.

Two very important things happened at the time of the physical manifestation of YHWH (the Creator/Y'shua): Y'shua became **the Son of YHWH at physical conception**.

Y'shua became **the physical Son of YHWH at birth**. (When you read the "Summary" below, it will all make sense.)

3) The baptism of Y'shua: a spiritual conception and birth:

After Y'shua's transformation, he became the first son of the Father's New Creation (Rom 8:29; Col 1:15-18).

The prophet Isaiah foretold the spiritual conception, birth, and empowerment of Y'shua as the Son of YHWH: **"And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord".** (Isaiah 11:2 KJV)

At the time of Y'shua's physical conception, he received the genetic imprint of the human family; and upon receiving the Spirit of YHWH, Y'shua received the genetic imprint of YHWH the Father: **"And it came to pass in those days, that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized of John in the Jordan. And straightaway coming up out of the water, he saw the heavens opened, and the spirit like a dove descending upon him: And there came a voice from heaven, saying, You are my beloved son, in whom I am well pleased"** (Mark 1:9-11 KJV). See also Matt 3:16-18; John 3:1-10; Heb 1:1-6.

As the Spirit of YHWH descended on Y'shua, YHWH the Father declared that Y'shua is his Son.

The apostle Paul was inspired to record that, when a person is converted from the original human creation into the New Creation through YHWH's Spirit, that person becomes a son of YHWH: **"For as many as are led by the spirit of God, these are the sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit of slavery again to fear, but you received a spirit of adoption by which we cry, Abba! Father!"** (Rom 8:14-15 KJV). See also Col 1:15-18.

YHWH the Father's First-born:

"For to which of the angels did he say, **You are my Son**; today I have begotten You? And again I will be a Father to him, and **he shall be a Son to me**. And again when he **brought the firstborn into the world**, he said let the angels worship him". (Heb 1:5-6 Para.). Quoted from Psalm 2:7. See also Heb 5:5.

Here, the writer to the Hebrews speaks of Y'shua becoming the physical Son of YHWH at conception and at birth; and the spiritual Son of YHWH upon receiving the Spirit of the Father at baptism.

Before Y'shua death:

"And now Father, glorify me with yourself, **with the glory which I had with You before the existence of the world**". (John 17:52 Para.). See also John 17:24; 8:38-59.

When Y'shua asks his Father to return his glory, Y'shua was no longer a human with only the spirit of man. At this point in time, he was the first of humanity to have YHWH the Father's Spirit residing in him. He was the first Son of YHWH the Father to be created out of the human race; **he was the first of the New Creation.**

Summary:

It seems logical from the Scriptures which have been presented here, that **Y'shua became the Father's physical Son the instant he emptied himself of his immortality** and allowed YHWH the Father to perform the miracle of conception within the egg of the virgin *Miriam*.

Y'shua remained the Father's physical Son until he was baptised with water and with the Holy Spirit. After this baptism, **Y'shua became the Father's first Son of the New Creation.** And He became YHWH the Father's first Son to be made immortal when he was resurrected from the dead.

Y'shua first became the Son of YHWH the instant he became a human being. Although he was the first to become a Son of YHWH the Father, he will not be the last: "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order. Christ the first-fruits, Afterwards, they that are Christ's at his coming". (1 Cor 15:22-23)

4:3-4 Man shall not live by bread alone

"(3) And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, **command that these stones be made bread**. (4) But he answered and said, It is written, **Man shall not live by bread alone**, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God".

"(3) And the devil said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, **command this stone that it be made bread**. (4) And Jesus answered him, saying, It is written, That man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word of God. (Luke 4:3-4)

In the wilderness experience, we have recorded a trinity of tests which reveal the character and cunning of Satan; and the perfection of Messiah which qualify Him to die for the sins of His people.

The First Temptation

1) The proposition: Satan's first line of attack concerns hunger, which Y'shua experienced due to His forty-day fast:

2) The Premise: Satan's suggestion was based on several mistaken grounds or presumptions. Let's read between the lines to understand them. First, a Father who is good would not deprive one of His creatures. Doing without food cannot be the will of YHWH. Such was the insinuation in the temptation of the first Adam in the garden. "Surely a good God would not withhold such a good thing as this fruit", Satan suggested. Second, Satan supposes that men serve YHWH and submit to His will because YHWH bribes them to do so with material blessings. Remember Satan's statement to YHWH concerning Job: "Then Satan answered the Lord, 'Does Job fear God for nothing?'" (Job 1:9). Satan simply could not imagine Y'shua submitting to the will of the Father when it meant personal discomfort.

3) The potential outcome: Had Y'shua followed Satan's advice, several situations would have been inevitable. First of all, if personal pleasure comes before YHWH's will, Y'shua would never have gone to the crucifixion stake of Golgotha. If submission and obedience did not involve personal sacrifice, the atonement would never have been accomplished. Then, too, if physical needs have priority over spiritual necessities, then Y'shua would never have preached the Gospel. All His life would have been spent feeding the hungry and healing the sick. The only result of Y'shua's coming would have been some kind of 'great society' with

no salvation wrought for men. Also, Y'shua could never have spoken on the subject of discipleship and self-denial (as He so often did – Matt 10:31-39; Luke 9:23, 57-62) unless He Himself had experienced it.

4) The principles: Y'shua's response indicates several vital principles of godly service, as relevant for us today as they were 2,000 years ago. First of all, the physical hunger which Y'shua experienced was the will of YHWH for His life. The account of the temptation begins: "*Then Jesus was led up by the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted by the devil*" (Matt 4:1, Luke 4:1). Y'shua was Spirit-led to fast and hunger in the wilderness.

Second, obedience to the will of YHWH takes precedence to one's physical appetites. That is the implication of the statement, "*Man shall not live on bread alone, but on every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God*" (Matt 4:4). Physical appetites are good because they are God-given. Bread is important to physical life, but there is no real life apart from obedience to the revealed will of YHWH. Third, physical deprivation in the will of YHWH is not bad, but good; for it tests our faith and strengthens it. This is the force of the context of Y'shua's quotation in Deuteronomy chapter 8. Note the words, which immediately precede those, quoted by Y'shua to Satan:

(2) "And thou shalt remember all the way which the LORD thy God led thee these forty years in the wilderness, **to humble thee, and to prove thee, to know what was in thine heart, whether thou wouldest keep his commandments, or no.**

(3) And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; **that he might make thee** know that man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live". (Deut 8:2-3)

Israel hungered in the wilderness by the will of YHWH. Submission cannot be tested in abundance so much as in adversity. We do not test the obedience of our children by telling them to go to the ice cream store, but by telling them to go to the doctor for a shot. Israel's faith was strengthened as they learned to trust YHWH for their every need.

Likewise, Y'shua's hunger was a test of His submission to the Father's will. Just as YHWH provided sustenance for the Israelites in the wilderness, so He would do for His Son, in His own time. The Son would not act independently of the Father to provide food for Himself. After the test was completed, YHWH did supernaturally provide for this need (Matt 4:11).

Finally, the measure of a man is not to be found in the assertion of his rights, but in his submission to YHWH. One of the things which have always hindered Biblical belief is the false notion that devotion to YHWH is a womanly trait, and that real 'he men' don't go for the sissy stuff of submission to YHWH. That is one of Satan's lies. The measure of a man is his submission to YHWH. Satan suggested that Y'shua look out for Himself and act independently of the Father. To do that would have depreciated His manhood.

The first temptation denied YHWH's provision. YHWH had sustained Y'shua during His fast. To accept Satan's challenge would have been a confession that YHWH's provision was insufficient. Y'shua then responded with Scripture: "*Man shall not live by bread alone*" (Deut 8:3), referring to similar circumstances which prevailed when the people of Israel wandered through the desert relying upon YHWH to provide them with manna.

4:5 Setteth him on a pinnacle of the Temple

"*Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple*".

"*And he led Him to Jerusalem, and stood Him on the wing of the temple, and said to Him, If You are the Son of God, throw Yourself down from here*". (Luke 4:9)

Y'shua and the devil now stand on the *kanaf* (wing) of the Temple. "*Wing of the Temple*" more literally translates the more familiar term, "*pinnacle of the temple*". Christian legend locates the site of Y'shua's second temptation upon the so-called pinnacle of the Temple on the southeastern corner of Herod's retaining wall. Other scholars say it was on the southwestern corner of the retaining wall, as this was found to be the highest point following excavations which they did to the original base of the Western Wall in the Tyropeoen Valley.

These traditions are probably incorrect. In the minds of the Gospel writers, "*the wing of the Temple*" must have been more centrally located. Perhaps Y'shua was situated upon the height of the Sanctuary building shelf, which would have provided greater visibility. While no archaeological evidence has suggested the point, some identifiable part of the architecture may have depicted the wings of the Divine Presence

surrounding the Temple and protecting it. In all events, the visibility of the spot may have been greater if the temptation was staged in the Inner Sanctuary that towered above the city some 46 meters (about twelve stories high). Also, the Jewish people never really accepted the Herodian retaining wall as part of the Temple.

A Jewish Midrash (though of a later date) describes the activities of Messiah in the Temple. “Our teachers taught, at the time that King messiah would appear, **He will come and stand on the roof of the Temple. He will proclaim to Israel and will say, ‘The time of your redemption has arrived. If you do not believe - behold My light which shines upon you’**” (Pesikta Rabbati 36). If this tradition or a similar one was in place, it would clarify the place and the nature of Satan’s test. It suggests that the temptation really centered on the nature of the Messianic task. Satan was asking Y’shua to reveal Himself as the Messiah in supernatural power in the Temple where all would recognise the nature and purpose of His mission. Jerusalem is called the “*holy city*” which is a common Rabbinic term for the city (Babylonian Baba Kamma 97b, Sanhedrin 107b).

Interestingly, as Moses was given the design for the Tabernacle (which later became the Temple, and which Judaism teaches is a "representation" of YHWH's heavenly realm), Satan conversely took Y’shua up to the top of the Temple and offered Him "his" realm.

Other commentaries on “the wing of the temple”:

“From here James, the Lord’s brother, was thrown down thirty-eight years later and killed. **This wing was the watch-post, where the white-robed priests customarily called the people to the early worship and the priests to the morning sacrifice**, as the massive Temple gates swung open ere sunrise”. J.W. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), p. 77.

“It should be noted that the rabbis identified the person addressed by God in Psalm xci with the Messiah. The Midrash, known as Pesiqta Rabbati (162a), records a traditional belief that Messiah would manifest himself standing on the roof of the temple. The part of the temple indicated in the temptation narrative may have been the part overlooking the “Royal Colonnade”—which Josephus (*Antiquities*, xv. 11,5) describes as looking down a precipitous descent into the Kidron valley, the height being so great as to make the spectator dizzy”. Norval Geldenhuys, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1951), p. 162.

4:6-7 It is written again

“(6) And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: **for it is written**, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. (7) Jesus said unto him, **It is written again**, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”.

(9) “And he brought him to Jerusalem, and set him on a pinnacle of the temple, and said unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down from hence:

(10) **For it is written**, He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee:

(11) And in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone.

(12) And Jesus answering said unto him, It is said, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God”. (Luke 4:9-12)

The New American Standard Bible on verse 7: “Jesus said to him, **On the other hand, it is written**, ‘YOU SHALL NOT PUT THE LORD YOUR GOD TO THE TEST’”.

The deceiver now quotes Scripture, attempting to entice Y’shua into accepting the easy way to success.

The Second Temptation

1) The Proposition: Having failed in the first recorded effort, the devil moved to an alternate approach as seen in Matt 4:5-7).

2) The Premise: Satan’s presupposition in this challenge was that YHWH’s faithfulness is best demonstrated by the spectacular. In addition, there is the implicit assumption that one’s trustworthiness should be put to the test. If YHWH was the Father of Y’shua, let Him prove it; and in such an unusual way that no one could miss it.

This was a very subtle challenge, for Jerusalem was the sacred city, and the Temple was the center of Israel’s religious life. Furthermore, the Old Covenant prophecies anticipated Messiah’s public presentation at the Temple: “Behold, I am sending My messenger, and He will clear the way before Me. And the Lord whom you are seeking **shall suddenly come to His temple**, even the Angel of the Covenant, in whom you delight.

Behold, He comes, says Jehovah of Hosts" (Mal 3:1 LITV). Besides this, there are rabbinic traditions that Messiah would reveal Himself from the roof of the Temple as mentioned in the section above. As a rule, the Jews expected Messiah to be introduced with a blaze of glory, and a spectacular leap and miraculous deliverance would precisely fill the bill.

3) The Potential Outcome: The most distressing possibility had Y'shua failed this test is that the Jews would have immediately hailed Him as Messiah. What would have been tragic about such an occurrence is that the Kingdom would have been established on the wrong basis. The moral and spiritual foundations of the Kingdom would have been completely over-shadowed by the spectacular and material elements.

4) The Principles: There are two principles brought to light by the response of Y'shua to Satan's scheme. First, there was the principle of hermeneutics, or biblical interpretation. Satan said, "*it is written*". Y'shua responded, "*On the other hand* (literally, 'also'), *it is written...*" (Matt 4:7 NASB). Satan had used one passage, but he had ripped it out of context. Worse yet, he interpreted and applied it inconsistently with other Scriptures. G. Campbell Morgan rightly comments, "*No one statement wrested from its context is a sufficient warrant for actions that plainly controvert other commands. ... How excellent a thing it would be if the whole Church of Christ had learned that no law of life may be based upon an isolated text. ... Every false teacher who has divided the Church, has had, 'it is written' on which to hang his doctrine*". G. Campbell Morgan, *The Crises of the Christ* (Old Tappan, New Jersey, Fleming H. Revell Co., 1936), pp. 181-82. In other words, Scripture must be interpreted by Scripture.

Second, Y'shua would remind Satan and every Believer that testing is not trusting. The 91st Psalm, which Satan quoted from, speaks of the quiet confidence that the child of YHWH possesses. But divine protection does not encourage presumption. Y'shua's reply, again from the book of Deuteronomy, is that "*You shall not tempt the Lord your God*" (Deut 6:16).

The context of this quotation is the incident at Massah, where the Israelites demanded that YHWH provide water. Submission and demanding are at opposite ends of the spectrum. YHWH was challenged to vindicate Himself by acting in a specified way. This was putting YHWH to the test. We might say it was attempting to force YHWH's hand. Real faith and trust delights in YHWH's manifestation of Himself in the ordinary. It is not faith, but failure when we demand YHWH to prove Himself in the spectacular. Over and over in the life of Y'shua the Jews demanded a sign (e.g. John 6:30), but Y'shua continually refused such requests.

4:8-10 Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain

"(8) *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; (9) And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. (10) Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve*".

(5) "And the devil, taking him up into an high mountain, **shewed unto him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time.**

(6) And the devil said unto him, All this power will I give thee, and the glory of them: for that is delivered unto me; and to whomsoever I will I give it.

(7) If thou therefore wilt worship me, all shall be thine.

(8) And Jesus answered and said unto him, Get thee behind me, Satan: **for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve**". (Luke 4:5-8)

The third temptation involved the sovereignty of YHWH. The devil showed Y'shua the kingdoms of the world. He promised to place them under Y'shua's authority and give Him the glory of such power on the condition that Y'shua worshipped him.

According to Dan 7:13, only YHWH has the authority over His creation. He alone is the King of the universe, and the authority of Satan is limited (Job 1:9-12). According to the Jewish concept of YHWH's sovereignty, such a claim by Satan was based upon a false assumption. Satan cannot give what belongs to YHWH. Hence, the real nature of this test was to deny the Lordship of YHWH and to enter into idolatrous worship of the devil.

It may seem strange that Satan can tempt (or "bless") anyone, especially the Son of YHWH; but nonetheless he and his "angels" (fallen) are given that ability. Ultimately, even their actions serve the purpose of YHWH.

The Third Temptation

1) The Proposition: Having failed in his first two efforts, Satan makes one last attempt to divert Y'shua from His mission. Y'shua has so frustrated Satan that all masks and facades have been torn away. It is here that we see Satan at his worst.

2) The Premise: Satan had come to realise that Y'shua could not be deceived. Satan now puts aside the deception and lays all his cards on the table. In offering Y'shua the kingdoms of the world, Satan proposes to exchange that which was his most valued possession for that which he most diligently aspired, the worship of YHWH Himself. There are no refinement here, no deceptions, just a hard-nosed business proposal: Give up your kingdom for mine, the future for the present, with only the bow of the knee. Satan had desired to be "*like the most high*" (Isaiah 14:12-14), to exercise the prerogatives and privileges of YHWH. To receive homage from Messiah would be worth any price.

3) The Potential Outcome: To once bow the knee to Satan is to forever be in his service. Y'shua's kingdom would have been one of fallen men in rebellion against Himself. To serve Satan would have been YHWH in rebellion against Himself—something inconceivable.

4) The Principle: Before we deal with the principles of Scripture which Y'shua did employ, let me suggest another passage which makes Satan's proposal preposterous and ludicrous. It is a passage, which Y'shua may well have been meditating upon during the forty days in the wilderness. Psalm 2 was directly alluded to by the testimony of the Father at Y'shua's baptism. A look at the entire Psalm gives ample reason for Y'shua's rejection of Satan's scheme.

If you will look at this Psalm in your Bibles, you will see that the present state of the world is described. In verses 1-3, the nations are in an uproar, in open rebellion against YHWH and His Messiah. Such is the kingdom which Satan offers in exchange for Messiah's Kingdom. In verses 4-6, YHWH laughs at man's rebellion and promises to bring the world into subjection through His "anointed". In verses 7-9, Messiah speaks and promises to declare YHWH's decree to men because of His divine appointment. But note, especially, verse 8:

"Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession". (Psalm 2:8)

Think of it: YHWH invites His Messiah to ask of Him, and He will give the nations as an inheritance. Satan offered his broken-down kingdom; YHWH offers the nations. How hollow Satan's offer must have sounded in contrast to that of Psalm 2, a Psalm which must have been prominent in Y'shua's thinking!

One final comment about Psalm 2—look at verses 11 and 12:

(11) **"Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling."**

(12) **Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him".**

Verses 11-12 give the response appropriate to those in opposition to YHWH and His Messiah. Worship Him! Do homage to Him! Fear His anger! Serve Him! Think of it: Satan had the arrogance to request worship from Messiah, rather than to fall before Him.

Now the principles which Y'shua applies to this situation: The first principle is that YHWH alone is to be worshipped. Here is where Messianic faith departs from other "religions". Many world religions gladly add Y'shua to their host of deities, but YHWH demands exclusive obedience and worship. James Stewart puts it clearly: *"Very nobly the early Church followed its master there. It is an extraordinarily significant fact that of all the new religions that came pouring out of the East in the early centuries the religion of Jesus was the only one to arouse real persecution. When the religions of Osiris, Cybele, and other gods and goddesses came, Rome welcomed them all with open arms. But when the lonely God from Palestine came and the Nazarene's name was first heard on the imperial streets, Rome girded herself to fight him to the death. Why? It was because Osiris and the rest were content to live together and share the honors, but the young God with the nail prints in his hand would not live together or share the honors with any. From the day of Jesus' decision in the desert the demand of his religion was all or nothing"*. James S. Stewart, The Life and Teaching of Jesus Christ (Nashville: Abingdon, 1978), pp. 49-50. In His humanity, Y'shua could not submit to or worship any other than the Father.

The second principle is that worship necessitates service. Satan requested what appeared to be only a momentary act of worship, a mere bending of the knee. But such is never the case with true worship: *"You shall worship the Lord Your God, and serve Him only"* (Matt 4:10).

True worship involves service. Satan hoped Y'shua would underestimate the implications of bowing the knee in worship.

Overview of the temptations

Let's take a look at the temptation of Y'shua as a whole. Several striking features are apparent.

1) The temptation is not evil in and of itself. Y'shua was "Spirit-led" to be tempted. What Satan meant as a temptation, YHWH used as a test. The actual Greek word rendered "to tempt" or "to test" is actually the same. Only the context dictates whether the sense is a "test of character" or "a solicitation to sin (temptation)". What YHWH intends as a test, Satan may exploit as a temptation. But YHWH never tempts us to sin (James 1:13). While Satan seeks to cause the saint to fail, YHWH strives to bring about greater faith. Temptation is a part of YHWH's program in the life of the saint for his growth, and His glory.

- 2) The temptation of Y'shua proved Him qualified for His work on the crucifixion stake. Only a sinless, spotless "Lamb of God" could take upon Himself the sin of the world. Y'shua's sinlessness stood out when tempted by the master deceiver.
- 3) The temptation of Y'shua prepared Him to be a merciful High Priest: "*For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb 4:15).

Y'shua's temptation "in every point as we are" enables Him to be a sympathetic High Priest (cf. also Heb 2:17-18). While His temptation proved Him sinless, it also made Him sensitive to our weaknesses.

- 4) The temptation of Y'shua was a test of submission. Underlying the entire temptation was a solicitation to set aside submission to the Father and act independently of YHWH. This was the cause of Satan's fall. It is interesting to ponder the fact that Satan had no idea of the actual program YHWH had devised to bring about his destruction through the work of Messiah (Gen 3:15). If Satan would have ever realised that the crucifixion stake was his defeat, he would never have instigated the crucifixion through the instrumentality of Judas (John 13:2). Satan's strategy was to entice the Son to act independently of the Father. By undermining the submission of the Son to the Father, he could attain his own purposes just as he had done in the garden. YHWH's order of authority (chain of command) was man, woman, creature; the order of the fall was creature (serpent rebelling against creator), woman (acting independently of her husband), man. Satan always attempts to overturn YHWH's order. G. Campbell Morgan draws our attention from Deuteronomy to this same process of reversal in the sequence of temptation as compared with the Y'shua's replies:

"These answers of Jesus reveal the order of the attacks. First bread, then trust, and then worship. If the references in Deuteronomy are now observed, it will be discovered that they are quoted in opposite order to the way in which they occur in the book. In answer to the temptation concerning bread Christ uttered words to be found in Deuteronomy 8:3. In replying to the temptation directed against trust, His quotation was from Deuteronomy 6:16. While in replying to that in the realm of worship, the quotation is from Deuteronomy 6:13. In the law of God, the order is worship, trust, and bread. That order the devil inverted, and his temptations proceeded as to bread, trust, worship". G. Campbell Morgan, The Crises of the Christ, p. 201.

- 5) Because Y'shua could not sin, He bore the burden of the temptation to the full. When Adam was created, he was made **able not to sin**. When Y'shua, the last Adam, was begotten, He was **not able to sin**. Some have concluded that the perfection of Y'shua would diminish the victory of Y'shua over Satan; but, in fact, it intensified the victory:

"In this way the sinlessness of Jesus augments His capacity for sympathy: for in every case He felt the full force of temptation" (in loc.). And Westcott remarks at Hebrews ii. 18: *"Sympathy with the sinner in his trial does not depend on the experience of sin, but on the experience of the strength of the temptation to sin, which only the sinless can know in its full intensity. He who falls yields before the last strain."*

If we bear these considerations in mind, we shall realise that the Saviour experienced the violence of the attacks of temptation as no other human being ever did, because all others are sinful and therefore not able to remain standing until the temptations have exhausted all their terrible violence in assailing them".

It is written

These words refer to the *Tenach*: "*Tenach*", as previously stated, is an acronym formed from the first letters of the three parts of the Hebrew Bible:

Torah (meaning: instruction, revelation or teaching) The first five books of Moses - Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, Deuteronomy.

N'vei'im (prophets) Joshua, Judges, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel & the "minor prophets".

K'tuvim (writings) Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Solomon, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra, Chronicles, Nehemiah.

In Jewish studies, the entire *Tenach* is sometimes referred to as "*Torah*", as it is all YHWH's revelation. In the same sense, the entire Bible (with "New Testament") is "*Torah*".

It is interesting to note that Satan tempts Y'shua with three categories of sin mentioned in 1 John 2:15-17, and Y'shua quotes the *Torah* to resist Satan all three times: Deut 8:3; Deut 6:16; Deut 6:13.

(15) *"Love not the world, neither the things that are in the world. If any man love the world, the love of the Father is not in him."*

(16) *"For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world."*

(17) *"And the world passeth away, and the lust thereof: but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever".*
(1 John 2:15-17)

*"And he humbled thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna, which thou knewest not, neither did thy fathers know; that he might make thee know that **man doth not live by bread only, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of the LORD doth man live**". (Deut 8:3)*

"Ye shall not tempt the LORD your God, as ye tempted him in Massah". (Deut 6:16)

"Thou shalt fear the LORD thy God, and serve him, and shalt swear by his name". (Deut 6:13)

Satan is the inventor of the lie (John 8:44) and misuses Scripture (see Luke 4 verse 6 above). He was citing Psalm 91:11-12 out of context.

The baptism and temptations of Y'shua

The baptism of Y'shua HaMashiach is included in all four Gospels, while the temptation of Y'shua is omitted by John. Since John seeks to establish the deity of the Messiah (and YHWH cannot be tempted—James 1:13), it is unnecessary to his argument. Luke seeks to stress the humanity of Y'shua, and thus it is not difficult to comprehend his reasons for placing the genealogy of Y'shua (which traces His lineage back to Adam) between his account of Y'shua's baptism and temptation.

4:11 When the devil ended all the temptations, the angels came and ministered unto him

*"(11) Then **the devil leaveth him**, and, behold, **angels came and ministered unto him**".*

*"And he was there in the wilderness forty days, tempted of Satan; and was with the wild beasts; and **the angels ministered unto him**". (Mark 1:13)*

"And when the devil had ended all the temptation, he departed from him for a season". (Luke 4:13)

Another thing we should note in the temptations of Y'shua is that Y'shua plays a representative role in two ways. First, He plays a representative role with Israel. The aim here is to show that where Israel failed, Y'shua succeeds. Notice the similarities:

- 1) The mention of the Son of YHWH: In Exod 4:22-23 and Hos 11:1, Israel is called the Son of YHWH. Here Y'shua is called the Son of YHWH.
- 2) Both were tested in the wilderness: Israel was tested in the wilderness according to 1 Cor 10:1-13, and now Y'shua is being tested in the wilderness.
- 3) The figure 40: For Israel 40 years, for Y'shua 40 days.
- 4) The presence of the Holy Spirit: The Holy Spirit was present with Israel in the wilderness according to Isaiah 63:7-14. The presence of the Holy Spirit was made evident in the first verse of each of the Synoptic Gospels.
- 5) When Y'shua was with Satan, He quotes Scriptures and all the quotations are from the book of Deuteronomy.

Secondly, Y'shua plays a representative role of mankind. According to Heb 4:15, Y'shua was tempted in all points as we are; yet, without sin. This does not mean that He suffered every temptation that we do, anymore than we suffer every kind of temptation that He did. The word "points" simply means areas, and He suffered temptation in all areas that we do. According to 1 John 2:16 there are three areas of temptation:

- 1) The lust of the flesh;
- 2) The lust of the eyes; and
- 3) The pride of life.

When Y'shua was tempted to turn the stones into bread to satisfy His hunger, He was being tempted in the area of the lust of the flesh. When He was taken to the pinnacle of the Temple and asked to throw Himself down to prove that He was Messiah, this was a temptation in the area of pride of life. When He was shown visibly all the kingdoms of the world and offered authority over all of them, that was a temptation in the area of the lust of the eyes. Every temptation fits into one of these three categories.

4:12 John cast into prison and Y'shua departed to Galilee to preach

*"(12) Now when Jesus had heard that **John was cast into prison**, he departed into Galilee".*

*(14) "Now after that **John was put in prison**, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God,*

(15) And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel". (Mark 1:14-15)

*"Added yet this above all, that he **shut up John in prison**". (Luke 3:20)*

"And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about". (Luke 4:14)

After Yochanan was put in prison by Herod, Y'shua left for Galilee in the power of the Spirit.

Why was John shut up in prison? The answer is:

"But Herod the tetrarch, being reproved by him for Herodias his brother Philip's wife, and for all the evils which Herod had done". (Luke 3:19)

And from Mark:

- (17) **"For Herod himself had sent forth and laid hold upon John, and bound him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife: for he had married her."**
- (18) **For John had said unto Herod, It is not lawful for thee to have thy brother's wife.**
- (19) **Therefore Herodias had a quarrel against him, and would have killed him; but she could not:**
- (20) **For Herod feared John, knowing that he was a just man and an holy, and observed him; and when he heard him, he did many things, and heard him gladly".** (Mark 6:17-20)

Y'shua went to Nazareth to preach and was not accepted there; in fact, they wanted to kill him because he claimed to be the Messiah:

- (14) "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.
- (15) **And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.**
- (16) **And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.**
- (17) **And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,**
- (18) **The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,**
- (19) **To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.**
- (20) **And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.**
- (21) **And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.**
- (22) **And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?**
- (23) **And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.**
- (24) **And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.**
- (25) **But I tell you of a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;**
- (26) **But unto none of them was Elias sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.**
- (27) **And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.**
- (28) **And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,**
- (29) **And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.**
- (30) **But he passing through the midst of them went his way".** (Luke 4:15-30)

From there, Y'shua went to the Sea of Galilee, to the city of Capernaum.

4:13-16 Might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet

"(13) And leaving Nazareth, he came and dwelt in Capernaum, which is upon the sea coast, in the borders of Zabulon and Nephthalim: (14) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, (15) The land of Zabulon, and the land of Nephthalim, by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles; (16) The people which sat in darkness saw great light; and to them which sat in the region and shadow of death light is sprung up".

The fulfillment of Isaiah 9:1 and 2:

(1) "Nevertheless the dimness shall not be such as was in her vexation, when at the first he lightly afflicted **the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, and afterward did more grievously afflict her by the way of the sea, beyond Jordan, in Galilee of the nations.**

(2) **The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light: they that dwell in the land of the shadow of death, upon them hath the light shined".**

"(31) And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days". (Luke 4:31)

Capernaum, a city of Galilee

The location of Capernaum (or *Kfar Nahum* in Hebrew) is along the border of the territories of Zebulon and Naphtali on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Its location is four kilometers from the point where the Jordan River enters the Sea of Galilee and about 16 kilometers from present-day Tiberias.

The present name of the site, *Talhum* in Arabic or a.k.a. *Tell Hum*, seemingly arises from its name in medieval Jewish manuscripts: *Kefar Tanhum*, or simply *Tanhum*; for there is no real "tell" on the site (Loffreda and Tzaferis: 1993:292). One scholar proposed that the word "tell" may come from *teloneion*, the Greek word for "customs house"; while the *Hum* may be a remnant of the original Hebrew name of the town, *Kfar Nahum*.

The crest of a ridge of hills just to the west of the ancient town is the mountain of Capernaum (Matt 28:16, Mark 6:46), referred to the Byzantine pilgrim Egeria as *Eremos* (Pixner 1992:34). The town received no mention in the Old Covenant and it only appears in the New Covenant in the Gospel accounts. Matthew refers to Capernaum as *Y'shua's* "own city" (Matt 9:1).

Since Capernaum lay on the political border separating Herod Antipas' tetrarchy of Galilee from Gaulanitis, ruled by his brother Philip, it was the location of a customs house (Matt 9:9). There was also a small military garrison, quartered to the east of the Jewish town, under the command of a centurion—probably one of Herod Antipas' mercenaries (Matt 8:5-13; Luke 7:1-10). The garrison's quarters included a representative Roman bath with caladium, frigidarium, and tepidarium. Josephus recounts that he was brought to Capernaum, or Cephar nome, en route to his headquarters at Tarichea. This was after injuring his wrist when his horse fell into a quagmire in a battle near the Jordan River during the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70) with imperial Rome (Josephus life 72; Winston 1957:26). He also wrote of the springs of Heptapegon as the springs of Capharnaum (Josephus, Wars 3.10.8; Winston 1957:736).

The town proper, whose existence is from the Early Roman Period, lies in a very fertile area and it was a busy place. Located on the highway from the Mediterranean coast to Damascus, the *Via Maris* (Way by the Sea); merchants would bring silk and spices from Damascus and take back the dried fish and fruits of the plains of Gennessaret. Despite its relative prosperity (augmented by local fishing in the Sea of Galilee), the town was evidently quite small but large enough for a small synagogue. Its population was likely no more than 1,000 to 1,500 people. The town in *Y'shua's* day was a poor fishing village, extended along the actual lake shore only for a distance of about 490 meters. Apparently the Jewish inhabitants could not afford their own synagogue and they praised the Gentile Centurion, who held the Jewish people in high regard and seemingly sought to maintain good relations with the local townspeople for building it (Luke 7:5).

Y'shua made Capernaum (mentioned repeatedly in the Gospels) his dwelling place or headquarters after he abandoned Nazareth (Matt 4:13). He often returned to the town after preaching in the countryside along the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee—which he regarded as his home (Matt 9:1; Mark 2:1)—apparently as a guest of his disciple Peter and his wife. Paul attests to Peter still having a wife (a believing one at that) who accompanied him on his travels, ca. A.D. 55 (1 Cor 9:5). Presumably, Peter's mother-in-law also resided in the house (Mark 1:31). Peter and his brother Andrew, originally from Bethsaida (John 1:44), had settled in Capernaum (Mark 1:29).

Y'shua performed many miracles here (Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:34). From this town, he chose his first four disciples (Peter, Andrew and the two sons of Zebedee—James and John); and later he chose the publican Matthew (also known as Levi) as well (Matt 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27). The latter, who became the author of the first Gospel, worked at the customs house (Matt 9:9). The duties performed by publicans commonly included the levy and collection of duties or tolls from merchants traveling along the *Via Maris*, taxing fishermen on fish caught in the Sea of Galilee, and maintaining some semblance of public order (Pixner 1992:35). The Centurion, commander of the military garrison in service to Herod Antipas, sought *Y'shua's* help in the healing of his servant (Luke 7:1-10). *Y'shua* commends this Gentile officer for understanding that *Y'shua* could heal from far off and his physical presence in a ceremonially unclean Gentile compound was not necessary. This kept *Y'shua* from becoming ceremonially defiled according to the Mosiac Code (Law).

In later rabbinic texts, Pharisaic rabbis referred to Capernaum as a center of *minim*—a term usually applied to Judeo-Christians (Pritz 1992:102-103). These sources attest to a significant Judeo-Christian presence in Capernaum as early as the Second Century A.D. Other rabbinic sources from the 4th century contain polemics directed against the inhabitants of Capernaum as archetypal sinners (which, if they were Judeo-Christians, they certainly were from the Pharisaic point of view).

Capernaum appears to have largely escaped destruction during the First Jewish Revolt (A.D. 66-70); and by the 4th Century A.D. the town had increased in size, expanding towards the nearby hills. Despite the critical remarks of 4th Century rabbinic sources, the community's Jewish and Christian inhabitants appear to have coexisted rather peacefully. Presumably, most of its Jewish residents were not observant Jews and somewhat oblivious to the rhetoric of the emerging rabbinic Judaism of the Pharisees.

Whether or not the archaeologists have established sufficient evidence for the identification of Peter's house is an open question. Loffreda (Loffreda 1993) and Finegan (Finegan 1992) write as if this was a foregone conclusion. What is known is that Greco-Roman Christians, both clerics and laity, from about A.D. 325 understood the traditional site of the House of St. Peter as authentic. It is unknown how they arrived at this conclusion. There appears to be sufficient evidence (graffiti and the like) to conclude that it is more probable than not that this traditional site is the actual house of Peter.

The most impressive archaeological remains at Capernaum are those of the beautiful White Synagogue, now partially reconstructed and made of dressed stones. Many decorative fragments once ornamented its facade. Presumably, this was a traditional Jewish synagogue; probably dating from the late Third Century. Its identity as a traditional Jewish synagogue is evident.

Visible below certain sections of the walls of the White Synagogue are the remains of an earlier synagogue, built of basalt, dating to Y'shua's day; and presumably it is the one in which Y'shua taught (John 6). The elders of Capernaum in Y'shua's day referred to this earlier structure as having been built by the Roman centurion garrisoned there, whom they held in high esteem (Luke 7:3-5). It is doubtful whether a minor fishing village the size of Capernaum (where the inhabitants looked to a Gentile to build a synagogue for them) could support more than one. No other candidates have come to light.

Considering the available evidence, the small basalt synagogue is the one in which Y'shua spoke. This conclusion does not have a basis in science; however, it is a working hypothesis open to further investigation and scrutiny. The White Synagogue lies above only portions of the earlier basalt synagogue of Y'shua's day. In A.D. 69, the Romans destroyed this earlier basalt synagogue during the First Jewish Revolt.

4:17 The kingdom of heaven is at hand

"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand".

(14) Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching **the gospel of the kingdom of God**,

(15) And saying, The time is fulfilled, and **the kingdom of God is at hand**: repent ye, and believe the gospel". (Mark 1:14-15)

"(32) And **they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power**". (Luke 4:32)

As mentioned earlier, "the kingdom of heaven is at hand" should be translated, "the Kingdom is offered".

4:18-22 Y'shua's first disciples

"(18) And Jesus, **walking by the sea of Galilee**, saw two brethren, **Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother**, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. (19) And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. (20) And **they straightway left their nets, and followed him**. (21) And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, **James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father**, mending their nets; and he called them. (22) And **they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him**. (23) And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people".

(16) "Now as he walked **by the sea of Galilee**, he saw **Simon and Andrew his brother** casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers.

(17) And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men.

- (18) And straightway they forsook their nets, and followed him.
 (19) And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets.
 (20) And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him". (Mark 1:16-20)

The Gospel writer John gives us more insight on who some of these disciples were; they were, in fact, originally Yochanan the Immerser's disciples:

- (35) "Again the next day after John (the Immerser) stood, and two of his disciples;
 (36) And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he (Yochanan the Immerser) saith, Behold the Lamb of God!
 (37) And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus.
 (38) Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?
 (39) He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour.
 (40) One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.
 (41) He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ.
 (42) And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas (Peter), which is by interpretation, A stone.
 (43) The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip, and saith unto him, Follow me.
 (44) Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter.
 (45) Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.
 (46) And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.
 (47) Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!
 (48) Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.
 (49) Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.
 (50) Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.
 (51) And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man". (John 1:35-51)

"(38) Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou?" What we have here is the common way in which a person became a disciple of a Rabbi. They would normally follow him at a distance for some time until he acknowledged their presence by asking them, "Who do you seek?" Their response would be, "Rabbi, where do you live?"

"(39) He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour (16:00)". If the Rabbi rejected the potential disciple, he would say something to the effect, "It is none of your business". If he accepted them as a disciple, his response would be, "Come and see". Here, the Rabbi Y'shua accepts His first two disciples who were previously followers of Yochanan. This would also be a good time to bring out another point. The Hebrew word translated disciple is "talmid", which would be far better translated "student". It is an unfortunate fact that today we try to make disciples out of people who are not very good students. Discipleship, then and now, was not for everyone. It is from these disciples that produced the Rabbis, teachers and elders of the community. That is the way it should be now. Because we do not really understand the Biblical concept of discipleship, we can end up trying to put people in positions that cause only frustration for them because they are not called to it.

"(40) One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother". In New Covenant times, the priesthood was in turmoil. The majority of the priestly families had formed the Sadducean Party, denying the doctrine of the resurrection and joining the wicked dynasty of King Herod. Only a few, such as Zachariah, remained zealous for YHWH. Others left the Temple service entirely, withdrawing into the desert and joining the Essenes. This was probably the case of Yochanan the Immerser and the Gospel writer, Yochanan the Priest, a disciple of the Immerser.

The Biblical account here gives us the name of only one of the “*two disciples*” mentioned; namely, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. The other is left mysteriously anonymous; but with a little reading between the lines, we can assume that his identity is none other than *Yochanan* the Gospel writer, whom we could also call “*Yochanan the Priest*”. This is especially plausible, since it is clear that the writer of *Yochanan’s* Gospel is characteristically humble and prefers not to refer to himself by name. He prefers the classification, “*Dear Disciple*” or “*the disciple that Y’shua loved*”. Mystery, then, seems to be a key to understanding the priest known as *Yochanan*. In any case, the Gospel story makes it clear that this anonymous disciple of *Yochanan* the Immerser was a companion of Andrew and that both left the Immerser to follow *Y’shua*. Andrew, in turn, recruited Simon Peter who comes to the center stage in many of the subsequent Gospel stories. But, our anonymous disciple remains strangely in the shadows.

As the story of *Y’shua’s* life and ministry continues, *Yochanan* the Priest doesn’t appear as one of the main characters “on the scene”, such as the ever-present Peter. Again, we shouldn’t confuse him with *Yochanan*, son of Zebedee, who was a member of *Y’shua’s* inner circle. Perhaps this was simply an aspect of *Yochanan* the Priest’s humility. He was quite content to stand on the sidelines as an intense observer, filtering out each event of *Y’shua’s* ministry through his own priestly perspective.

But, there is possibly another reason for *Y’shua’s* affection for the “*Dear Disciple*”; namely, the simple fact that *Yochanan* the Gospel writer was indeed a priest. As mentioned earlier, most of the priests were members of the wealthy and influential party of the Sadducees. To have such a person as a disciple would have been a great honour for *Y’shua*, giving His movement more credibility with the people. Moreover, if he had been an Essene, he would have been a seeker after YHWH and had the kind of spiritual walk that *Y’shua* offered.

“(46) *And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see*”. What was a Nazarene? A Nazarene was someone who was despised and rejected. Nathaniel’s question reflects the negative viewpoint people had for Nazarenes. People who were from Nazareth were people who were despised and rejected.

“(47) *Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!* (48) *Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.* (49) *Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel*”. When *Y’shua* sees Nathaniel coming, curiously He calls him an “*Israelite in whom is no guile*”. When Nathaniel hears this, he asks, “How do you know me?” *Y’shua’s* answer is a strange one: “Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you”. What is going on here? In this story, there are several items of interest from a Jewish perspective. Nathaniel believed because *Y’shua* previously saw him under a fig tree meditating. He is now about to tell him other things to let Nathaniel know this is no ordinary Man he is dealing with. It is recorded in Jewish literature that one of the best places to meditate is under a fig tree. One example is Midrash Rabba 62:2, where it tells of Rabbi Akiba and his disciples being accustomed to sitting under a fig tree to study.

It wasn’t that he was merely sitting under a fig tree, but that Nathaniel was meditating upon Scripture. What impressed him about *Y’shua* is not only that he saw him under a fig tree (a supernatural deed), but that *Y’shua* also knew what Scripture he was meditating on. Jacob was an Israelite in the Old Covenant in whom there was much guile, and was even famous for much guile. Jacob was also the first person to be called Israel. By calling him an Israelite and using the term “*guile*”, *Y’shua* was connecting Nathaniel with Jacob. Nathaniel recognised this because he happened to be meditating upon a special portion of Genesis, which talked about Jacob.

“(50) *Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.* (51) *And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man*”. *Y’shua* gives Nathaniel another clue to further let him know that *Y’shua* was actually reading his mind from a distance, a supernatural deed. The specific Scripture Nathaniel was meditating on was Genesis 28. In that Scripture, Jacob is forced to flee from the home of his father because of his guile. While he is spending the night in Bethel (his first stop), he has a dream. In this dream, he sees angels ascending and descending on a ladder from Heaven. So, *Y’shua* knew what was in the mind of Nathaniel. It is this recognition on the part of Nathaniel that causes his response, “*You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!!*”

James the son of Zebedee and John his brother

Their position among the Twelve *talmidim* (apostles):

Yaakov (James) and *Yochanan* (John the Priest), along with *Kefa* (Peter), constituted the Master's inner three—being permitted to see and hear things that others did not. Perhaps these three men were destined to be leaders of the early church that Y'shua showed them:-

His greatness in raising the dead (Mark 5:37).

His glory on the Mount of transfiguration (Mark 9:2).

His grief in the garden of *GatSh'manim* (Gethsemane) (Mark 14:32).

Quick review of the names of the twelve *talmidim* (apostles):

Shimon Kefa - Simon Peter

Andrew

***Yaakov Ben Zavdai* - James son of Zebedee**

***Yochanan* - John his brother**

Philip

Bartalmay – Bartholomew

T'oma – Thomas

Mattityahu - Matthew the tax collector

Yaakov bar Halfai - James son of Alphaeus

Taddai – Thaddaeus

Shimon Zealot - Simon the Cananite

Yhudah K'riot - Judas Iscariot

It is interesting to note that there is very little information for so prominent an apostle. *Yaakov*'s name, when mentioned, was nearly always mentioned before *Yochanan* (John). This probably indicates his seniority; and John MacArthur suggested that *Yaakov* may have been the leader of this rather dynamic pair.

Their family:

Yaakov was called *Ben Zavdai* (son of Zebedee) and the brother of *Yochanan*. His father, *Zavdai*, was a fisherman who owned several boats on the Sea of Galilee and had hired servants in his business (Mark 1:19-20). Some infer additional evidence of their wealth from the fact that *Yochanan* was "known to the high priest" (John 18:15). Perhaps the family owned property in *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem) and or had business connections there. The family also had business associations with *Shimon Kefa* (Simon Peter) (Luke 5:9-10). His mother, *Shalome*, may have been a sister of the mother of Y'shua (Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25).

The call:

Yaakov seems not to have been with *Kefa* (Peter, Rock) and Andrew in their pilgrimage to Judea, where they heard of the "Lamb of God" and received their first call to discipleship (John 1:35-51). Perhaps *Yochanan* was the other disciple of *Yochanan* the Immerser who was with Andrew (v 40). If so, *Yaakov* probably stayed home to tend the business; and upon their return to *Galil* (Galilee), the recounting of the events of Judea may have left a deep impression upon *Yaakov*. At any rate, he was well-prepared for the call later at the Sea of Galil (Luke 5:2-11).

Notice how the brothers, in obedience, left everything and followed Messiah Y'shua (Matt 4:22). Rather than catching fish, the Y'shua wanted the sons of *Zavdai* to become fishers of men.

Yaakov's personality:

His title.

Adonai Y'shua called *Yaakov* and John "Boanerges", which means "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). The title described their zeal, passion, ambition and aggressiveness.

His vengeful zeal (Luke 9:51-56):

Not long after the Transfiguration, and towards the close of His Galilean ministry, Y'shua was leading His disciples through *Shomrom* (Samaria) towards *Yerushalayim*. Messiah Y'shua sent *Yaakov* and *Yochanan* to find group lodging for the night. When they were not welcome, *Yaakov* and *Yochanan* used the precedence of Elijah (2 Kings 1:10); asking permission from the Master to send fire down from Heaven to destroy the *Shomronim* (Samaritans). Here, we see *Yaakov*'s impure zeal was mixed with fumes of pride and anger. More noteworthy is the Master's response (v 56). Y'shua reinforced His teaching with His example. He moved on to more receptive soil.

Yaakov's perception on this issue changed as he was being trained and molded by the Master. Y'shua commanded His *Talmidim* (disciples) to witness unto all men (Acts 1:8), including areas in *Shomrom*. Scholars believed that *Yaakov* likely made trips into the same region and preached the Word.

His excessive ambition (Matt 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45):

In this incident, we notice the self-seeking attitude of both Yaakov and Yochanan. Messiah Y'shua directed His reply to the brothers, rather than their mother, as He knew that they were behind the request. They were ambitious and wanted to rise to the position of great privilege in the Kingdom. Y'shua taught them the great lesson on humility (Matt 20:25-28).

His early martyrdom (Acts 12:1-2):

Yaakov suffered martyrdom about a decade after Pentecost. Why Yaakov? It seemed that Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great (who ruled at the birth of Y'shua) wished to increase his popularity with the Jews and thus stabilise his political position. Yaakov was the obvious choice, probably because as "son of thunder" he was a fiery, effective and prominent leader. His zeal marked him for an early arrest and his aggressiveness may have made him a target.

5. His transformation inferred:

Yaakov's perception on the earlier issues, such as destroying the *Shomronim* and occupying the position of importance, has certainly changed. We have seen the former, and in the latter we read of his willingness to drink of the Master's cup as being the first apostle to die for the Master.

4:23 Preaching the good news of the Kingdom

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, **teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people**".

(14) "Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, **preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God**,

(21) *And they went into Capernaum; and straightway on the sabbath day he entered into the synagogue, and taught*. (Mark 1:14 and 21)

(16) "And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, **as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read**". (Luke 4:16)

(18) *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised*. (Luke 4:18)

(31) *And came down to Capernaum, a city of Galilee, and taught them on the sabbath days*.

(32) *And they were astonished at his doctrine: for his word was with power*. (Luke 4:31-32)

Y'shua's religious attendance

Every year Y'shua's family went up to Jerusalem to celebrate Passover (*Pesach*) (Luke 2:41-43), a tradition which Y'shua continued (John 12:12; Mark 14:12-26). Y'shua also kept Tabernacles (*Succoth*, 'booths') (John 7:1-39). John 10:22-23 may also indicate that Y'shua celebrated the *Hanukkah* festival, which commemorated the 2nd century B.C. rededication of the Temple under the Maccabees.

"As was his custom" he also attended *synagogue* every Sabbath (Luke 4:16) even during his travelling ministry (Matt 4:23; 9:35; Mark 1:39; Luke 4:15, 16-27, 44).

The synagogue

When the institution of the *synagogue* (assembly) began to emerge, the Temple in Jerusalem was still standing. The first roles of the *synagogue* were not associated with prayer, but rather with **Jewish study and gathering**. The first rabbis were not celebrants of religious rites but teachers of religious texts; in fact, the word *rabbi* means "my teacher".

Following the destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70, the *synagogue* assumed an additional role as the place of communal prayer. No distinct architectural forms for *synagogue* buildings became standard, but the interior design came to include features still found today: a lectern for the leader of the service, a "Holy Ark" in which the *Torah* scrolls are kept, and seating arranged facing Jerusalem in honour of the centrality of the site of the former Temple.

As the liturgy evolved and became formalised, expertise in recitation was needed as it was memorized prior to the development of the wide-scale production of books. The knowledgeable person leading the congregation in prayer was considered its representative – in Hebrew, *sh'lach tzibbur*. Initially filled by an ordinary lay person with greater knowledge, the role developed over time into a profession called the cantor or *chazzan*.

In the *Mishnah*, the leader is called "one who descends before the chest". (The Ark in which *Torah* scrolls are kept today) in the ancient synagogue was not built into the wall of the synagogue, but consisted of a portable chest containing the *Sefer Torah*.) Other terms found in the sources are *sheliah tzibbur* ("messenger of the congregation"), abbreviated to *shatz* (hence the Jewish surname Schatz) and *hazan* (originally meaning "overseer"), the name most frequently used. (The Jewish surname Chazan, in various spellings, is derived from this term.)

The *hazan* was not a special functionary. Any member of the congregation was qualified to lead the congregation in prayer. But in the course of time, specially qualified persons were favoured to act as *hazanim*. The term "cantor", adopted by Western Jews in modern times, is not found in the traditional sources.

The synagogue, together with the Temple, is the most important institution in Judaism.

Similarities and customs in the synagogues and early church

We know from early sources that there were between 394 and 480 *synagogues* in Jerusalem during the First Century; one being located within the precincts of the Temple itself. (*Jerusalem Talmud*, Meg. 3:1; Ket. 105a; Sot. 7:8; Yoma 7:1 (London: Soncino Press, 1948)). This is undoubtedly why the early pattern of the Church had its origins in the Jewish *synagogue*. Note the following similarities between the ancient synagogue and the early Church:

The principle leader of a *synagogue* was the *nasi* or president. In the Messianic congregation, the leaders were still called *president* rather than pastor as late as A.D. 150 by such non-Jewish writers as Justin Martyr (Alexander Roberts, ed., *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, Vol. I (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans Publishing Company), p.186.)

In the *synagogue* structure, three of these leaders would join together to form a tribunal for judging cases concerning money, theft, immorality, admission of proselytes, laying on of hands, and a host of other things mentioned in the *Sanhedrin* section of the *Mishnah*.

These men were known as the "rulers of the *synagogue*" because they took on the chief care of things, a title mentioned several times in the teachings of *Y'shua* (Mark 5:3 and Luke 8:41). This practice was still in use among the Gentile congregations at Corinth under the apostleship of Paul, where he spoke of the court within the congregation (1 Cor 6:1-2).

The *nasi* was the administrator of the *synagogue*, and we know that James, the half-brother of *Y'shua*, was the *nasi* of the early Church at Jerusalem. Early documents, such as the *Didache*, suggest that the churches in Asia Minor and Greece treated the Church at Jerusalem with much the same authority as the *synagogues* did the *Sanhedrin*. (Roswell Hitchcock, ed., *Didache* 8, (Willits, CA: Eastern Orthodox Publishers, 1989), chapters 11-15) and (Issac Boyle, trans., *Eusebius' Ecclesiastical History* 3.25.4 (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1974)).

There was also a public minister of the *synagogue* called a *chazen* who prayed, preached behind a wooden pulpit, and took care of the general oversight of the reading of the Law and other congregational duties. He did not read the Law himself; but stood by the one who did, ensuring that it was done properly. He selected seven readers each week who were well-educated in the Hebrew Scriptures. The group consisted of one priest, one Levite, and five regular Israelites (Luke 4:16). The terms "overseer of the congregation", "angel of the church", and "minister of the *synagogue*" all referred to this position. (John Lightfoot, "Commentary on the New Covenant from the Talmud and Hebraica", Vol. II., Rev. 3:1, 7, 14 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1979), pp. 89-99)

There were also three men known as *almoners* or *parnasin* who cared for the poor, distributed alms, and were expected to be scholars of the Scriptures. Since they were also known as *gabbay tzedikah*, it may be from this function that we get the modern term, *deacon*. Some scholars hold that it was from these seven: the president, the ruler, the overseer, the *chazen*, and the three *parnas*; that the idea of selecting "seven good men of honest report, full of the Holy Ghost and wisdom" came about (Acts 6:3). These men were appointed over the business affairs of the Church, so the apostles would not have to be distracted from their study of the Scriptures and prayer.

In Jewish literature the question is asked, "Who is a scholar worthy of being appointed Parnas?" The answer is, "He who is asked about a law from any source, and is able to give an answer". (Rabbi Isidore Epstein, ed., *Soncino Talmud*, Shab. 114a (London: Soncino Press, 1948)). In modern times, the Jews use this term to refer to a lay person, who is also called an elder.

Another function in the ancient *synagogue* was the *shaliach*, or announcer. From this position we get the term *apostle*, meaning one who is sent forth to announce the Gospel—a role equivalent to that of our modern missionaries. There was also the *maggid*, a migratory evangelist of the First Century who spoke to various congregations; and the *batlanim*, a scholarly teacher who was either independently wealthy or on some kind of support so he would be available to provide the congregation with accurate academics and answers. There had to be at least ten *batlanim* in every congregation of one hundred and twenty members. There was even a tradition that a *synagogue* service could not commence without ten men present. (Lightfoot, op.cit., p.89) Y'shua may have been referring to this tradition when He said, "Where two or three are gathered in My name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt 18:20).

Next, there was the *zakin*, a word meaning "old"—more in the sense of maturity than age. This person provided counsel to the people and was similar to a modern-day pastor or elder. In Judaism, those who had reached the age of forty were considered to have attained understanding; and those who were over fifty were considered worthy to counsel the younger people (Philip Blackman, ed., Mishnah, 1 Pet. 5:5; I Tim. 5:1; Avot 5:21 (New York: Judaica Press, 1983)). The *rabbi* was a prophet after the manner of the post-exilic prophets of Judaism. **He carried the responsibility of reading and preaching the Word and exhorting and edifying the people** (1 Cor 14:3). Y'shua carried this role out in the *synagogue*:

- (14) "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.
- (15) And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.
- (16) And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.
- (17) And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,
- (18) The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
- (19) To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
- (20) And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.
- (21) And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.
- (22) And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:14-22)

There was also the interpreter, known as the *meturganim*. This was a person skilled in languages who stood by the one reading the Law or teaching in a *Bet Midrash* (a house of study) to interpret into the *lingua franca* of that day the Hebrew that was being spoken. The use of an interpreter goes back to the time of Ezra, when the interpreter was said to have "added the meaning". The *Talmud* gives many details of the interpreter's duties in the *synagogue*. (Rabbi Isidore Epstein, ed., Soncino Talmud, Meg. 4; Maimon.Tephillah, 12; Massecheth Soph. 10 (London: Soncino Press, 1948).)

It is from this concept that we understand Y'shua's words, "What you hear in the ear, preach upon the housetops" (Matt 10:27). This phrase was easily understood by those who were familiar with the system of study in the *Bet Midrash*, where the teacher would literally speak the message in the interpreter's ear, who would then shout it out to others, both inside the classroom and out.

Terms for *synagogue*

Synagogue: (Middle English, from Old French sinagoge, from Late Latin *synagoga*, from Greek *sunagoge*, assembly, *synagoge*, from *sunagein*, to bring together : sun-, *syn-* + *agein*, to lead).

In Sephardi the *synagogue* is called: *Esnoga*.

In Yiddish the *synagogue* is called: *Shul*.

In Ukrainian the *synagogue* is called: *kloyz*.

In Polish the *synagogue* is called: *shtibl*.

In Judea and Babylon the *synagogue* was called: *Bet HaKnesset*.

In Ezek 11:16 it is called: a "Little Sanctuary".

In the Greek versions of the Apocrypha they reference "proseuche" or "House of Prayer".

The “Gospel”

Good news, as most are familiar with, is the "Gospel". Christianity generally teaches the "Gospel" as; *the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah*. But how can Y'shua preach this if He is still alive? The apostles, likewise, preached the same while Y'shua was alive. Also, Heb 4:2-6 says that the Gospel was preached to the Israelites, some 1,300 years before Y'shua's time. How can this be?

The explanation is in the Matthew verse itself: the Gospel has to do with the restoration of the lost sheep of the House of Israel as will be seen in its fullness in the Millennium.

Y'shua the Healer came into this physically, mentally and spiritually sick world. His divine commission is specified in Luke's Gospel: "(18) *The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to:*

Preach the gospel to the poor;
He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted,
to preach deliverance to the captives,
and recovering of sight to the blind,
to set at liberty them that are bruised,
To preach the acceptable year of the Lord". (Luke 4:18-19)

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people". (Matt 4:23)

Physical health is a priceless commodity, which increases in value the older one gets. When one's health is gone, it seems that there is nothing we can do to bring it back. But the Saviour healed every kind of physical ailment. When he had passed through a village or town, he left behind a perfectly healthy population: no lepers, no cripples, no cancer patients, no deaf and dumb mutes and no one possessed by evil spirits. It is quite impossible to imagine the sense of joy and exultation that followed in the wake of the Saviour's tour. In the annals of human history, there has never been anything like it. Had he visited mankind in this century, he would have been mobbed by millions simply for his ability to heal. But if you go back and study his 'terms of reference' (listed above) you will see that Y'shua the Messiah didn't just come to heal the body. After all, everyone he healed died some years later. Their healing was simply a low-level lesson of the real healing he had in mind. Remember his mission was to:

Preach the gospel to the poor,
Heal the broken hearted,
Deliver the captives of sin (House of Israel),
Open the eyes of the spiritually blind,
Set at liberty those who had been battered and bruised by Satan,
And announce the acceptable year of YHWH: the day of Salvation!

With that spiritual commission in mind, let us now consider the process of physical healing and what it really represents.

4:24 All Syria

"And his fame went throughout **all Syria**: and they brought unto him **all sick people** that were taken with **divers diseases** and **torments**, and those which were **possessed with devils**, and those which were **lunatick**, and those that had the **palsy**; and he healed them".

(23) "And there was **in their synagogue a man with an unclean spirit**; and he cried out,
(24) Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art, the Holy One of God.
(25) And **Jesus rebuked him**, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him.
(26) And when the unclean spirit had torn him, and cried with a loud voice, he came out of him.
(27) And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the **unclean spirits**, and they do obey him.
(28) And **immediately his fame spread abroad throughout all the region round about Galilee**". (Mark 1:23-28)

(33) "And **in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil**, and cried out with a loud voice,
(34) Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with thee, thou Jesus of Nazareth? art thou come to destroy us? I know thee who thou art; the Holy One of God.

(35) And **Jesus rebuked him**, saying, Hold thy peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not.

(36) And they were all amazed, and spake among themselves, saying, What a word is this! for with authority and power he commandeth the unclean spirits, and they come out.

(37) And **the fame of him went out into every place of the country round about**. (Luke 4:33-37)

"All Syria" is possibly a mistranslation in the Greek texts, as the DuTillet Hebrew Matthew has instead, "the people" (which has a similar spelling to "Syria" and makes more sense).

In other words, Y'shua's fame spread abroad throughout all "the people" round about Galilee where He ministered and healed people.

Y'shua left the synagogue and went to Simon's house

Matthew mentions nothing about this. Mark says that after Y'shua preached in the synagogue, he went to Simon and Andrew's house and healed Simon's wife's mother. After that, for the rest of the day till sunset, Y'shua healed many people of different kinds of diseases.

(29) "And forthwith, **when they were come out of the synagogue, they entered into the house of Simon and Andrew, with James and John.**

(30) But **Simon's wife's mother lay sick of a fever**, and anon they tell him of her.

(31) **And he came and took her by the hand, and lifted her up; and immediately the fever left her**, and she ministered unto them.

(32) And at even, when the sun did set, they brought unto him **all that were diseased**, and **them that were possessed with devils**.

(33) And **all the city was gathered together at the door**.

(34) **And he healed many that were sick of divers diseases**, and **cast out many devils**; and suffered not the devils to speak, because they knew him". (Mark 1:29-34)

It is interesting to note that Y'shua did not allow the demons to speak when they were driven out because they knew Y'shua. Luke gives the same account:

(38) "And **he arose out of the synagogue**, and entered into **Simon's house**. And **Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever**; and they besought him for her.

(39) **And he stood over her, and rebuked the fever; and it left her**: and immediately she arose and ministered unto them.

(40) Now when the sun was setting, **all they that had any sick with divers diseases** brought them unto him; and he laid his hands on every one of them, and healed them.

(41) **And devils also came out of many, crying out, and saying, Thou art Christ the Son of God.** And he rebuking them suffered them not to speak: for they knew that he was Christ". (Luke 4:38-41)

Y'shua rose early to pray, as was his habit, and healed more people during the day

(35) "And in **the morning, rising up a great while before day**, he went out, and departed **into a solitary place**, and **there prayed**.

(36) And Simon and they that were with him followed after him.

(37) And when they had found him, they said unto him, All men seek for thee.

(38) And he said unto them, Let us go into the next towns, that I may preach there also: for therefore came I forth.

(39) And **he preached in their synagogues throughout all Galilee**, and cast out devils.

(40) And there came a leper to him, beseeching him, and kneeling down to him, and saying unto him, If thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.

(41) And Jesus, moved with compassion, put forth his hand, and touched him, and saith unto him, I will; be thou clean.

(42) And as soon as he had spoken, immediately the leprosy departed from him, and he was cleansed.

(43) And he straitly charged him, and forthwith sent him away;

(44) And saith unto him, See thou say nothing to any man: but go thy way, **shew thyself to the priest**, and **offer or thy cleansing those things which Moses commanded**, for a testimony unto them.

(45) But he went out, and began to publish it much, and to blaze abroad the matter, insomuch that **Jesus could no more openly enter into the city**, but was without in desert places: and they came to him from every quarter" (Mark 1:35-45)

(42) "And **when it was day**, he departed and went into a desert place: and the people sought him, and came unto him, and stayed him, that he should not depart from them.

(43) And he said unto them, I must preach the kingdom of God to other cities also: for therefore am I sent.

(44) And **he preached in the synagogues of Galilee**". (Luke 4:42-44)

Y'shua's habit was to pray before the sun came up in a solitary place. Later the day He healed a leper.

Here in Mark 1:43, we witness once again Y'shua adhering to the Law of Moses. After healing him He told the person to show himself to the priest. Why? Because Y'shua complied with **Positive Law 77: Lev 14:10 - On offering brought by a leper after being cleansed**:

(1) "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,

(2) **This shall be the law of the leper in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest:**

(3) And the priest shall go forth out of the camp; and the priest shall look, and, behold, if the plague of leprosy be healed in the leper;

(4) Then shall the priest command to take for him that is to be cleansed two birds alive and clean, and cedar wood, and scarlet, and hyssop:

(5) And the priest shall command that one of the birds be killed in an earthen vessel over running water:

(6) As for the living bird, he shall take it, and the cedar wood, and the scarlet, and the hyssop, and shall dip them and the living bird in the blood of the bird that was killed over the running water:

(7) And he shall sprinkle upon him that is to be cleansed from the leprosy seven times, and shall pronounce him clean, and shall let the living bird loose into the open field". (Lev 14:1-7 read to verse 57)

Other laws a leper had to adhere to:

Positive Law 110: Lev 14:2 – On the specified procedure of cleansing from leprosy

Positive Law 111: Lev 14:9 – On that a leper must shave his head

Positive Law 112: Lev 13:45 – On that the leper must be made easily distinguishable

The Miracle at Cana: changing water into “wine” (The wedding is the fifth of the Jewish Lifecycle customs)

(1) **"And the third day there was a marriage in Cana of Galilee; and the mother of Jesus was there:**

(2) **And both Jesus was called, and his disciples, to the marriage.**

(3) **And when they wanted wine, the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine". (John 2:1)**

We start with Y'shua's first "semeion" sign. A "sign" is a miracle that has special significance that points us to Y'shua. This miracle takes place less than a week after leaving Yochanan by the Jordan, after Y'shua called His first disciples. It takes place in Kanah, the hometown of Nathan'el, some 8 to 10 kilometres north of Nazareth. Y'shua, His family and His disciples are all invited to the wedding.

Since Bible times, the various holidays and rites of passage throughout life have provided particular opportunities for Jewish people to celebrate. The "Song of Songs" is an example of a passion-filled poem that openly celebrates the sensual purity of marital love.

The third day of the week is Tuesday on the Jewish calendar and is still the preferred day for weddings in Israel. That's because on the original third day, YHWH pronounced things "good" twice; the only time He did so in the seven days of Creation. Therefore, the third day is known as a day of double blessing, the best day of the week to begin a new life.

Now marriage was and is still very important among the Jewish people. Not only is marriage the basis of a good family and a healthy society, but it's also a reminder of Israel's close relationship to YHWH. YHWH is the Groom and Israel is the Bride. And it is a sign of the Messianic times, when the voice of the bride and the bridegroom will be heard throughout the streets of Israel. When King Messiah returns bringing restoration, peace and joy to Israel and the nations when YHWH is reunited with man in eternal intimacy, it will be like a giant and joyous wedding celebration.

Remember that Yochanan the Immerser, that great prophet and forerunner of the Messiah, lived a very strict life. He was a Nazarite, especially devoted YHWH's service. He didn't drink wine or any liquor made from grapes. In addition, he lived in the wilderness clothed in a "tallit" (camel's hair garments), and eating a diet of grasshoppers and honey.

Y'shua the Messiah (possibly also a Nazarite) has compassion with humanity. He is sharing our joys and sorrows, interacting in family life and social occasions. You see, He is concerned about all aspects of human

life—not just the political or "spiritual" problems. He cares about individuals, families, social events, and marriages.

At this point, they are in the Galilee and they come to a wedding. The marriage took place in the bridegroom's family's home, while the guests celebrate for a period of seven days. The marriage was consummated in the bedroom. This is the origin of the "*Chuppah*", the bridal chamber. That's one of the reasons that Jewish people are married under the "*Chuppah*".

In this segment, we have the first of *Yochanan*'s seven signs. Remember, *Yochanan* has seven signs, seven discourses, seven "*I Am's*". With this segment, we also conclude the first full week of *Y'shua*'s public ministry.

From an eschatological point of view:

The wedding took place on the third day – prophetically that the Messiah that will marry his bride also on the "third day", the "third thousandth year" since *Y'shua*'s first coming that is now in the dawn of the third Millennium (The third day of creation is known as a day of double blessing, the best day of the week to begin a new life.).

The normal duration of the wedding feast is seven days, referring to our seven-year stay in heaven. The couple consummates their marriage in a "*chuppah*" at the bridegroom's father's house – the Bride and the Messiah will consummate their marriage in their heavenly "*chuppah*", at Messiah's Father's house – the New Jerusalem City.

"And the mother of Jesus was there: And both Jesus was called". Inviting a rabbi would be very common, especially if he was a friend of the family, which seems to be true in this case. But a problem develops at this wedding: the "wine" ran out. "Wine" was and is an important item at a Jewish wedding celebration. The worst thing that could happen to a Jewish wedding is to run out of "wine". The "wine" running out would diminish the joy of the celebration and be an embarrassment to the family.

As said, at these weddings the feast would last for seven days. There were occasions where, because of the seven-day feast, they did not plan for enough "wine". Furthermore, the Jews weren't stupid; and they had a way of knowing when to serve the expensive "wine" and when to serve the cheap "wine". They would serve the good "wine" first, and after the people had a few drinks, it didn't matter what came next. Then they would serve the cheap "wine".

When the wine ran out, "*the mother of Jesus saith unto him, They have no wine*". *Miriam* knew about the problem, and looked to her eldest son *Y'shua* to help with the problem. This indicates that her husband Joseph probably died already. *Miriam* had confidence in *Y'shua*, her eldest son, and asked for His help.

I don't think that she was expecting *Y'shua* to do a miracle, since a miracle-working prophet hadn't done miracles in hundreds of years, and *Y'shua* had never performed one. I think *Miriam* knew that if there was a problem, *Y'shua*, her eldest son, could be counted on to help take care of things. And so she said to Him, "*They have no wine*".

"Jesus saith unto her, *Woman*, what have I to do with thee? mine hour is not yet come". (John 2:4)

And *Y'shua* said to her, "*Woman*". It wasn't an insulting way of talking to His mother. It was a polite form of address. He used it again when He spoke to His mother from the Crucifixion stake - "*Woman, behold your son*".

He asked her, woman, what does that have to do with us? What business of that is ours? Why should I intervene? I need to concentrate on other things, not helping out with our family problems like I have in the past. My hour has not yet come.

"My hour has not yet come". This is a Jewish term referring to an appointed time when something was to be done (Mishnah Eduyoth 1:1). Most of the time when this term is used, it is a reference to His death. But here, it is a reference to His public miracles. While His public ministry has begun, this is not the time for His public miracles. This is to happen in Jerusalem, the capital of the nation, at the Feast of Passover.

Y'shua's response to this request for help indicates some change in the relationship between Him and *Miriam*. He is no longer under her parental authority in the same way He was earlier. By this one statement, *Y'shua* conveys to His mother that she no longer has any authority over Him. Not only is He a fully mature man, but He had just been immersed by *Yochanan* the Immerser when the Spirit of YHWH descended and

remained on Y'shua, anointing Him as YHWH's *Mashiach*. Miriam must learn about her Son in a new way, as Israel's Messiah who is now concerned about His Father's business.

"His mother saith unto the servants, Whatsoever he saith unto you, do it". (John 2:5)

But despite Y'shua's initial response, *Miriam* was confident that He would act. In spite of Y'shua's initial coolness toward her request, she persevered. She still had confidence that Y'shua would help and take appropriate action.

He will perform a miracle, just not in public yet. It will be performed in such a way that only a few know about it: the servants, His mother and His disciples. The Bible doesn't go into detail, but this house and family must have been very familiar to Y'shua and His mother. Perhaps *Miriam* was even helping with the wedding arrangements. In any case, she doesn't hesitate in giving orders to the servants.

"And there were set there six waterpots of stone, after the manner of the purifying of the Jews, containing two or three firkins apiece". (John 2:6)

Stone jars which held water was used only for ceremonial washing, a symbolic act of cleansing from sin; not for cleaning off the dust of the road or other dirt. They were placed at the door so a person would not enter a friend's house in a ceremonially "unclean" state and contaminate the house. By dipping their fingers into the water and wiping them dry, a person would symbolically "wash away their sins" and be ceremonially clean. When we say, "I'm washing my hands of this matter", we really mean we're trying to absolve ourselves of any responsibility for it.

Now there were six stone waterpots/jars set there, containing seventy six or hundred and fourteen liters each: so we're talking about 570 to 680 litres of water. The *Talmud* also has lots of rules about washing hands before you eat and cleaning vessels. Water pots of stone were in common use, and Mishnah *Yadaim* 1:2 says, "*From all kinds of vessels may they pour water on their hands, even from vessels of cow dung or vessels of stone and earth*". Religious Jews to this day still observe ceremonial washings before they eat.

(7) *Jesus saith unto them, Fill the waterpots with water. And they filled them up to the brim.*
(8) *And he saith unto them, Draw out now, and bear unto the governor of the feast. And they bare it.*
(9) *When the ruler of the feast had tasted the water that was made wine, and knew not whence it was: (but the servants which drew the water knew;) the governor of the feast called the bridegroom,*
(10) *And saith unto him, Every man at the beginning doth set forth good wine; and when men have well drunk, then that which is worse: but thou hast kept the good wine until now.*
(11) ***This beginning of miracles did Jesus in Cana of Galilee, and manifested forth his glory; and his disciples believed on him".*** (John 2:7-11)

So, this is Y'shua's first "sign". Y'shua performed the beginning of His signs in *Kanah* of Galilee and manifested His glory, and His disciples believed in Him. He miraculously rescued this newlywed Jewish couple from a social disaster, showing that He is the Lord over nature and able to turn water into "wine".

This first "sign" produced confidence and growing trust in Y'shua among His disciples. *Yochanan* tells us that they saw a glimpse of His glory: the honour and power that are part of who Y'shua really is (the Lord of Glory); but that glory was hidden for the most part when He was on Earth. This great miracle revealed to the disciples who Y'shua was. It revealed His power. No one can change water into wine. That's humanly impossible even with modern scientific technology. But Y'shua did. Y'shua did because he is YHWH in the flesh.

This "wine" is even superior to the "wine" served in the earlier part of the feast, and now the groom is commended for going contrary to custom in serving the better wine last, rather than first.

We are clearly told that this is Y'shua's first miracle. This one statement falsifies many of the other books that were written in the Second Century or so that talked about the early childhood of Y'shua and records Him doing many miracles as a small child and boy

Miracles of Y'shua - What Are They?

A miracle of Y'shua would be defined by the Merriam Webster dictionary as "*an extraordinary event manifesting divine intervention in human affairs, or as an extremely outstanding or unusual event, thing, or accomplishment*". According to the Biblical Studies Foundation, a miracle "*is an unusual and significant*

event (*terasa*) which requires the working of a supernatural agent (*dunamis*) and is performed for the purpose of authenticating the message or the messenger (*semeion*).

While there are many explanations for what a miracle is, we can probably all agree that the word "miracle" describes an event that occurs outside the bounds of natural law—and which is beneficial in its result. During His three-year public ministry (as we will see further in this study), Y'shua performed miracles that demonstrated His ability to heal, to master the elements, to affect the outcome of our endeavors, and even to raise the dead. Every one of His miracles occurred outside the bounds of natural law—and all of them had a beneficial result.

Was His first miracle - wine or grape juice?

The obvious answer to the question, "Did Y'shua turn water into wine?" is yes. At the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee recorded in John 2:1-11, Y'shua turned water into wine. However, this question does not usually ask what is meant by it. What is usually meant is, "Did Y'shua make intoxicating wine?" And the answer is no.

The word translated "wine" in English (in Koine Greek) can refer to either alcoholic or non-alcoholic wine. At present, the term "wine" is almost used exclusively of alcoholic wine, but let us never be guilty of interpretation based solely upon modern-day definitions. Consider these examples of the word "wine" being used in Scripture with reference to unfermented grape juice.

Joel 1:10 says: "*The field is wasted, the land mourneth; for the corn is wasted: the new wine is dried up, the oil languisheth.*" (This refers to grapes dried up in the fields, which could not be intoxicating.)

Isaiah 65:8 says: "*Thus saith the LORD, As the new wine is found in the cluster, and one saith, Destroy it not; for a blessing is in it: so will I do for my servants' sakes, that I may not destroy them all.*" (Alcoholic wine in the cluster? No, the juice of the grape while in the cluster could not be intoxicating.)

Jeremiah 48:33 says: "*And joy and gladness is taken from the plentiful field, and from the land of Moab; and I have caused wine to fail from the winepresses: none shall tread with shouting; their shouting shall be no shouting.*" (The wine of fresh squeezed grapes coming out of the winepress is grape juice and could not be fermented.)

Certainly other passages could be considered, but these are sufficient to illustrate that the word "wine" can refer to alcoholic wine or simply grape juice.

"So, how do we know when it refers to grape juice or intoxicating wine?" The context in which the word is found will determine whether it refers to alcoholic or non-alcoholic wine. So, consider the context.

The immediate context of John 2:1-11 is quite clear. The guests at the marriage feast of Cana were able to discern between the quality of the drink that Y'shua had made and that which had already been served. If intoxicating wine had been served, and people "*well drunk*" or "*drunk freely*" (American Standard Version, 1901) of it (verse 10), then they would not have had such keen discernment.

Though the amount is not specified as to what they had previously drunk, if they consumed the six waterpots that Y'shua had the servants fill with water and which contained "*two or three firkins apiece*" (verse 6), then they would have consumed somewhere between 570 to 680 litres of booze! This is far more than enough to make the most casual drinker drunk.

Those who twist this account to condone social drinking say the term "*well drunk*" refers to the idea that the crowd was so drunk that they could not rightly discern. However, the point of "*the governor of the feast*" to the bridegroom is that the guests were able to discern between the "*worse*" and the "*good wine*". If it is the case that these wedding guests were so drunk that they could not rightly discern, then Y'shua made the six pots of alcoholic beverage for those who were already strongly under the influence and caused them to be even more drunk! Thus, the "*good wine*" of the wedding feast of Canaan must have been the fresh juice of the grape.

Also, consider the logical consequence of those who want to use this passage to justify the consumption of alcoholic beverages. Their argument goes something like this: "Since Y'shua produced alcoholic wine, then it is morally right for a person to drink it". However, notice that their logic takes them further than most of them want to go. Since Y'shua produced alcoholic wine (as they claim), then not only would it be morally right to drink it; it would also be morally right to produce it, sell it, distribute it, and make a living from it. But since that would most certainly cause someone to stumble, then it must be morally right to cause someone to stumble. However, the logical consequence of their argument would oppose Y'shua's teaching (Luke 17:1-2). No, this reasoning is a foolish argument that has no foundation in Scripture.

Further, consider the general context of the Bible. Habakkuk wrote, "*Woe unto him that giveth his neighbour drink, that putteth thy bottle to him, and makest him drunken also, that thou mayest look on their nakedness!*" (2:15). The sin Habakkuk is rebuking is the sin of contributing to drunkenness. If Y'shua supplied intoxicating wine to the wedding guests at Cana, then He contributed to their intoxication. Not only did Y'shua contribute to it, He also condoned and encouraged people to get completely soused! Since intoxication is sinful, then Y'shua sinned and the "woe" of Habakkuk would be upon Him. If this be the case, then it would be better for Y'shua "*that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and he cast into the sea*" (Luke 17:2). As a perfect man, Y'shua could not have turned water into alcoholic wine and offer such to others.

Another passage to consider in this context is Proverbs 23:31-32 which says, "*Look not thou upon the wine when it is red, when it giveth his colour in the cup, when it moveth itself aright. At the last it biteth like a serpent, and stingeth like an adder*". If Y'shua had turned water into intoxicating wine, then He would have caused others to look upon the wine when it is red, opposing the wisdom of Solomon. Since, Y'shua is "*greater than Solomon*" (Matt 12:42), He would know the wisdom of sobriety and would not tempt others with an intoxicating beverage. Again, Solomon wrote, "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*" (Prov 20:1).

"What, then, was the miracle of the wedding feast in Cana?" The miracle of Cana was that Y'shua surpassed or transcended the normal amount of time and the natural process that it takes to produce and harvest grape juice. That which normally takes months, took Y'shua but a moment. Augustine wrote, "*For he on that marriage-day made wine in the six jars which he ordered to be filled with water he who now makes it every year in the vines; for, as what the servants had poured into the water-jars was turned into wine by the power of the Lord, so, also, that which the clouds pour forth is turned into wine by the power of the self-same Lord*". (As quoted in "Bible Wines" by William Patton, page 91.)

"How could this be? Did they have any methods of preservation of grape juice in the First Century?" Yes. In fact, they had several methods. In the book, "Bible Wines", the author, William Patton, discusses four methods that the ancients used for the preservation of grape juice. One such method is to keep air completely excluded—a method often used today. R. C. Foster in his book, "Studies in the Life of Christ", said, "*A Greek wine ship of the second century B.C. found by divers off the southern coast of France several years ago contained a great number of wine flasks that had been sealed so tight that after more than 2,000 years the sea water had not seeped into them*".

With close examination, we must conclude that Y'shua did not make intoxicating wine at the marriage feast in Cana of Galilee. "Did Y'shua turn water into wine?" Yes. "Did Y'shua turn water into intoxicating wine?" Absolutely Not!

Alcohol has caused and/or contributed to broken homes, every kind of accident imaginable, disease both physical and mental, poverty and crimes of every kind. Since its effect is such, it is beyond my own imagination why anyone would ever want to justify its use let alone mar Y'shua's perfect example with its production and distribution. Its use is not social in any way but is in every way antisocial. Its defense by sweet-talking, soft-pedaling, so-called preachers is religiously hypocritical, morally irresponsible, and socially despicable. It has victimised the unborn, children, teenagers, the middle aged, and the old. It has victimised business people and labourers, country folks and city folks, the rich and the poor. There is probably not one person who has not felt its evil bite and its viperous sting!

It is beyond my reasoning power to understand how people, who claim to be spiritually minded and morally upright, will rationalise its use. Blood has filled our streets because of this vile beverage. Graves have filled our hills and vales because of this evil drink. Reproach has filled our nation because of this wicked intoxicant. Corruption has filled our society because of this corrupted liquor. Shame and disgrace has filled our homes because of this malicious booze. Rather than justifying its use, let us stand diametrically opposed to it for "*Wine is a mocker, strong drink is raging: and whosoever is deceived thereby is not wise*".

Beloved friend, it is not a sin to have a glass of wine (Psalms 104:5, Judges 9:13), but do not get drunk, smile

Additional information concerning grape juice

Grape juice was a common drink of the time: when available, it was drunk fresh, and it was also evaporated of water into "must", a thick paste of the consistency of toothpaste, which was kept in wineskins and reconstituted as required with the addition of water. This did not ferment during the time it was being thus

kept, and when reconstituted was in fact more resistant to fermentation than if it had not undergone this process.

If produced with cold water (especially from a spring or well or deep pool) it made a very refreshing drink. Now, undoubtedly, alcoholic wine was produced from grapes. But one did not always and exclusively want to drink wine when one was thirsty and desired a cool drink, and this reconstituted grape juice was one option available in the Middle East in biblical times. It is believed that there are still places in the Middle East where this practice of making "must" and reconstituting it into grape juice has continued into modern times.

There is frequently a tacit assumption when some commentators approach John 2 that "good wine" must be "alcoholic wine" because "unfermented grape juice" could not possibly be accorded that description. This is, I submit, a biased and subjective an assumption.

"Drunk" is the verb *MEQUW* and it means intoxicated.

We have now moved the discussion to the exact area of meaning of another Greek word. I certainly acknowledge that *MEQUW* can mean to be or become intoxicated. But my understanding is that it can also mean to have drunk well of any liquid, quite without reference to the consequences, if any; and without necessarily implying that what you are drinking has to be alcoholic and intoxicating.

The mystical side of the first miracle

Yochanan was a mystic. His Gospel is highly symbolic in the way it presents facts about Y'shua and His ministry. He made no attempt to portray events in their chronological order. He chose only 7 miracles, followed by 7 discourses and 7 "I am" statements:

I am the Bread of Life ... 6:35,
I am the Light of the World ... 8:12,
I am the Gate ... 10:7,
I am the Good Shepherd ... 10:11,
I am the Resurrection and the Life ... 11:25,
I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life ... 14:6, and
I am the Vine ... 15:1.

His entire Gospel covers only about 21 days out of 3½ years, devotes 10 chapters to just one week and nearly $\frac{1}{3}$ (237) of the 879 verses of *Yochanan's* Gospel describe just one day. The richness of *Yochanan's* symbolism makes his Gospel a favourite among those who view Scripture from a high level of inspiration, and his story of the wedding at Cana is the crowning touch. Let's look at it through *Yochanan's* eyes.

Y'shua commanded unnamed servants to completely fill 6 (the number of man) jars that were stone, cold, and empty (a model of unregenerate hearts—Ezek 36:25-27) with water. In John 16:5-14, the Holy Spirit is described as One who would not speak of himself, but only of Y'shua. In fact, the only name by which we know the Holy Spirit is actually His job description—Comforter (KJV) or Counsellor (NIV). This title is derived from the Greek word *parakletos*, which can also be translated intercessor or advocate. These servants are a model of the Holy Spirit, Who accomplishes the work of regeneration in our hearts (Titus 3:4-7), filling us with Living Water (John 7:37-39).

The water, normally used for ceremonial cleansing, immediately turned to wine and so that which had temporarily cleansed a person from sin now became symbolic of the Blood of Y'shua that washes us clean forever (Luke 22:20). The master of the banquet remarked that the bridegroom had saved the best till last, signifying that the New Covenant that permanently cleanses us (represented by the wine) is far superior to the Old Covenant that only temporarily set aside our sins (represented by the water). Thus by this miracle, Y'shua truly did reveal His Glory; and you can see why the disciples put their faith in Him.

Y'shua returned to Capernaum

After this Jewish wedding, Y'shua remained in the Galilee. Verse 12 says, "**After this he went down to Capernaum, he, and his mother, and his brethren, and his disciples: and they continued there not many days**". He went down to *K'far Nachum* (the Village of Nachum, Capernaum). *K'far Nachum* was the hometown of Matthew, Simon and Andrew, and possibly *Yochanan* and *Ya'akov* (James and John – see Mark 2:15 and Matt 8:14). It's on the north shore of the Kinneret - the Sea of Galilee; which of course, is really a lake. This town becomes the headquarters for Y'shua and the disciples.

No particular reason is given in the Bible for this trip. Perhaps it is to visit friends or relatives; perhaps it is an exploratory trip, since Capernaum would later become His headquarters. What is noticeable here is that He is traveling with His family. This would soon not be the case, as many believe that a rift develops between Y'shua and His family, probably over His Messianic claims.

That brings us to our second adventure with Y'shua. It is the account of those events that took place as when Y'shua was at Jerusalem celebrating His first Passover after being anointed by YHWH with the Spirit. In Kanah, Y'shua showed kindness to a family in need. In Jerusalem, Y'shua will show another side of Himself to a different group of Jewish people. He will deal with them in a very different way. Let's look at verse 13:

Y'shua clears the Temple In Jerusalem

"And the Jews' passover was at hand, and Jesus went up to Jerusalem". (John 2:13)

He comes to Jerusalem at the Passover, and this is the first of four Passovers that will be mentioned in His ministry. It is by the mention of these four Passovers that we are able to date His public ministry as lasting approximately 3 ½ years.

Going up to Jerusalem to observe the Passover was not new to Y'shua. He had done it yearly with His family. But this year, having been immersed by Yochanan, and anointed with the Spirit of YHWH, it will be different.

Let me ask you another question: what is every Jewish family supposed to do before they celebrate Passover? Cleanse their homes of leaven - which is a symbol of sin, right? Well, the most important home in Israel was YHWH's House - the Temple; and so Y'shua, the rightful Son over YHWH's House, will cleanse YHWH's House and remove those things which keep people from the worship of YHWH.

The prophet Malachi warned us that this is what the true Messiah would do. **"Behold, I (Adonai - the Lord) am going to send My messenger (John the Baptist), and he will clear the way before Me. And the Lord (Ha Adon – the Messiah), whom you seek, will suddenly come to His Temple; and the Messenger of the Covenant, in whom you delight, behold, He is coming", says the Lord of hosts".** (Mal 3:1)

YHWH speaking through the prophet Malachi, forewarned us that He would send the Messiah, who is the Lord and YHWH's Messenger; the Messenger who brings the New Covenant. He would suddenly come to His Temple, His Holy House in Jerusalem, and the first thing He would do is cleanse it thoroughly.

(2) **"But who may abide the day of his coming? and who shall stand when he appeareth? for he is like a refiner's fire, and like fullers' soap:**

(3) **And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness".** (Mal 3:2-3)

The Messiah would start with the leaders of the Temple: the Priests and the Levites, cleansing them like gold and silver are purified by the refining fires, purifying them like dirty clothes are cleansed by strong laundry detergent.

(14) **"And found in the temple those that sold oxen and sheep and doves, and the changers of money sitting:**

(15) **And when he had made a scourge of small cords, he drove them all out of the temple, and the sheep, and the oxen; and poured out the changers' money, and overthrew the tables;**

(16) **And said unto them that sold doves, Take these things hence; make not my Father's house an house of merchandise".** (John 2:14-16)

The cleansing of the Temple by Y'shua is steeped in Jewish background. Rabbinic sources tell us that this was a business venture of selling animals in the Temple area. The Pharisees called it "the bazaar of the sons of Annas". This was the name used because the family of Annas, which were Sadducees, controlled the entire business venture in the Temple. Rabbi Shaul of Jerusalem said, "Annas was the High priest, his sons were the treasurers, and his sons-in-law were the assistant treasurers". Josephus tells us that the sons of Annas were the holders of money, very rich and despoiling the common priests by open violence.

It is thought by some scholars that Y'shua's action of cleansing the Temple of the moneychangers was aimed at the early Shammaite view adhered to by the Zealot priests who refused many of the offerings of

the Gentiles to the Temple. We know from Josephus that by the year A.D. 66 the Zealots refused all gifts of the Gentiles to the Temple. According to Mishnah Shekalim 1:5, only sacrifices which could be vowed or brought as free-will offerings were accepted from Gentiles, giving the priests the option of accepting gifts from non-Jews for Temple repairs or upkeep (Arakhim 6a, Maimonides Matnot Arayim 8:8).

The Shammiaite priest's ruling on vows would enable the Zealot priests to refuse and even pocket the money, since these offerings were not specifically marked for sacrifice. The Gentiles offered many gifts. This was evident from Josephus (Wars 5:17), who records that the altar was "*universally venerated by Greeks and barbarians*". We see how this would have angered Y'shua (Matt 21:12, 13; Mark 11:15-17), since it was the priest's job to accept all gifts and forward them for the intended purpose (Shekalim 6:5, 6). It was at the moneychanger's tables that the Zealot priests would have diverted the Gentile offerings. We can see this more in what Y'shua said to the moneychangers as He quoted them Isaiah 56:7 and Jer 7:11. The Damascus Document gives more evidence of why those like the Essenes disliked the Temple in Jerusalem when it talks about "not defiling themselves by laying on hands which had been vowed or devoted to YHWH or on the property of the Temple".

According to the Mosaic Law, you had to come to the Temple and bring a sacrifice. This sacrifice had to be without spot or blemish. It was the job of the ones who were in charge of the Temple to inspect the sacrifice to see if it was without spot or blemish. There was an inspection fee for having your animal checked and the money went into the pockets of Annas the High Priest. Invariably, if you did bring your own sacrifice, somehow they managed to find something wrong with it. So, if your sacrifice was disqualified, you had two options. First, if you lived in Jerusalem, you could go home and get another one. But, if you lived in the Galilee, a three-day journey from Jerusalem, this was impossible. So you had to resort to the second option. This second option was rather convenient, because over in the corner of the Temple compound was a whole bunch of sheep that already had the Sadducees "Good Housekeeping Seal of Approval". They had already been inspected and certified to be without spot or blemish. All you needed to do was buy one. But, these sheep were sold at high-inflated prices, and the money also went into the pockets of Annas. Also, it was not unusual for an animal that was previously disqualified to end up among these after the previous owner had left. Amazingly, the spot or blemish had disappeared.

"*And his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal of thine house hath eaten me up*". (John 2:14-17)

This is a quotation from Psalm 69:9, a Messianic Psalm. The Hebrew translation is more graphic: "*The zeal for Your house will cause My destruction*". This will be literally fulfilled because of what Y'shua does here and again about three years later. The whole group of Sadducees will be against Him and they will seek His death because of what He did in the Temple compound. **It is important to emphasise here that it was a very small group of the Jews (Sadducees mostly) that caused His death. The bulk of the Jewish populace actually accepted Him as the Messiah, as we shall see later on.**

- (18) Then answered the Jews and said unto him, **What sign shewest thou unto us**, seeing that thou doest these things?
- (19) Jesus answered and said unto them, **Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.**
- (20) Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days?
- (21) But he spake of the temple of his body.
- (22) When therefore he was risen from the dead, his disciples remembered that he had said this unto them; and they believed the scripture, and the word which Jesus had said". (John 2:18-22)

At this point the Sadducees demand a sign and He gives them a rather cryptic one. They understand Him to mean that he is threatening the physical Temple. The Temple He is speaking of, of course, is the Temple of His body. We are told that later the Jewish populace did the same thing. Three years before the destruction of the Temple in 70 A.D., Josephus tells us that the populace of Jerusalem swept into the Temple compound, overthrew the tables, and chased the animals out of the compound.

The Temple was being commercialised. Instead of being a place of worship, contemplation, mediation, with everything focusing on a holy YHWH and the way of atonement He provided through the sacrificial system, the priests who were in charge of the Temple had allowed it to become more like a Middle Eastern Shuk - a loud, noisy, crowded Bazaar where profit was the most important thing.

In fact, both the Jewish historian Josephus and the Rabbis both mention the greed, wastefulness and luxurious lifestyles of the Priests who were in charge of the Temple at this period of time. "The bazaar of the

sons of Chanan" is mentioned in early rabbinic writings as being greedy and corrupt, where extra profits were made off the worship of YHWH, driving up the prices of sacrifices.

Now, sacrifices needed to be offered. Jewish pilgrims didn't bring lambs, goats, bulls or pigeons from Rome or Babylon or cities that were far from Jerusalem. They needed to buy kosher animals at Jerusalem. And, those who lived outside Israel brought their own foreign currencies which were converted by the moneychangers into money that was usable at the Temple, so that the Temple tax could be paid in the proper coinage.

But, these sons of Levi had allowed the commercial aspect of the Temple to crowd out other things, preventing people from thinking rightly about YHWH. They had made the Temple a house of merchandise instead of the only true house of worship on the entire planet.

And so, Y'shua cleansed the Temple, using a whip, because of His great concern; His tremendous zeal and fiery concern about everything that will keep men from YHWH. He is not a Messiah who is a pacifist or a wimp. He will take drastic actions if necessary on behalf of YHWH's House as Y'shua's disciples later remembered; especially as they read Psalm 69:9, "*Zeal for Your House has consumed me*", which they applied to the Messiah.

In His holy zeal, Y'shua cleansed the Temple at the beginning of His service to YHWH and at the end of His ministry. And, Y'shua will do this everywhere He desires to come into. Don't be surprised if we allow the Temple of YHWH's Spirit to get crowded out by other things—the Son of YHWH will take His whip to our lives to drive out all those things that will distract us from serving YHWH—which is our true life.

This cleansing of the Temple by the young carpenter from Nazareth at Passover, when it was crowded by hundreds of thousands of Jewish people from all over the world, did not sit well with the Jewish leaders. It challenged their authority, it made them look bad and it cut into their profits. A confrontation resulted.

The Jewish leaders said to Him, "What sign do You show us as your authority for doing these things?" "Yeshua, who do you think you are? We are the *Coheneem* - the Priests and the religious leaders of Israel. You are challenging our system and the chain of command. What right do you have to do that? Do something: give us some evidence that you have authority to challenge us. Do you possibly think that you are greater than us?"

Y'shua answered them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up". I won't do a miracle on command to prove Myself to a group of faithless people who are hostile to Me. The only sign for you, to prove to you that I do indeed have greater authority than you, is the miracle of My death and resurrection, which I already know is coming. But these Jewish leaders didn't understand what Yeshua had said to them.

The Jewish leaders then said, "It took forty-six years to build this Temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" If the literal sense makes sense, seek no other sense. But if the literal sense doesn't make sense, then seek a non-literal sense, a symbolic meaning. Did it make sense that Y'shua would rebuild the Temple in three days? No - not really. Not at that time. And so Yochanan clarifies things: "*But He was speaking of the temple of His body*". He was predicting His death and His resurrection victory over death.

So when He was raised from the dead, His disciples remembered that He said this; and they believed the Scripture and the word which Y'shua had spoken. In retrospect, Y'shua's powerful statement to these Jewish leaders created belief: faith in the words of Y'shua and in the Scriptures, both of which foretold His death. Y'shua's death and His resurrection remains the great sign and proof of Y'shua's authority, that He acted with YHWH's blessing and approval and authority in all that He did and said. His resurrection proves that He was superior to all the Jewish leaders in Israel, since the Son of the House is greater than the employees who merely work at the House.

This confrontation at Passover sets the tone for Y'shua's relationship with the religious leaders that will culminate in His death at another Passover three or four years later. The religious leaders will look for ways to discredit and challenge the authority of Y'shua. And, this statement would remain misunderstood and remembered for three or four years and used against Him at His trial, which took place close by (see Matt 26:61).

Let's conclude with the reaction of other Jewish people who were in Jerusalem during this special Passover, starting with verse 23: "(23) Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, **many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did.** (24) But Jesus did not commit himself

unto them, because he knew all men, (25) And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man". (John 2:23-25)

Word had been going around Jerusalem (which meant most of the Jewish nation that was gathered there) that *Y'shua* of Nazareth, the son of *Miriam* and *Yoseph*, had been doing miracles there. This was very exciting, since a prophet who did miracles hadn't come to Israel in hundreds of years. *Yochanan* tells us that many "believed in His name". These miracles produced some belief; but it was only partial faith and not full confidence. Belief in *Y'shua* or His miracles isn't enough.

"Believe" means more than mere mental affirmation. It means following, obeying, becoming a persecuted disciple, and sticking with *Y'shua* to the bitter end.

Still in Jerusalem: during the Passover Feast *Y'shua* teaches *Nakdimon* (Nicodemus)

(23) *"Now when he was in Jerusalem at the passover, in the feast day, many believed in his name, when they saw the miracles which he did."*

(24) *But Jesus did not commit himself unto them, because he knew all men,*

(25) *And needed not that any should testify of man: for he knew what was in man". (John 2:23-25)*

It is at this point that His miracles become public. They are for the purpose of authenticating His person and His message. What is His person? He is the Messiah. What is His message? He is offering to Israel the Kingdom of YHWH spoken of by the Old Covenant prophets. These miracles serve as signs for the nation of Israel to come to a decision regarding His claims.

"There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:" (John 3:1)

One who has observed His miracles and is impressed by them is a man by the name of Nicodemus. The first thing to notice about Nicodemus is that he is a Pharisee. What is about to happen will challenge one of the fundamental points of doctrine for the Pharisees. *"All of Israel has a share in the world to come (Olam HaBah)".* If you were born a Jew, that is sufficient for entrance into the Kingdom (*Malkut Shammayim*). Another quotation from Pharisaic sources reads, *"Abraham sits at the gates of Gehenna to snatch any Israelite consigned thereto"*. If inadvertently some Jew was consigned to hell, not to worry—Abraham sits at the gates of Gehenna to prevent him from going in. This teaching by the Pharisees will be contradicted by *Y'shua* to "the Teacher of Israel" this night. To be born a Jew (to be born physically) was spoken of figuratively in rabbinic writings, to be born of water. To be born of water was a figure of speech for physical birth. Baptism is not at all being spoken of here. The church has taken this section for a teaching on baptism, which is totally wrong.

"The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him". (John 3:2)

Many Pharisees served YHWH faithfully in genuine devotion. It must not be viewed as a summary of the entire movement in places where the Gospels charge the Pharisees with hypocrisy. (See section, "James the Brother of *Y'shua*" under "Matt 13:53-54: And when he was come into his own country".) Later, when Christianity left Judaism and became a Gentile religion, the word "Pharisee" became a negative term to those who did not realise both the good and the bad. In fact, *Y'shua*, believing the entire Bible, would have aligned Himself with this group more than any other of His day. Like the fundamental groups that are most critical of each other, so *Y'shua* pointed out the errors of His own group.

Nicodemus is also mentioned in rabbinic literature (Taan. 19b, 20h, 21c) as *Nakdimon Ben Bonai*.

Nicodemus is the Greek rendering of the name. According to the *Talmud*, he was one of three wealthy Jews of Jerusalem who helped accumulate stores for the siege by the Romans in A.D. 70 (Git. 56a). We know by this information four basic things about him.

He was one of the wealthier men in Jerusalem.

His real name was not Nicodemus, but Bonai.

After he became a believer in *Y'shua*, he and his family somehow lost their wealth. Rabbinic source Sanhedrin 43:1, using an altered name the Rabbis gave him, says Bonai was a disciple of *Y'shua*. And last, he made his living by digging wells around Jerusalem.

(3) *"Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.*

(4) *Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?*

- (5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.
- (6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.
- (7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye **must be born again**.
- (8) The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.
- (9) Nicodemus answered and said unto him, How can these things be?
- (10) Jesus answered and said unto him, Art thou a master of Israel, and knowest not these things?
- (11) Verily, verily, I say unto thee, We speak that we do know, and testify that we have seen; and ye receive not our witness.
- (12) If I have told you earthly things, and ye believe not, how shall ye believe, if I tell you of heavenly things?
- (13) And no man hath ascended up to heaven, but he that came down from heaven, even the Son of man which is in heaven. " (John 3:3-13)

Now the way that Nicodemus responded to Y'shua has been missed too many times. Notice what Nicodemus says: "*How can a man be born again when he is old*" Now, the way this text is expounded by so many preachers is that Nicodemus does not understand anything about what Y'shua says. That is not the problem that Nicodemus has. He does understand something about the expression "*born again*" because it is a very important expression in rabbinic theology. His problem is: "*How can a man be born again when he is old?*" If the question was merely how can a man be born again, what difference does the age make? Nicodemus' problem is not the lack of understanding what it is to be born again; but rather, how can it happen when one is old?

In Pharisaic Judaism, there are six different ways a man can be born again. Nicodemus qualified for four of them and did not qualify for two of them.

The first one he did not qualify for was when a Gentile converted to Judaism. Since Nicodemus was a Jew, this was not an option for him.

The second way he did not qualify for was when a man was crowned king of Israel. Nothing in this text says anything about the membership of Nicodemus in the house of David; and if he was, it would have been significant enough to mention. And even supposing that he was a member of the house of David, with the Jews under Roman domination there was no possibility of him being crowned king. So, this was not an option for him either.

The four ways that were open to him he had already accomplished. When a Jew was *Bar Mitzvahed* at the age of thirteen, he was said to be born again. Nicodemus was clearly well past the age of thirteen; and therefore, was already born again in that way.

A second way that was open to him was when a Jew was married he was considered to be born again. Now, nothing was said about his wife; so how do we know that he was married? We are told that he was "ruler of the Jews" which meant that he was a member of the *Sanhedrin*. One of the prerequisites for membership in the *Sanhedrin* was that you had to be married. A single man could not be a member of the *Sanhedrin*.

The third way that was available to him was when one was ordained as a Rabbi. Since he was a ruler of the Jews and a Pharisee, this tells us that at some point he was ordained a Rabbi.

The last way that was available to him was to be appointed to the head of a rabbinic academy. One who was merely a Rabbi was given the title "Rav", meaning a teacher. One who was the head of a rabbinic academy was given the title "haRav", meaning "the teacher". The fact that Y'shua calls him "*the master (teacher) of Israel*" tells us that he was the head of a rabbinic academy.

So, Nicodemus had used up every way that he thought was available to him to be "*born again*" according to his theology. That is the reason he phrased his question, "*How can a man be born again when he is old?*" It was not that he did not understand the term, but he simply felt that he had already used up his options. Y'shua was about to add another option for him that would be available to everyone; regardless of race, gender or creed.

- (14) "And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of man be lifted up:
- (15) That whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have eternal life.
- (16) For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whosoever believeth in him should not perish, but have everlasting life". (John 3:14-16)

He mentions here the serpent of brass. We have a reference to this in the Babylonian Talmud Rosh haShannah 3:8, "*Is it possible for the serpent that killed to make alive? No! But, the case is that when the Israelites looked upward for help and subjected themselves to the will of their Father in Heaven, they were healed. When they did not, they perished*". Y'shua was using this example to let the people know that they could look to him for healing and salvation.

(17) “For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; **but that the world through him might be saved.**

(18) He that believeth on him is not condemned: but he that believeth not is condemned already, because he hath not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

(19) And this is the condemnation, that light is come into the world, and men loved darkness rather than light, because their deeds were evil.

(20) For every one that doeth evil hateth the light, neither cometh to the light, lest his deeds should be reproved”. (John 3:17-20)

It is significant to note that the New Covenant writers stress that a Jew is to represent all of humanity. Y’shua would not have been chosen by vote or democratic process, but would be sent by YHWH.

“But he that doeth truth cometh to the light, that his deeds may be made manifest, that they are wrought in God”. (John 3:21)

The embodiment of the *Torah* in Y’shua created a major tension. Y’shua subordinated many central themes of Judaism to Himself, and the New Covenant writers continued that subordination. Thus, Y’shua became the Temple (John 2:19-21) and the atoning sacrifice (John 1:29). At Passover, the *matzah* or unleavened bread represented His body (Mark 14:22); likewise, the lamb sacrificed at Passover symbolised His death (1 Cor 5:7). In addition, Y’shua declared Himself Lord of the Sabbath (Mark 2:27, 28). He also distinguished the ritually clean from the unclean (Mark 7:1-23). The overall effect was that the First Century Jewish community largely considered these teachings strange and anti-ritualistic, and a threat to the religious beliefs of that day.

Yochanan’s testimony

(22) **“After these things came Jesus and his disciples into the land of Judaea; and there he tarried with them, and baptized.”**

(23) **And John also was baptizing in Aenon near to Salim,** because there was much water there: and they came, and were baptized.

(24) For John was not yet cast into prison.

(25) **Then there arose a question between some of John’s disciples and the Jews about purifying.**

(26) **And they came unto John, and said unto him, Rabbi, he that was with thee beyond Jordan, to whom thou barest witness, behold, the same baptizeth, and all men come to him.**

(27) **John answered and said, A man can receive nothing, except it be given him from heaven”.**
(John 3:22-27)

It appears that the dispute is not necessarily about purification, but who is doing it. Yochanan very correctly tells the people that the blessing is not in the baptiser, but from heaven regardless of who is baptising. It does not take an ordained minister to do the baptising, but a contrite heart of the candidate.

(28) **“Ye yourselves bear me witness, that I said, I am not the Christ, but that I am sent before him.**

(29) **He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which standeth and heareth him, rejoiceth greatly because of the bridegroom’s voice: this my joy therefore is fulfilled”.**
(John 3:28-29)

This was referred to as the “*shoshevin*” among the Jews. These were especially selected friends of the bridegroom that took messages from the bridegroom to the bride and ministered to the joy of the occasion. Sometimes they conducted the bride from her father’s house to the house of the bridegroom (Ketuboth 4:5). The bride is always under the authority of her father until she is placed under the authority of her husband by marriage. But, if her father surrendered her to the emissaries (the friends of the bridegroom); she is under the authority of her husband already.

Yochanan uses a very vivid word picture to explain what is happening here. The bridegroom is a picture of the Messiah and to Him goes the bride. Yochanan is pictured as the “friend of the bridegroom”, a servant to the Messiah. Although Yochanan is not part of the bride, he is part of the guests only; therefore, his joy is still fulfilled (see “The Rapture of the church compared to the Jewish wedding tradition” below in this section)

(30) **“He must increase, but I must decrease.**

(31) **He that cometh from above is above all:** he that is of the earth is earthly, and speaketh of the earth: **he that cometh from heaven is above all”.** (John 3:30-31)

Yochanan very correctly knows that his time has come and now he must remove himself from the scene. But, he tells his disciples very forcefully who *Y'shua* is. He is no ordinary man like *Yochanan*, but He has come from heaven, YHWH Incarnate.

- (32) "And what he hath seen and heard, that he testifieth; and **no man receiveth his testimony.**
- (33) He that hath received his testimony hath set to his seal that God is true.
- (34) For he whom God hath sent speaketh the words of God: for God giveth not the Spirit by measure unto him.
- (35) The Father loveth the Son, and hath given all things into his hand.
- (36) He that believeth on the Son hath everlasting life: and he that believeth not the Son shall not see life; but the wrath of God abideth on him". (John 3:32-36)

Yochanan also knows that a lot of people are not going to accept *Y'shua* as Messiah, even though He speaks the words of YHWH. This is such a profound statement and you can almost detect a note of sadness in *Yochanan*'s voice. Elohim has come to save His people and many will not listen. History is doomed to repeat itself over and over again as this same thing happens continually.

4:25 And great multitudes followed *Y'shua*

"And there followed him great multitudes of people from Galilee, and from Decapolis, and from Jerusalem, and from Judaea, and from beyond Jordan".

The rapture of the church compared to the Jewish wedding tradition

What nationality was *Y'shua*? In what national ritual will He marry His bride? Who is the bride? The answers are clear - *Y'shua* is a Jew and we know that the true children of YHWH will one day be the bride, but **very few** leaders, teachers or scholars know that *Y'shua* the Jew will marry His bride in a **Jewish tradition**. If we understand ancient Jewish wedding practices, it makes the meaning of so many Scriptures clear.

Did not YHWH make an everlasting covenant with Abraham (Gen 17:2-10) and His descendants, the Jews? (Exod 6:6-7). We know that YHWH, who cannot lie, will protect the Jews and their traditions. Now let's examine for ourselves to see if the Bible's Rapture compares with the Jewish wedding tradition. If this is the case, "The Rapture", "The Church in heaven" (during the 7 years of Tribulation on earth), and "The Second Coming" must all fit exactly into the three phases of the Jewish wedding tradition.

The three phases as laid out are, Phase 1 – The Engagement, Phase 2 – The Wedding and Phase 3 – The Celebration. Now let's compare the Bible with these three phases.

PHASE 1: ENGAGEMENT (SHITRE ERUSIN IN HEBREW)

The Jewish man prepares a contract, called a "ketubah" (*Y'shua* provided a new covenant). His Abba (Father) reads the contract to make sure all is in order. (YHWH agreed to give his only Son John 3:16).

He then goes to his future bride and proposes to her and her father (*Y'shua* came to earth to propose to his bride. Luke 22:20; Matt 1:21-25).

The most important thing is the bride's price (*Y'shua* paid the full price - was crucified. Matt 27:45-50). If the contract and price are acceptable to the father, the young man will pour a cup of wine and wait for her to see if she will drink it. *Y'shua* waits eagerly for you to accept His shed blood (2 Cor 11:2; John 6:54-56, 9:22). By our participating in Holy Communion after salvation (Matt 26:28-29), we publicly declare that *Y'shua* was nailed to the crucifixion stake for our sins (First Holy Sacrament 1 Cor 11:17-34).

He will then give her gifts as a token of his love (Holy Spirit comes to live in you after you have been saved (9 gifts of the Holy Spirit. John 14:26, Acts 2:1-4, 1 Cor 12:1-11).

When the young man leaves, she will have a special public ceremonial cleansing bath called a "mikveh". (After salvation and receiving of the Holy Spirit you get purified through baptism – (Second Holy Sacrament')). To confess publicly what happened at the grave and that you bury the old man and walk in a new life with Messiah-Rom 6:1-6.) See information on baptism at the end of this section.

Only now, after the "mikveh" are they legally married; but are not yet ready to live together (only after baptism you belong to *Y'shua*, but you are not yet with *Y'shua* in heaven) Mark 16:16. It is interesting to note that the year 2001 was the year of 'Mikveh' for the Jews. They are getting ready for something!!!

Before he leaves, he must tell her that he is going to prepare a wedding chamber (honeymoon suite) or a "chuppah" for her, and will come again to get her. (*Y'shua* promised us that He was going to prepare a place for us and He would come again to fetch us. John 14:3).

The young man then starts immediately to prepare a place (*Y'shua* is busy right now preparing a place for us. John 14:2).

It can take a long time to prepare a place. If someone asked the young man what the date of the wedding will be, he would have replied "I don't know, as only my father can inspect and approve the house"; only after approval is he allowed to receive his bride. (Just before *Y'shua* left, His disciples asked Him when would He return. His answer was "... but of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, but My Father only" Matt 24:36; Rev 21:9-27).

During this period, the bride is called a "*me'kudeshet*", and will make herself ready with the gifts that the bridegroom gave her and shows by wearing a veil that she has been "bought with a price". (Re-born believers to use Holy Spirit to live holy at all times – your light must shine to show you belong to *Y'shua*. Heb 12:14).

The bridegroom eagerly awaits the final inspection of his chamber by his father. (*Y'shua* eagerly awaits the inspection by YHWH of the place He went to prepare for us).

PHASE 2: WEDDING

After approval, it does not take the bridegroom long to go and get his bride. (*Y'shua* will come quickly to fetch us).

The bride must always keep a lamp full of oil ready at night, as the bridegroom normally comes and steals her away like a thief in the night. (*Y'shua* said when he returns he will come like a thief in the night – referring to the Rapture. 1 Thes 5:1-2, Matt 24:42, 44). (Now you can understand what *Y'shua* tried to explain in Matt 25:1-13).

The bridegroom will come accompanied with close friends. (*Y'shua* will come with His angels. 1 Thes 4:16).

He wants to surprise her, but also allows her enough time to get ready – just enough to get her things, no time for packing (*Y'shua* warns continuously in the Bible to be ready. 1 Thes 5:4-6).

When they get close to the house, they give a "shout" and blow a "shofar" (ram's horn) to warn the bride and her maids. (*Y'shua* will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet (shofar) of Elohim. 1 Thes 4:16).

They then take the bride and leave in a hurry with her maids and her face still covered, leaving the curious neighbours behind. (*Y'shua* will Rapture the Church away – take His Bride and leave the world curious. 1 Thes 4:17).

When they arrive at the father's house, the newlyweds enter the wedding chamber for a seven-day honeymoon, where they consummate the marriage and establish their covenant union. (The Church will be in heaven for seven years while there will be great Tribulation on earth. From Rev 4:1 to Rev 19:11 you never read of the Church on earth again).

When they have intercourse, the bride's hymen is broken and blood is spilt to show she was a true virgin. (All your works will be tested by fire to prove yourself. 1 Cor 3:13-15).

The groom's best friend stands outside the door, waiting for the groom to tell him the marriage is now complete; at that moment the husband takes the honeymoon sheet stained with blood and gives it to his friend. His friend then shows this to the guests as evidence that the two have become one (Possibly *Y'shua* will show the O.T. Saints and the angels the crowns of the rewards of the reborn believers (John 3:29) – note that John is classed as an O.T. saint who is one of the guests and not the bride. The bride only started at the outpouring of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost. Why?).

PHASE 3: THE CELEBRATION

The celebrations last for seven days (the church will be in heaven for a seven year period while there will be great Tribulation on earth – Rev 4:1 to Rev 19:11).

After the seven days, the newlyweds appear and the guests clap and cheer to congratulate them (The O.T. Saints, and the angels will be very happy as they will join the celebration before the marriage supper of the Lamb – John 3:29).

This is followed by the marriage supper, which is given to honour the new husband and wife (this will be the marriage supper of the Lamb in heaven – Rev 19:9).

When the party is over, the bride (without her veil) and groom depart to their own house where the neighbours will recognise the bride. (*Y'shua* and His Saints will then come down to earth for the battle of Armageddon and reign for a thousand years on earth – Rev 19:14).

END OF Section I - Introduction to Messiah

SECTION II

A MIDRASH ON TORAH OBSERVANCE

MATTHEW 5:1-16

TEXT:

- (1) And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:
- (2) And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying,
- (3) Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- (4) Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted.
- (5) Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth.
- (6) Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled.
- (7) Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy.
- (8) Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God.
- (9) Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God.
- (10) Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- (11) Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
- (12) Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.
- (13) Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men.
- (14) Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid.
- (15) Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house.
- (16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven".

The "Sermon on the Mount"

NOTE: Traditionally, the section of Scripture from Matt 5:1 to 7:29 has been called "*the Sermon on the Mount*", because of the physical location of Y'shua when He spoke. Unfortunately, this title misses the point of the sermon; thus, a better reference of its content would be: "*A midrash on Torah observance*", meaning "*A teaching on the Instructions (Law) observation*".

This *midrash* is broken up into several sections beginning with 5:1-16, where Y'shua declares what has become known as the "*beatitudes*", followed by gentle reminders to his Jewish audience as to what their God-given role is to be. These "*introductory statements*" will be followed by the bulk of the message concerning the *Torah*.

Numerous references will be made to other Jewish writings, including the *Talmud*, *Midrash Rabbah*, *Zohar* and Qumran (Dead Sea) Scrolls, to show how Y'shua's teachings mirrored those of the Pharisees and others of His day.

5:1 The Mountain and the Disciples

"And seeing the multitudes, he went up into a mountain: and when he was set, his disciples came unto him:"

The Mount of Beatitudes stands serenely near the northwest corner of the Sea of Galilee. It is the only definable mountain that is in close proximity to the Evangelical Triangle—that area in which Y'shua conducted most of his ministry. The Triangle was the area falling between the cities of Capernaum, Chorazin and Bethsaida. The Mount of Beatitudes is the likely spot where Y'shua sat down and gave the Beatitudes of Matt 5:1-12. The church grounds situated in the area today have an abundance of beautiful flowers and a breathtaking view of the Sea of Galilee as well.

The relationship between the rabbi and his "*talmidim*" (disciples, followers, students) was very close. It was not only one of learning, but also imitating his conduct and character. In turn, the rabbi was responsible for his *talmidim*. It is important to note that Y'shua's audience here is exclusively Jews. He did not preach directly to the Gentiles in His lifetime. Nonetheless, what He says to His Jewish brethren would apply to any

Gentile coming to the faith of Israel, as Elohim does not have a "separate" revelation and faith for the Gentile world – there is one Elohim for both Jew and Gentile.

5:2-3 Kingdom of Heaven

"(2) And he opened his mouth, and taught them, saying, (3) Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".

The term "heaven" is a euphemism for "YHWH". Matthew uses this about ninety percent of the time in his Gospel. Judaism makes use of multiple ways of referring to YHWH, including: *HaShem* (meaning "the name"), *Adonai*, *Elohim*, *El*, *Yah*, *Eloah* and others.

5:3-10 Blessed are...

"(3) Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. (4) Blessed are they that mourn: for they shall be comforted. (5) Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth. (6) Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled. (7) Blessed are the merciful: for they shall obtain mercy. (8) Blessed are the pure in heart: for they shall see God. (9) Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. (10) Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven".

"Blessed" is *Asher* (*Ah-Share*) in Hebrew, and has a combined meaning of "happy and fortunate". With that in mind, let's look at the various "happy and fortunate" groups of people:

...the poor in Spirit (re: Isaiah 57:15 "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones", and Isaiah 66:2 "For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word".)

...the mourners who will be comforted (re: Isaiah 61:2 "To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn"; and Isaiah 66:10 and 13: "Rejoice ye with Jerusalem, and be glad with her, all ye that love her: rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her: ... As one whom his mother comforteth, so will I comfort you; and ye shall be comforted in Jerusalem".)

...the meek who inherit the land (re: Psalm 37:1 "But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace").

...they will be satisfied (re: Isaiah 66:11-12 "That ye may suck, and be satisfied with the breasts of her consolations; that ye may milk out, and be delighted with the abundance of her glory. (12) For thus saith the LORD, Behold, I will extend peace to her like a river, and the glory of the Gentiles like a flowing stream: then shall ye suck, ye shall be borne upon her sides, and be dandled upon her knees".)

...merciful who obtain mercy (re: Psalm 18:26 "With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the foward thou wilt shew thyself foward". And 2 Sam 22:26 "With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful, and with the upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright".)

...pure in heart (re: Psalm 22:4 "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them", and Psalm 51:10 "Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me", and Psalm 73:11 "And they say, How doth God know? and is there knowledge in the most High?")

...persecuted for righteousness for theirs is the kingdom (re: Isaiah 66:5 "Hear the word of the LORD, ye that tremble at his word; Your brethren that hated you, that cast you out for my name's sake, said, Let the LORD be glorified: but he shall appear to your joy, and they shall be ashamed".)

"Blessings" as such are also found in the Qumran (Dead Sea) scrolls. In the following portion, wisdom is clearly exalted. Wisdom and the law are viewed as inseparable. (Missing scroll portions are bracketed):

4Q525, Fragment 2, Column 2: "[Blessed is the one who...] with a clean heart and does not slander with his tongue. Blessed are those who hold fast to its statutes and do not hold fast to the ways of injustice. Ble[ssed] are those who rejoice in it, and do not burst forth on paths of folly. Blessed are those who seek it with pure hands, and do not search for it with a deceitful [he]art. Blessed is the man who obtains wisdom, and walks in the way of the law of the Most High; establishes his heart in its ways, restrains himself by its corrections, is continually satisfied with its punishments, does not forsake it in the face of [his] trials, at the time of distress he does not abandon it, does not forget it [in the day of] terror, and in the humility of his soul does not abhor it. But he meditates on it continually, and in his trial he reflects [on the law, and with al]l his being [he gains understanding] in it, [and he establishes it] before his eyes so as not to walk in the ways [of injustice, and...]

[...and...] together, and perfects his heart by it, [and...] [and places a crown of...upon] his [hea]d, and with kings it shall se[at him, and...] brothers shall [...]"

5:9 The Peacemakers

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God".

What is YHWH's concept of a "peacemaker?" It may not be what one would call "politically correct". For instance, there is one person in the Scriptures, specifically called a peacemaker. He is Pinchas (Phinehas), the grandson of Aaron. What did he do to earn this title from YHWH? He took a spear and simultaneously ran it through a man and woman who were fornicating. For this specific action of killing these people, YHWH praises him and calls him a peacemaker (Num 25:6-13). Pinchas later became the High Priest.

5:10-13 Semitic Poetry

"(10) Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
(11) Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake. (12) Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven: for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you. (13) Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men".

Verses 10-12 are an example of Semitic poetry in a form called a *chiasmus*, where verses are repeated but in reverse order. Here, the verses follow an A-B-C-B-A order:

- A. Blessed are they which are persecuted for righteousness' sake:
- B. for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
- C. Blessed are ye, when men shall revile you, and persecute you, and shall say all manner of evil against you falsely, for my sake.
- B. Rejoice, and be exceeding glad: for great is your reward in heaven:
- A. for so persecuted they the prophets which were before you.

Verse 13 is an example of Semitic poetry in a form called *formal parallelism*, where a concept in one line is expounded on through several subsequent lines.

Ye are the salt of the earth:
but if the salt have lost his savour,
wherewith shall it be salted?
it is thenceforth good for nothing,
but to be cast out,
and to be trodden under foot of men.

The Salt

Y'shua's use of "salt" in His metaphor is no accident. Salt has a specific relationship to the eternal covenant YHWH has with Israel. This is found in Scripture and throughout other Jewish writings:

"Neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking" (Lev 2:13)

"It is a covenant of salt for ever" (Num 18:19)

Talmud - Mas. Menachoth 19b, 20a: "For it has been taught: The verse, *It is a covenant of salt for ever, signifies that there is a covenant declared in regard to salt*. So R. Judah. R. Simeon says, *Here it is said, It is a covenant of salt for ever, and there it is said, The covenant of an everlasting priesthood, as it is impossible to conceive of sacrifices without the priesthood so it is impossible to conceive of sacrifices without salt!*"

Midrash Rabbah - Genesis XCVII: "*The throne of Israel was given to Judah through the righteous David-to him and to his sons as a covenant made with salt*".

Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 241b: '*It is written: "Neither shalt thou suffer the salt of the covenant of thy God to be lacking from thy meal-offering; with all thine oblations thou shalt offer salt". Salt was to be used because it softens bitterness, and so mankind cannot do without it. Salt is the covenant upon which the world is established: hence it is called "the covenant of thy God".*

5:13-16 WHO are the salt and the light?

"(13) Ye are the salt of the earth: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be salted? it is thenceforth good for nothing, but to be cast out, and to be trodden under foot of men. (14) Ye are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. (15) Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a

bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. (16) Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven".

"Candle" is a poor translation. It should read "lamp", as there were no candles in Y'shua's time.

As mentioned earlier, Y'shua here is addressing Jews within their Judaism. (It is critical to understand the meaning of this and every verse in its original context before expounding on it or trying to apply it to another situation.) This is Y'shua's first recorded "public address" to the Jews, after having spent some time preaching to them in the Synagogues (Matt 4:23). Y'shua Himself said He came for the lost sheep of Israel (not the Gentiles) and told His apostles to do the same (Matt 10:5-6; 15:24). Gentiles would receive their direct invitation to join the faith of Israel through the Messiah after His death and resurrection.

Israel is also Elohim's "Messiah" (meaning: Anointed One). Their job was/is to bring the revelation of Elohim (that the Lord Himself gave them at Mount Sinai) to the entire world. Here, Y'shua is issuing them a reminder of their responsibility in these verses. Israel is still "YHWH's chosen people", and the faith they received through the giving of the *Torah* and work of their Messiah, is still the only one YHWH has ever established. (As we will discuss in the next section.)

In other words, in this context, Israel is the "*salt of the earth*".

5:16 Good works ... glorify your Father

"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven".

Good works are the Positive Commandments of the *Torah*. (More on this in Chapter 5 and later in the study.) These are the only "works" that would distinguish the Jews and cause Gentiles to give glory to the Father, who gave His *Torah* as a means for His people to sanctify (set apart) themselves.

NOTE: This section of Scripture, Matt 5:17-20, is pivotal to understanding the relationship of Messiah to the *Torah*, and therefore of the believer to the *Torah*. Thus, we have given it a section of its own.

SECTION II A MIDRASH ON TORAH OBSERVANCE

MATTHEW 5:17-48

TEXT:

- (17) *"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill.*
(18) *For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*
(19) *Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.*
(20) *For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven".*
(21) *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*
(22) *But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire.*
(23) *Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee;*
(24) *Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift.*
(25) *Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison.*
(26) *Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing.*
(27) *Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery:*
(28) *But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart.*

- (29) And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.
- (30) And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell.
- (31) It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement:
- (32) But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery.
- (33) Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths:
- (34) But I say unto you, Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne:
- (35) Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King.
- (36) Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black.
- (37) But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil.
- (38) Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth:
- (39) But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also.
- (40) And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also.
- (41) And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain.
- (42) Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.
- (43) Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy.
- (44) But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you;
- (45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust.
- (46) For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same?
- (47) And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?
- (48) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect".

5:17 The Law

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill".

Christian Bibles consistently refer to "the Law", meaning the Law of Moses. The Hebrew term for this is the *Torah*. However, the correct translation of "*Torah*", is not "law" (not in the western legal sense of the word). Rather, *Torah* is correctly translated as "revelations or instructions from YHWH" for a blessed life.

When understood in its proper Hebrew context, here are some examples of what the "New Testament" says about *Torah*:

Faith does not abolish any part of the *Torah* as a whole (Matt 5:17-20 as above, "For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all".) (James 2:10)
 Keeping the *Torah* is part of the faith that gets you to heaven (Matt 19:17 "And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? There is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments". Rev 12:17 "And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ".
 Rev 14:12 "Here is the patience of the saints: here" are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus". Rev 22:14 "Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city".)

You will abide in Y'shua's love, if you keep *Torah* (John 14:15-23) as He abided in the Father's love by keeping *Torah* (John 15:10; Heb 2:17-18, 4:15) See Scripture below.

- (15) "If ye love me, keep my commandments.
- (16) And I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter, that he may abide with you for ever;
- (17) Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you.
- (18) I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you.
- (19) Yet a little while, and the world seeth me no more; but ye see me: because I live, ye shall live also.
- (20) At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you.
- (21) He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will manifest myself to him.
- (22) Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?
- (23) Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him". (John 14:15-23)

(17) "Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people.

(18) For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted".

(Heb 2:17-18 LITV)

"For we do not have a high priest not being able to sympathize with our weaknesses but One having been tried in all respects according to our likeness, apart from sin". (Heb 4:15 LITV)

Faith in Y'shua does not cancel out what the Torah says, it establishes it (Rom 3:31 "Then is the Law annulled through faith? Let it not be! But we establish Law". LITV)

Torah is itself "liberty" and the standard we are to judge ourselves by (James 1:22-25 "(22) But become doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. (23) Because if anyone is a hearer of the Word, and not a doer, this one is like a man studying his natural face in a mirror; (24) for he studied himself, and has gone away, and immediately he forgot of what kind he was. (25) But the one looking into the perfect Law of liberty, and continuing in it, this one not having become a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in his doing". LITV)

It is those of the flesh who are not subject to the Torah (Rom 8:5-8 "(5) For the ones that are according to flesh mind the things of the flesh. And the ones according to Spirit mind the things of the Spirit. (6) For the mind of the flesh is death, but the mind of the Spirit is life and peace; (7) because the mind of the flesh is enmity towards God; for it is not being subjected to the Law of God, for neither can it be. (8) And those being in the flesh are not able to please God". LITV)

If you say you know Him, and ignore His Torah, you are a liar (1 John 2:3-7 "(3) And by this we know that we have known Him, if we keep His commands. (4) The one saying, I have known Him, and not keeping His commands is a liar, and the truth is not in that one. (5) But whoever keeps His Word, truly in this one the love of God has been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him. (6) The one claiming to rest in Him ought so to walk himself as that One walked. (7) Brothers, I do not write a new commandment to you, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the Word which you have heard from the beginning". LITV)

It does not matter if you are a Jew or a Gentile, what matters is keeping YHWH's Torah (1 Cor 7:19

"Circumcision is nothing, and uncircumcision is nothing, but the keeping of God's commands". LITV)

The "law of love" is that we keep his Torah - which is by no means a "burden" (1 John 5:3; 2 John 1:6; Matt 11:29-30) See Scripture below.

"For this is the love of God, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not heavy".

(1 John 5:3 LITV)

"And this is love, that we should walk according to His commandments. This is the commandment, even as you heard from the beginning, that you should walk in it". (2 John 1:6 LITV)

(29) "Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, because I am meek and lowly in heart, "and you will find rest to your souls.

(30) For My yoke is easy, and My burden is light". (Matt 11:29-30 LITV)

These "New Testament" references to *Torah* might at first confuse people, as they aren't used to thinking in these terms. However, when the Hebrew New Covenant authors and Y'shua Himself spoke of law/commandments in their First Century Jewish religious context, it must be interpreted as "*Torah*"; unless there is a clear reason to do otherwise, as this was what it meant to them.

Y'shua likened unto Moses

It is often pointed out by scholars and Bible teachers how Y'shua was like Moses. As a child, he was pursued by an evil king just as Moses was. He gave the law like Moses. He delivered the people and fed them miraculously like Moses. He ascended a mountain and taught the people as Moses did. Indeed, Moses actually spoke of one like himself who would come in the future: "The LORD thy God will raise up unto thee a Prophet from the midst of thee, of thy brethren, like unto me; unto him ye shall hearken". (Deut 18:15).

There were some differences in their ministries. The old Bible commentator, Matthew Henry, remarks concerning one of these differences. He says that in Moses' day "... the people were ordered to keep their distance; now (in Jesus' day) they are invited to draw near: a blessed change!" (Logos electronic Bible) Perhaps the prophet Malachi pictured Y'shua sitting and giving the Beatitudes when he wrote: "And he shall sit as a refiner and purifier of silver: and he shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto the LORD an offering in righteousness". (Mal 3:3).

The Beatitudes and the whole Sermon on the Mount of Matt 5-7 seem to be a giving or rather re-emphasising of the law of Elohim. Today some feel that Messiah is the end of the law and that we should not concern ourselves with law any longer. These folks often quote Rom 10:4 saying, "For Christ is the end of the law..." The complete verse reads "For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (NKJV). Thus, Messiah is the goal of the law for righteousness, but not the end of the law. Instead,

Messiah says in his Sermon on the Mount, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt 5:17).

Law written on the heart

It was always YHWH's intent to write the law on the hearts of his people. In Deut 6:6 we read: "*These commandments that I give you today are to be upon your hearts*". Jeremiah speaks of a day when this will become a reality: "*This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time', declares the LORD'. I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people*" (Jer 31:33). The writing of the law on the heart is thus finally accomplished by the New Covenant.

Christians claim a right in the New Covenant by adoption through Y'shua. They assume that they are then automatically engrafted into the olive tree of Israel. Now we must ask: what is involved in this covenant? What is involved in having the law written on our hearts? Is it just for show? Is Elohim just doing some unusual exercise in calligraphy?

All indications are that the law is written on the mind and in the heart for a purpose. The divine intention is that the law would be perfectly fulfilled in each individual life. The purpose is that YHWH's people should do what the law says. James exhorts us: "*Do not merely listen to the word, and so deceive yourselves. Do what it says*". (James 1:22). Clearly, those who only hear the law are deceived. Obviously, those who reject the law are equally deceived.

The Father wills that our lives should be lawful, law-abiding and not lawless. However, we are living in an exceedingly lawless age. Today, Christians, without knowing it, are being swept along with the tide of this age and are becoming more and more lawless. Let us consider what it means to have the law written on the heart.

Some examples of law on the heart:

For centuries, Christians have said that the Beatitudes are only an ideal and not reality. However, the Beatitudes are reality. They are the marks and characteristics of YHWH's men and women. Let us consider a few of them.

The poor in spirit have the law of humility written on their hearts. It is a lowly and humble spirit that the Father prizes, rather than a spirit of pride and self-sufficiency. In that great passage of Micah 6:8, the prophet states: "*He has showed you, O man, what is good. And what does the LORD require of you? To act justly and to love mercy and to walk humbly with your God*". It is strange that poverty in spirit would be listed first among the graces. The philosophers and worldly wise men have not regarded it so. Y'shua reckons the poor in spirit as truly happy and blessed. They inherit the kingdom of heaven. In Jewish writings, the concept of "heaven" is a standard substitute for "YHWH", in order that the sanctity of the divine name may be protected. Thus, the poor in spirit ultimately inherit YHWH and the certainty of his presence forever.

The mourners have a sorrow at lawlessness written on their hearts. We must learn to cry at our own sins and the sins and abominations of our lawless age. In Ezek 9:4, YHWH says to his messenger, "...*Go throughout the city of Jerusalem and put a mark on the foreheads of those who grieve and lament over all the detestable things that are done in it*". In this case, the order was given to slay those who were not found mourning. We also read this admonition in Scripture: "*The heart of the wise is in the house of mourning, but the heart of fools is in the house of pleasure*" (Eccl 7:4). Those who mourn have this comfort in Rev 21:4. At the end of this lawless age, the Master himself will wipe away all the tears from their eyes.

The meek have submission written on their hearts. The meek have learned to be like their Master. Y'shua says in Matt 11:29-30: "*Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light*". Meekness has often been described as strength under control. Moses was called the meekest man on earth (Num 12:3). This must not be confused with weakness. Moses in his righteousness indignation could fling the tablets of the law to the ground and break them to pieces. For the meek, these gentle, lowly and God-led souls, we have this promise in Psalms 37:11: "*But the meek will inherit the land and enjoy great peace*".

The merciful have kindness written on their hearts. In the Bible we see that mercy is the very name of Yehovah, for he is "...*merciful and gracious...*" (Exod 34:6). Elohim's original idea was that mercy be written on the tablet of our hearts and that we wear it as a necklace (Prov 3:3). From Matt 23:23, we learn that mercy is a "*weightier matter*" of the law. There are many pictures of mercy in the Old Covenant. In Deut 22:8, the Israelites were instructed to make a parapet on the roof to avoid needless injury or death. This was an added expense in building a house, but it was also a necessary act of mercy. The command to not boil a kid in its mother's milk (Exod 23:19) and the sparing of the mother bird when the young are taken (Deut 22:6-7) are obvious acts of mercy. Today, we see many supposedly wise people who shun mercy; but the Bible informs us that the wisdom that comes from above is full of mercy (James 3:17).

The pure in heart have holiness written on their hearts. There is a lot more involved here than the avoidance of sin. The heart is our center of being. Y'shua describes it in Mark 7:21-23 "*For from within, out of men's hearts, come evil thoughts, sexual immorality, theft, murder, adultery, greed, malice, deceit, lewdness, envy, slander, arrogance and folly. All these evils come from inside and make a man 'unclean'*". Also from within springs that holy desire to pursue Elohim and be like him. Someone once said that purity of heart is to will this one thing. It is to hunger for Elohim alone and seek him with all the heart, soul, mind and strength. This is without a doubt the most comprehensive of all the beatitudes. The pure in heart shall see YHWH and this is the greatest promise in the Bible. In reflecting on this promise, the Psalmist exclaims: "*And I in righteousness I will see your face; when I awake, I will be satisfied with seeing your likeness*" (Psa 17:15).

There is not space to discuss the remaining beatitudes; but they, too, amount to the Law of Elohim written on the heart of man. The way of life that Y'shua has ordained for his disciples has become greatly misunderstood over the centuries. We must recover it. Today the beautiful and placid Mount of Beatitudes stands in the Galilee. It is representative of the new Sinai where YHWH no longer writes on tablets of stone but on tablets of the heart.

Destroy ... Fulfill

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill". (Matt 5:17)

Over the centuries, many people have read these words of the Messiah, and attempted to interpret them in light of the prevailing theology. Typically, the approach taken is that Y'shua may not have abolished the *Torah* outright; but he certainly completed it, and thereby rendered it irrelevant for believers. This is, of course, an oxymoron (a figure of speech combining contradictory words); but it is the best most Christian interpreters can do with this passage.

What most people tend to forget is that the whole Bible is a 100% Hebraic book *from its foundation* and must be strictly interpreted according to the rules and expectations of the Hebrew people who wrote and read the text originally. To suppose otherwise, we would have to say that the writers of the Biblical texts wrote nonsense to their audiences. So, we are left with the basic fact that this text meant something to the first hearers of these words. What did it mean?

The understanding of this verse hinges upon two key terms. In Greek, they are "*katalusai*" and "*plerosai*". These are the words that are rendered, respectively, as "destroy" and "fulfill". In order to better understand this passage, we will examine the full range of meaning contained in each of these words. Then, an alternative historical setting will be offered which uses these words in a technical sense not known to the majority of Christian interpreters. Finally, this technical usage will be demonstrated to provide a better understanding of these terms in their context.

First, we need to better understand the meanings of "*katalusai*" and "*plerosai*".

Katalusai	Plerosai
This word means "destroy", "tear down", "abolish" or "to overthrow completely".	On the other hand, this word means "fill", "complete", "cause to abound", or "consummate", to "carry out", to "do", to "perform" and "obey"...
In rabbinic usage, it is applied when one wishes to attack an interpretation of the <i>Torah</i> as being less than accurate.	In rabbinic argumentation, it has the force of affirming what is considered a full and proper interpretation of a text.
In rabbinic argumentation, if you believe an opponent's argument to be seriously flawed, you might yell at him, "You are destroying the Torah!"	To say that someone has, "Fulfilled the Torah", is equivalent to saying he has "Provided the best and fullest understanding of the text", or that he has "Brought out the consummate argument from among the details provided".

How would these definitions then affect our reading of Matt 5:17? Let's take a look. First, for comparison purposes, here is the King James Version rendering. I'll bold the words that translate *katalusai* and *plerosai*.

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill". (Mat 5:17)

As I mentioned earlier, most Christian interpreters would explain that to mean...

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to render it nullified because I did it... so you don't have to!"

Some may object to that last rendering, thinking that I am being deliberately provocative. Nevertheless, I consider it a fair and accurate restatement of most Christians' view of the *Torah*. How else could they accept a theology that denies the value of the *Torah*, even while looking at a plain statement that it will endure until the end of time and space?

The usual Christian understanding of this verse is that, because one person (*Y'shua*) kept all the *Torah*, we today are thereby relieved of having to be obedient to God's commands as recorded in the *Torah*. But let us consider this notion in light of an illustration. Allow me to present a standard story told from Christian pulpits across the world... except with a twist at the end.

Suppose I am arrested for speeding one day. I had been driving my car 160 km/h in a pedestrian zone, where the speed limit was 60 km/h. I go to court. After hearing the evidence and testimony, the judge metes out the appropriate sentence. Then, in the manner of true grace, the judge steps down from his stand, and accepts upon himself my punishment. I have received grace and mercy, rather than the stern justice I deserve. Hallelujah!

Then, before they take him from the courtroom to prison, where he will serve my sentence, the judge says one thing more. "As a result of this free gift of grace, you are no longer subject to the laws of the land. You are absolved from all future infractions, and even the need to know the specifics of the laws. You are now free forever from the demands of the legal codes, and may ignore anyone who tries to arrest you for future infractions against the legal code. Such people are obviously legalists who would fail to recognise the great grace you have been given today.

What??? That can't be right, can it?

No, of course not. It violates justice and all standards of common sense to think that being judged innocent of a particular infraction should free one of all legal restrictions and obligations. Yet, that is exactly what most Christians have been taught all their lives. Because *Y'shua* died to atone for our sins, we are therefore free from the need to know the *Torah*, and there is no need for us to bother with keeping Elohim's laws. After all, "We have been made free from the law and all its requirements!" This is said with no concern for even knowing the specific laws that are contained in the *Torah*.

It clearly makes no sense to understand *Y'shua* in this way. He is in the midst of making the case that the *Torah* is eternal, and that no requirement of the *Torah* will ever pass away. Then, he proposes an understanding of the *Torah* that adds to its sternness, rather than taking away. He says it is no longer sufficient just to do what the *Torah* says. Now, the deed must be done according to the right intention.

Finally, let us take a look at a version of Matt 5:17 that incorporate the terms "*destroy*" and "*fulfill*", as they have been defined in rabbinic usage, above:

"Think not that I am come to teach in such as way as to invalidate the law, or the prophets: I am not come to invalidate, but to clarify the original purpose and teach accurately".

At last, we have a translation that makes a great deal more sense and much more in keeping with *Y'shua*'s true intent. If *Y'shua* really came to nullify the *Torah*, then he was a false prophet who deserved whatever he got. On the other hand, this better understanding of the words in the text render this verse as a fitting introduction for the Sermon on the Mount, where *Y'shua* goes on to clarify the *Torah* clearly with original intent, as stated here.

Did *Y'shua* perform the things which are written in the *Torah*? You bet. Does that mean we can ignore the *Torah* as the beginning of YHWH's revelation and the divinely prescribed approach to gain YHWH's blessing? Absolutely not. He expected us to continue in "The Way", which was at that time 1,500 years old. To sweep that aside and create an entirely separate, competing, religious system is the height of arrogance and foolishness.

In summary:

The second half of verse 17 is used by most Christians to support a doctrine that says the believer in Messiah is now "not under the Law". Some claim that by "fulfilling the Law", Messiah did away with it, and the believer no longer has a relationship to it.

One need not to look further than this verse itself to see that such an interpretation is incorrect, as:

The word *plerosai* (fulfill) DOES NOT mean to "do away with" or to "overthrow".

The word *katalusai* (destroy) DOES mean to "do away with" or to "overthrow", and Y'shua said He did NOT come to do that.

Y'shua tells us to not even THINK he came to destroy the law or prophets, let alone believe it! If you say that He came to abolish the law, then you are saying He came to destroy. Well, that's what Satan does! A more accurate meaning of "fulfill" here is to "obey". For instance, if I told my daughter to do something and she did it, then she has "fulfilled" or obeyed my request. Here is an instance of Y'shua fulfilling something:

"(16) And evening having come on, they brought to Him many having been possessed by demons. And He cast out the spirits by a word, and He healed all those having illness, (17) so that it might be fulfilled that spoken through Isaiah the prophet, saying, He took upon Himself our weaknesses, and bore our sicknesses". (Matt 8:16-17 LITV)

You see, Y'shua "fulfilled" or "obeyed" the Scripture that was speaking of Him. He also obeyed the law. We should do likewise.

Y'shua the law keeper

For many centuries, most Christians have been taught that there is dramatic discontinuity between the Old and New Covenants, between "Law" and "Grace", and between Israel and the Church. While there are distinct and greater advantages to the New Covenant instituted by Messiah Y'shua, there is also much continuity between Old and New Covenants. There is grace in the *Torah*, and there are laws and commands in the New Covenant. There are differences between Israel and the Church, but there is a lot of overlap as well. If you have ever heard people express thoughts like, "Christians should not be concerned with the Old Testament", then I encourage you to consider the following:

The Founder of the Faith, Messiah Y'shua, was Himself very Jewish. Y'shua was a Sabra (a native-born Israeli). Since He was born from the tribe of Judah and is a descendant of King David, He is Jewish royalty. He was circumcised on the eighth day. He was given a Jewish name – Y'shua. Godly parents raised him in a pious Jewish home. He regularly went to synagogue, as was His custom (Luke 4:16). The life He lived was that of an observant Jew who kept the *Torah* (Gal 4:4). He was able to say, "Which of you convicts Me of sin?" because He never sinned by breaking the commandments of the *Torah*. Messiah Y'shua taught that He fulfilled, not set aside, the *Torah* (Matt 5:17-19).

Orthodox scholar Pinchas Lapide made this observation: *"Jesus never and no where broke the law of Moses, nor did he in any way provoke its infringement - it is entirely false to say that he did... In this respect you must believe me, for I do know my Talmud more or less... This Jesus was as faithful to the law as I would hope to be. But I suspect that Jesus was more faithful to the law than I am - and I am an Orthodox Jew".* (Dr. John Fischer, "Foundations of Messianic Theology: Following In Yeshua's Steps?", page 14.)

See Matt 23:30-34 under "The Death of the Prophets" for the explanation on "*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets...*"

5:18 Jot or Tittle

"For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled".

Furthermore, Y'shua then goes on to emphasise in verse 18, that not even the tiniest part of the *Torah* (the "Law") is done away with—and won't be until the heavens and the earth are no more.

Not even the most insignificant change in the sacred Scriptures was permissible, according to the Saviour. The Hebrew *yod*, "jot" (in Greek it is the *iota*) was the smallest Hebrew letter. The "tittle" was the small projection on the stroke of a letter which distinguished one Hebrew letter from another (Hebrew = *kotz*).

Where does one find those original 613 commandments?

They come straight from the *Torah*. You can see these commandments in sprinkled throughout the *Torah* in places such as Gen 26:2-5; Exod 15:25-27; Exod 16; Exod 20:6; Lev 22, 26, 27; Num 15, 36; Deut 4-8, 10, 11, 13, 26-28, 30, 31. See chapter 5 of this study for the details.

5:19 Break or teach men so

"Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, he shall be called the least in the kingdom of heaven: but whosoever shall do and teach them, the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven".

Notice here it says "these" commandments! What are "these" commandments? The commandments found in the law and prophets!

He then takes it even further, and issues a solemn warning to anyone who "breaks" any of the *Torah*, or teaches anyone to do the same. The Greek word for "break" is *luo*, meaning; "to infringe upon, loosen the force of, or render not binding". Hence, Y'shua is teaching that His work in no way diminishes the authority or continuation of the *Torah*.

5:20 You shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven".

From the Complete Jewish Bible "*Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah—not until everything that must happen has happened. So whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I tell you that unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and P'rushim, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!*" (Matt 5:17-20)

Verses 17-20 set the theme and agenda for the entire "Sermon on the Mount". Y'shua the Messiah makes fuller the understanding of his disciples concerning the *Torah* and Prophets (Prophetic books in the O.T. written by the Prophets), so they can more fully express what being YHWH's people is all about. This is consistent with Judaism, as one of the Messiah's main functions would be to complete our understanding of the *Torah* and Prophets. The "evidence" for Y'shua being the true Messiah is that He meets the criteria set forth in the *Tenach* (Old Covenant), which in turn says the *Torah* is eternal.

Much of the remainder of chapters 5-7 gives specific examples of where Y'shua explains the fuller meaning of the *Torah* – teaching the people to not only keep the Law, but to go beyond the "letter of the Law" – understanding the godly principles behind the commandments, as this is how we come to know YHWH, which is His desire for us all.

The *Talmud* agrees with this and even states that Jerusalem was destroyed for not following what Y'shua taught:

Babylonian Talmud - Bava Mezia 30b - *R. Yohanan said: 'Yerushalayim would not have been destroyed, save that they judged Din Torah (by the Law of the Torah)'. Should they have judged by the brutal laws? -- Rather, they insisted upon the law, and did not practice Lifnim miShurat haDin (beyond the letter of the law).*

The righteousness of the Scribes and Pharisees

"For I say unto you, That except your righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, ye shall in no case enter into the kingdom of heaven". (Matt 5:20)

Y'shua never criticised the Scribes and Pharisees for carrying out the *Torah*. In fact, he told the people to follow their example:

- (1) *"Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,*
- (2) *Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:*
- (3) *All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not". (Mat 23:1-3)*

History knows none to be better masters in the art of legalism than the Scribes and Pharisees of Y'shua's day. The Scribes were the professionals, the clergymen who worked out the various rules and regulations binding on all devout Jews. The Pharisees as a rule were a rather select group of laymen committed to the

keeping of these "laws". The Scribes and Pharisees were viewed as the very pillars of Jewish society and religion. They were considered the most moral, upright, influential people of their day. They were the kind of people you would want your daughter to marry into. They were Israel's best, the cream of the crop. (Also see section "James the Brother of Y'shua" under "Matt 13:53-54 And when he was come into his own country".)

Now, some of the Scribes and Pharisees were extremely legalistic. The group of Scribes and Pharisees mentioned in verse 20, followed the letter of the law point by point and even added their own rules to make the law more restrictive. However, they did not follow the spirit of the law; therefore, their righteousness was self-righteousness.

The elect of Elohim must understand both the letter and the spirit of the law. Moreover, they must apply both the letter and spirit of the law in their lives. Adhering to both the letter and the spirit of the law is the way to be more righteous than the Scribes and Pharisees that Y'shua referred to.

In a nutshell, they did not regard the Old Covenant Law highly enough. They had set it aside, preferring their own rules, regulations and traditions (Mark 7:7-9). The one who was truly great in the Kingdom was he who would both teach the Old Covenant faithfully (without watering it down), and who would live in accordance with this teaching. In the remaining verses, Y'shua demonstrated how it was the Scribes and Pharisees who failed to take the Law far enough; thus, loosening and lowering its requirements. Worse still, they did not practice what they preached.

What went wrong?

Many of the Jewish people in the First Century had missed the basic message of the *Torah*. They had distorted their observance of YHWH's wonderful *Torah* into a system of works, self-effort and self-achievement. The idea of keeping YHWH's laws was twisted into a means of getting right with YHWH by one's own strength and merit. It was this misguided, legalistic approach to salvation that Y'shua addressed.

This was being carried over into some sections of the Messianic faith as well. In particular, Gentile believers in Galatia were being mistaught that self-effort and works resulted in salvation and/or a higher level of spirituality. It was this perverted legalism, and not YHWH's holy laws, that Paul also so vigorously attacked. Paul's criticisms of legalism must not be misconstrued as an attack against Messianic believers for keeping biblical commands out of a love for YHWH and a desire to obey Him.

Do not do away with the Law

Y'shua never said, "do away with" the Law/*Torah* as we have clearly stated in Matt 5:17-18. This is also verified by the fact that the word "*fulfill*" in the same passage was mistranslated; because the Hebrew word "*kum*", as Y'shua used it, did NOT mean to "finish" or "do away with". Rather, it meant "establish" or "confirm". (You can find an in-depth study on this subject in Tim Hegg's book, "It is Often Said".)

This is not to say that "works" are promoted in order to obtain eternal life—quite the contrary! Y'shua was our final SIN offering, and all must believe His shed blood on the crucifixion stake as the ONLY way to obtain eternal life.

Because of Y'shua's sacrifice on the crucifixion stake, both Jews and Gentiles are saved by grace through faith in the Messiah Y'shua and *NOTHING* can be added to, or subtracted from that equation! Beware of any synagogue or church that makes the *Torah* or "rabbinical stuff" the center of worship, or implies that Y'shua was Messiah but NOT Elohim! RUN out of there and put as much distance between you and them as possible because they are completely off Elohim's path!

So why do I believe that Y'shua did not "do away with the law" (*Torah*)? Because we realise that, while the covenant might have changed as YHWH promised in Jer 31:31, His Torah has not. "*Forever, O Lord, Your word is settled in heaven*" (Psalm 119:89). YHWH's provisions have not changed; the penalty for disobedience has not changed; and YHWH's promises have not changed. What HAS changed?
The lawgiver has changed: Moses is no longer the steward.

The administration has changed: The *Torah* is administered under a new covenant, no longer on clay tablets but on our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The priesthood has changed: Instead of an Aaronic high priest, there is one after the order of Melchizedek – Y'shua, the Son of YHWH, YHWH in the flesh (Psalm 110:4).

The purpose of the sacrifice has changed: Under the Sinai Covenant, animal sacrifices were offered to remission of sins; under the New Covenant, Messiah offered Himself good for all times (Psalm 40:6-8 and

Heb 10:11-12). (Sacrifices will continue when the Temple is rebuilt – Ezek 40-48, but as memorials and celebrations only).

Y'shua did not abolish Judaism but He reformed Judaism (Heb 9:10), which reform many Jews could not accept as of YHWH—thus opening the way for the Gospel to be preached to the Gentiles who gladly received the Gospel. ("Which stood only in meats and drinks, and divers washings, and carnal ordinances, imposed on them until the time of reformation". (Heb 9:10))

Someone puts it this way:

"Because of the ministry of Jesus and His redemptive work on the cross of Calvary, Gentiles as well as Jews can now maintain the righteous principles of the law without being encumbered with all the cultural baggage of Talmudic Judaism".

The Jewish Roots the unifying point

Today, Christianity is embraced by people all over the world, each with their own unique culture superimposed by a Western culture brought along by Western missionaries. Someone wrote this: "*The important fact to remember is that Western culture is a mixture of Christian and pagan worldviews*". Christianity has been packaged to much of the world with a Western culture. At the same time, much interpretation of the Word of YHWH is based on the theology of the Western Church whose roots sprang from Rome, not Jerusalem. And the Western Church has always used Greek rather than the original Hebrew tools for interpreting the Bible. Thus, it is no wonder that, while the Church is together in believing in the Messiah, they are widely divided when it comes to doctrines.

The cause of all these doctrinal differences lies clearly in the departure of the Church from her Hebrew roots, which is her only unifying point. The only way to really interpret the Word correctly is to return to the culture and Scriptures of the Jews to understand YHWH from where He has intended for Himself to be revealed and made known; namely, from the *Torah* and the Jewish culture which had evolved around the *Torah* and their life in YHWH. Any other sources of interpretation will definitely turn away from the truth, especially when they are based in paganism, as was the Western Church. Christians are "intended" to be wild olive branches that have been grafted into the olive tree; hence, they need to know the nature of this olive tree and to partake of that same nourishing sap that comes from its roots.

"*An over-Hellenized, over-Latinized Christianity needs a re-Judaizing process to bring it back to its founding Jewish roots and renew it more in keeping with its own inherent ideals*". Edward Flannery - Catholic scholar.

As a result of the drift, YHWH's family is now divided into two kingdoms—Judaism and Christianity. Both have preserved certain truths of YHWH's Word and both have erred. The day is coming when these two factions will be united and become one kingdom (Ezek 37:15-27). Christianity needs to repent for rejecting the *Torah* (biblical patriarchy) and return to embrace it, while Judaism needs to repent for rejecting the Messiah Y'shua and turn their hearts to Him. The people of YHWH are one (*echad*): one kingdom, one *Torah*, one Messiah.

Another puts it this way: "*Both Judaism and Christianity have erred in worshipping the God of Israel. BOTH are guilty. It is not a matter of choosing one over the other. Is today's Judaism biblical? In some cases, it is and in other cases, it is not. They have preserved some truths and departed from others. Is today's Christianity biblical? In some cases it is and in some cases, it is not. Christianity has preserved faith and believes in Y'shua as Messiah. Judaism has preserved our heritage*".

Finally, if there is anything inferior about the Jews, it is because they are compared with Y'shua the Messiah and not because they are compared with the Christians; for they are in every way more superior than the Christians are (Rom 3:1-2) when it comes to knowing the ways of YHWH. Are the Christians, like the Jews, well versed with the specifics concerning matters like raising children, marital and holiness standards, family and community relationships and many other things in life? The answer is no. For to them (the Jews) is committed the oracles of Elohim. That's why Paul cautioned the Gentile believers ought not to exalt themselves but to fear, for what had happened to the Jews may happen to them (rejecting the Truth).

The truth is that Torah was reformed and reshaped—not removed, but perfected in Y'shua the Messiah. It is a deception to think that Y'shua came to do away with Torah. The Jews missed the mark of Y'shua, not because they were under the Law; but rather because they did not have it in their heart, for Y'shua told them that if they had truly obeyed the Law of Moses, they would have known Him because Moses wrote of Him. The majority of the Jews missed Him at the first coming. Will the majority of the Christians miss Him at the Second Coming? Very possible.

It is important to understand that because Yeshua was teaching His disciples the correct manner in which to apply the instructions of the *Torah*, it sometimes caused His *Torah* teachings to conflict with those of the other Rabbis as we will see (Matt 15:1-4).

The Jewish Rabbi

Throughout the Gospel accounts, Y'shua continued to hold to the teachings and customs of the Jewish people as long as they did not contradict the original intention of the *Torah*.

As an adult, it was Y'shua's custom to celebrate the Sabbath and to attend synagogue on a regular basis. There He would have heard the *Torah* and the Prophets read each and every Sabbath and, on occasion, have participated in the service as any good Jewish man would do: "*And He came to Nazareth where He was brought up. And as was His custom, He went in on the day of the sabbaths, into the synagogue, and He stood up to read*". (Luke 4:16)

Y'shua was about thirty years old when He began the public ministry which led to His sacrificial death on the stake. During the years of His early adulthood, Y'shua spent time completing His study of the Scriptures and maturing in His relationships with other people. He also spent time communing with His Father in heaven, learning the true intent of the *Torah* instructions and what the Father would have Him to teach His disciples: "...*The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works*". (John 14:10b)

Y'shua made this same point again when He prayed for His disciples at the Last Supper: "*For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came forth from You; and they have believed that You sent Me*". (John 17:8)

Y'shua came with a direct message from the Father. Yet that message was not a new one; rather, it was the old, old story about faith and trust in YHWH and obedience to the *Torah*. Regarding faith and trust Yeshua said: "*No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life. For God did not send His Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world through Him might be saved*". (John 3:13-17)

Regarding obedience to *Torah*, Y'shua said: "*Do not think that I came to destroy the Law [Torah] or the Prophets, I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. 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. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven*". (Matt 5:17-19)

In this passage, the Greek word for "fulfilled" is *ginomai*, and it is defined as: "to cause to be, to become (come into being)". A better translation might be "...till all is completed". This phrase is a direct reference to a period of time following the Millennium, which is called in Hebrew the *Olam Haba* (the world to come). That is when all will finally be completed and fulfilled.

As of this writing, the physical heaven and physical earth are still in existence, so all has not yet been "fulfilled" or completed. In other words, the *Olam Haba* is not yet here. Therefore, it stands to reason that the *Torah* (Instruction/Law) and the Prophets still stand as written, and will continue to be in effect during the coming one thousand year reign of Y'shua on this earth. This point should be evident from the latter part of the passage where Y'shua taught that even the "least" of the commandments are of great importance when it comes to one's potential position in the Kingdom of YHWH.

Style of Teaching

During the time of Y'shua, there were two classic styles which the rabbis used to teach their students. The predominant style was called *Halacha*, which is defined as the 'way one walks'. To teach in the *halachic* method involved expounding on various points of law as found in the *Torah* and in the oral traditions.

However, it was not Y'shua's general practice to teach *Halacha*; rather, He primarily used a style called *Aggadah*. The *Aggadic* style employed stories and parables, which were directed towards causing the student to understand a concept of truth or a principle of moral behaviour. Y'shua often employed parables

which, when properly understood, infused the hearer with profound understandings concerning proper behaviour. Instead of listing a set of rules to follow, Y'shua helped the disciples understand moral principles which they could apply in other situations as well.

One of Yeshua's Aggadic teachings was the Parable of the Good Samaritan. It was preceded by the following question concerning how to inherit eternal life:

"And behold, a certain lawyer stood up and tested Him, saying, 'Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?'

He said to him, 'What is written in the law (Torah)? What is your reading of it?' (Notice how Y'shua immediately directed the man to the Torah.)

So he answered and said, "You shall love the LORD your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind", and "your neighbor as yourself". And He said to him, 'You have answered rightly; do this and you will live'. But he, wanting to justify himself, said to Jesus, 'And who is my neighbor?'" (Luke 10:25-29)

This interchange provided Y'shua with an opportunity to teach a broad principle about caring for the needs of others, no matter who they might be; for at that time the Jews and Samaritans were bitter enemies:

"Then Jesus answered and said: 'A certain man went down from Jerusalem to Jericho, and fell among thieves, who stripped him of his clothing, wounded him, and departed, leaving him half dead.

(31) *'Now by chance a certain priest came down that road. And when he saw him, he passed by on the other side.*

Likewise a Levite, when he arrived at the place, came and looked, and passed by on the other side. 'But a certain Samaritan, as he journeyed, came where he was. And when he saw him, he had compassion.

(34) *So he went to him and bandaged his wounds, pouring on oil and wine; and he set him on his own animal, brought him to an inn, and took care of him.*

(35) *'On the next day, when he departed, he took out two denarii, gave them to the innkeeper, and said to him, "Take care of him; and whatever more you spend, when I come again, I will repay you".*

(36) *'So which of these three do you think was neighbor to him who fell among the thieves?'*

(37) *And he said, 'He who showed mercy on him'. Then Jesus said to him, 'Go and do likewise'.* (Luke 10:30-37)

In this story, both the Priest and the Levite had cause to not want to investigate the man who was lying by the side of the road. For if he were already dead and they touched him, they would incur corpse uncleanness and be disqualified from serving in the Temple for a period of seven days.

Y'shua used this story to point out the fact that the life of a person is more important than being able to participate in Temple service. Interestingly enough, this is exactly the position that was taught by most of the other Jewish teachers of Y'shua's day. According to classic Jewish teaching, saving a life takes precedence over all other *Torah* commands. Y'shua was not teaching some new thing here; rather, He was expressing the majority opinion of the sages.

Y'shua was not a rebel or a renegade opposed to the Jewish teaching of His day; rather, he was the greatest of all Jewish rabbis who taught the *Torah* in its fullness, the way it was intended to be taught. Rather than being a marginal Jew, Y'shua was the quintessential (the pure, highly concentrated essence of a thing) Jew.

Table Fellowship

Just as there are factions and differences of opinion in the Christian community today, the same was also true among First Century Believers. Like their non-believing Jewish brethren, the early Jewish Believers thought that Gentiles could not become a part of their assemblies unless they first went through the traditional conversion process and became Jews. This process involved at least a one year period during which the person seeking membership would receive instruction in the *Torah* by attending synagogue and hearing Moses being read each week, plus learning their oral traditions and customs. People in this status were called "Godfearers".

Once a Godfearer had learned enough about the *Torah* and the traditions and customs of the Jews, he/she was ready to become a "Proselyte". This involved circumcision (for the men), immersion in a *mikveh* (immersion pool), and the offering of a sacrifice at the Temple. Only then could a Gentile be brought into full fellowship in the synagogue and enjoy table fellowship (eating of meals together) with other Jews. This is why the believing Jews of Jerusalem were skeptical when word reached them that Peter had eaten a meal at the home of Cornelius: "*Now the apostles and brethren who were in Judea heard that the Gentiles had also*

received the word of God. And when Peter came up to Jerusalem, those of the circumcision contended with him, saying, ‘You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!’” (Acts 11:1-3)

Instead of rejoicing at the fact that YHWH was beginning to work among the Gentiles, the Jerusalem Jewish Believers were upset because Peter had allowed himself to become ritually unclean by eating a meal with Gentiles. However, to their credit, once Peter had explained all that had happened, including his vision and subsequent journey to Caesarea, their hearts were changed: “*When they heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, ‘Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life’*”. (Acts 11:17-18)

The issue was always about social contact with Gentiles, and this was only because so many rules had been added concerning such contact. Social contact was also the issue when Peter went to Antioch. The issue there was never about giving up their Jewishness or abandoning the *Torah*.

Shaul the Pharisee

The Apostle Paul's given name was *Shaul* (Shaw-ool = Saul). *Shaul* was a Jew from the beginning and, as we shall see, remained Jewish all of his life.

Shaul taught that all people (both Jew and Gentile) have sinned and come short of the glory of YHWH and need to be forgiven for their sins so they will not have to die the second death. According to *Shaul*, forgiveness of this magnitude could only be obtained through the acceptance of the sacrificial death of *Y'shua HaMashiach* on the stake. However, once forgiveness had been obtained through the grace of Elohim, *Shaul* taught that the forgiven individual needed to stop sinning: “*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)

And what exactly is sin? “*Whoever commits sin also commits lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness. And you know that He was manifested to take away our sins, and in Him there is no sin*”. (1 John 3:4-5)

And what is lawlessness? It is being without *Torah*, for it is the *Torah* which defines sin. This is why *Shaul* could say: “*Therefore the law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good*”. (Rom 7:12)

Shaul was a *Torah* observant Jew all of his life. He was a Pharisee, the sect that was noted for being very particular about keeping the Law of YHWH. Paul claimed late in his life that he was still a Pharisee: “*Men and brethren, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee...*” (Acts 23:6)

While in prison in Rome, *Shaul* sent a letter to the Philippians in which he wrote: “*For we are the circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh, though I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless*”. (Phil 3:3-6)

Shaul kept the *Torah* all of his life. Yet he realised that it was not his works Righteousness that would gain him salvation, but rather it was his Faith Righteousness.

Not only did *Shaul* keep the *Torah* all of his life—he also kept the customs and traditions of the Jews as well. How do we know this? By his own testimony. First of all, *Shaul* had Timothy circumcised because he was Jewish from his mother's side: “*Paul wanted to have him (Timothy) go on with him. And he took him and circumcised him because of the Jews who were in that region, for they all knew that his father was Greek*”. (Acts 16:3)

Actually, the term “Greek” could also refer to the possibility that Timothy's father was a Hellenistic Jew—some of whom had abandoned circumcision.

Shaul went to synagogue on the Sabbath day as a matter of course: “*Then Paul, as his custom was, went in to them, and for three Sabbaths reasoned with them from the Scriptures...*” (Acts 17:2)

Shaul took a Nazarite vow (see Num 6) which required him to remain ritually clean for the duration of that vow: “*He had his hair cut off at Cenchrea, for he had taken a vow*”. (Acts 18:18b)

He observed the Biblical Festivals: "For Paul had decided to sail past Ephesus, so that he would not have to spend time in Asia; for he was hurrying to be at Jerusalem, if possible, on the Day of Pentecost". (Acts 20:16)

Shaul offered sacrifice at the Temple, not just for himself but for others as well. This was years after he had accepted Y'shua as his Saviour and Messiah. The occasion was his last visit to Jerusalem, when he met with Ya'acov (James) and the other leaders of the Jerusalem Believing community. False rumours about his teaching had preceded Shaul to Jerusalem, so he was advised by Ya'acov that when he cleared himself from his own vow, he should also pay to have four other Believers absolved of their vows as well: "Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men (Believers) who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the law. ... Then Paul took the men, and the next day, having been purified with them, entered the temple to announce the expiration of the days of purification, at which time an offering should be made for each one of them". (Acts 21:23-24, 26)

It is most interesting to note that *Shaul* and four other Jewish Believers were offering sacrifice at the Temple almost thirty years after Messiah Yeshua's death and resurrection. It is only after the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD and the Jews were dispersed into the nations (Diaspora), that the Aaronic priesthood ended and the sacrifices stopped, but as said it will continue again in the Millennial Reign.

By his own mouth, *Shaul* declared that he had never willingly broken the *Torah* commands: "When he had come, the Jews (non-believing) who had come down from Jerusalem stood about and laid many serious complaints against Paul, which they could not prove, while he answered for himself, 'Neither against the law of the Jews, nor against the temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all'". (Acts 25:7-8)

Finally, when *Shaul* arrived in Rome for his imprisonment, he once again reiterated his claim that he not only had kept the *Torah* all of his life, but that he also had observed the traditions of the Jews as well: "And it came to pass after three days that Paul called the leaders of the Jews together. So when they had come together, he said to them: 'Men and brethren, though I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers, yet I was delivered as a prisoner from Jerusalem into the hands of the Romans, who when they had examined me, wanted to let me go, because there was no cause for putting me to death'". (Acts 28:17-18)

Thus we see that *Shaul* (Paul), was a *Torah* and Tradition observant Jew all of his life. This should be a profound testimony to all Believers.

Moral and ethical matters

Although some 170 of the 613 Laws of the *Torah* apply to moral and ethical matters, few Christians recognise them as a part of modern theology and it has fallen to the Jewish people to preserve this aspect of YHWH's Law until the present. It appears that the chosen people status was not awarded as a special privilege, but because the people of Israel could be trusted to preserve the Law of YHWH (Psalms 105:45).

5:21 You have heard it was said...

"Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment."

One of the teachings of Judaism regarding Messiah (to this day) is that He will come and teach His people the deeper points of the *Torah*. Y'shua does just this in the remaining verses of chapter five. He begins with the expression, "Ye have heard it was said". This He does, both to draw his audience's attention to a specific point, as well as to make a distinction between His opinion on a matter of *Torah* and any other(s) of His time. He is offering His authoritative interpretations on how to follow the commandments. In the Judaism of Y'shua, these are called *halachtic rulings*. Later in this Gospel, we will see Y'shua extending this authority to His apostles. We also see Paul issuing such halachic rulings in several of his epistles.

It is important to realise that Y'shua did not come to "correct all the misguided teachings of the Pharisees". (This thought is commonly expressed in religions that have little understanding of the Judaism of Y'shua's time. See section, "James the Brother of Y'shua", under "Matt 13:53-54 And when he was come into his own country".)

First, it should be noted that there was no dominating consensus among the Pharisees and other religious groups at that time. A brief look at the Pharasaic writings in the *Talmud* show a diversity of opinion, including many that argue against each other. This is called *arguing for the sake of HaShem* (God—"The Name").

Secondly, *Y'shua* actually supported most Pharasaic opinions on the *Torah* that eventually were captured in the text of the *Talmud*. *Y'shua* not only quoted and supported Pharisaic teaching, He also upheld the religious authority of the Pharisees. He told the people to obey the Pharisees, as they "sat in Moses' seat", meaning their authority came from YHWH. (Matt 23:1-3)

There were two majority schools of rabbinic thought at that time: the school of Rabbi (see Glossary section for more info) and the school of Rabbi Shammai (both of whom had died prior to *Y'shua's* ministry). Hillel was the grandfather of Gamliel, who was the leader of the Sanhedrin and who taught the apostle Paul. Hillel's teachings were thought to be more liberal than those of Shammai. As we will see, throughout the Gospels, *Y'shua* is often agreeing with an already existing Pharasaic interpretation of Scripture.

The main point is that *Y'shua's* comments are within the framework of Pharasaic discussion. Unfortunately, the term "Pharisee" has a totally negative meaning today, even though many Pharisees were godly men and some followed *Y'shua* (i.e., Paul, Nicodemus, and the factions mentioned in Acts 15 and Luke 13:31). As uncomfortable as many would find in hearing this, *Y'shua* Himself would have been regarded as a Pharisee. When the Pharisees went out to question *Yochanan* the Immerser about who *Yochanan* was, he said that one among THEM (the Pharisees) was the Messiah to come (John 1:26-27).

The Pharisees themselves were highly critical of one another, saying there were "seven kinds of Pharisees", and not all were good. (*Babylonian Talmud*, tractate Sotah 22b.) The disciples of Hillel went so far as calling those of Shammai, "sons of Satan", in a similar fashion to what *Y'shua* called some of them. (*Babylonian Talmud*, tractate Yevamot, footnotes #14 to 16a: "*Literally 'the first-born of Satan'*".) When we see *Y'shua* rebuking the Pharisees, it is very much a "family argument", and needs to be understood as such.

In verses 21-48, *Y'shua* brings up a number of issues surrounding actual commandments. As we will see, he often quotes directly from the *Talmudic* writings of the Pharisees. He is addressing the "fences" (safeguards) placed around the *Torah*: in some cases supporting the ones the Pharisees put in place; in other places he offers His own "fences".

Thou shall not kill...

"*Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment:*" (Matt 5:21)

This is a direct commentary on the sixth commandment (which is actually against "murder", and not "killing"). Note that when He says, "*But I say unto you*" (verse 22), He is not canceling the commandment as murder is still sin and will bring judgment. Rather, He is showing that, in addition to following the letter of the commandments, one should go beyond the minimum requirements as we grow in our relationship with Elohim.

Within Jewish orthodoxy, one would keep the sixth commandment so long as he did not commit murder. *Y'shua* went beyond the prohibition of the act of murder to the attitude of anger which prompts it. To hold a bitter resentment toward another is to be guilty of violating YHWH's prohibition of murder. We sometimes say, "If looks could kill, I'd be dead". We mean that the anger (which can result in murder) is written on one's face. That slow-burning, long-harboured anger is sin; and so is that explosive anger which has a hair-trigger.

5:22 But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother...

"*But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire*".

This comment is on the heels of 5:13-21 where *Y'shua* says he is teaching *Torah* "correctly" (in its fullness) to His Jewish audience, so that they can take this *Torah* out to the world.

Y'shua makes a connection between murder in verse 21, and "speaking evil" of someone in verse 22. This was not a "new teaching", but it had been greatly overlooked by that time. Such "evil speaking" is speaking "*Lashon Hara*" (Evil Tongue) against a person, and is equated with murder throughout Jewish literature. In the book of "James" (Ya'acov is his real name), it also speaks of "the tongue" to great length.

Y'shua is reminding the people that "character assassination" is as bad a "physical assassination" in YHWH's sight. This is the higher level of *Torah* that He taught – All part of His greater command to "Love one another".

This is also the first of many examples we will demonstrate of Y'shua supporting Pharasaic Talmud: Babylonian Talmud, Bava Mezia 58b: "*One who shames the face of his fellow, it is as if he has murdered him*".

The expression "Raca" is probably of Aramaic origin and one which reflects on the intelligence of the one so called. It could mean something like 'blockhead' or 'empty-head'. In our idiom, it might be expressed as 'idiot', 'stupid', 'lame brain', or some similar expression. These are the kind of outbursts which we could lash out as we are driving along and someone makes a foolish decision that affects (and angers) us. 'You fool' does not belittle a man's intelligence so much as it challenges his moral character. Such a fool was described in Psalm 14:1—He is the kind of man who says, "*There is no God (Elohim)*".

Sanhedrin

"But I say unto you, That whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whosoever shall say to his brother, Raca, shall be in danger of the council (Sanhedrin): but whosoever shall say, Thou fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. (Matt 5:22)

Sanhedrin is the Hebrew for "Assembly". During the rabbinic period, the Sanhedrin was an assembly of 71 scholars which acted as a Supreme Court and Legislature. The Nasi and Av Bet Din were in charge. Before A.D. 70, it convened in the Temple chamber; later it met in various centres. Its duties consisted of proclaiming the *Rosh Hodesh* (new moon), declaring leap years, and reaching decisions regarding questions of Law.

It was discontinued before the Fourth Century. During the 16th century, Joseph Caro and Jacob Berab unsuccessfully attempted to revive ordination in Palestine to create a new Sanhedrin. The term 'Sanhedrin' also refers to the fourth Tractate in the *Mishnah* order of *Nezikin*. It deals with courts of justice and judicial procedure; it also contains a list of Sins that exclude a person from entering into the afterlife.

5:23-24 First be reconciled to thy brother

"(23) Therefore if thou bring thy gift to the altar, and there rememberest that thy brother hath ought against thee; (24) Leave there thy gift before the altar, and go thy way; first be reconciled to thy brother, and then come and offer thy gift".

We know that if anger is sin and if sin affects one's relationship with Elohim, then one cannot truly worship Elohim while harbouring anger in his heart. The one who remembers a grievance between himself and another should deal with it immediately, even before his acts of worship and devotion. What is interesting in this passage is the assumption that someone else has a grievance with us. Even though I may harbour no ill feelings toward this brother, he has hard feelings against me. If I am to take the initiative in healing this situation, surely I must act to bring reconciliation and restoration in situations where I am the one who feels wronged.

A second application is made in the area of civil law. If there is a legal dispute pending against us, we should make every effort to "settle out of court". Again, the emphasis falls upon dealing with anger quickly and decisively. The longer anger is allowed to go untended, the more it will grow. Legalism looks to the law to settle disputes; Y'shua says that love should arbitrate our differences. When we choose to reconcile in love, we remain friends; and the matter is settled much more simply. When we rely on the Law to arbitrate, we are subject to the severest penalties. I have never seen a dispute between two parties settled in the law courts where they left as friends and they felt as though they had come out ahead.

The concept of "reconciliation" can be a difficult one for believers to understand properly. One may ask, *If all my sins are forgiven by my faith, why do I have to ask forgiveness from anyone?* A different but related question might be, *If YHWH can't stand sin, why is it each time a person breaks a commandment, a lightning bolt doesn't descend from heaven and strike him?*

Reconciliation has a place in the answer to both questions.

As believers, we have salvation from Elohim; but we are still called to forgive others and ask forgiveness when we've wronged them. Concepts such as "eternal security" have no place in a Hebraic discussion of

"faith". Not one person in the Bible took their salvation for granted—before or after Y'shua. The Messiah makes it clear that if we don't forgive, we won't be forgiven.

The sacrificial system of the *Tenach* played a major role in reconciliation and was the reason more "lightning bolts" didn't come down from the heavenlies to smite people. Y'shua is presently fulfilling this role for us in the heavenlies (1 John 2:2); hence, at this time there is no need for the day to day sacrifices of reconciliation.

This teaching also parallels that found in the *Talmud*:

Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 85b: "*Yom Kippur atones for all sins, but first you must reconcile your conflict with others*".

Learning Our Husband's Ways

We should, as Believers in Messiah Y'shua, learn everything possible about the life and times of our betrothed Husband. In order to do this, we must learn about the time, the place, and the customs of the people to whom Y'shua was sent—to the Jews of Judea and to "...*the lost sheep of the house of Israel*" (Matt 15:24).

Y'shua was not sent as a Roman or a Greek, nor was He sent among the people living in what we call today India, China, or Japan; even though all of those people now have access to Him through His sacrifice on the stake.

During His earthly ministry, Y'shua was only able to gather to Himself a relatively small number of Jewish disciples: "*And in those days (after the ascension of Y'shua to heaven) Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty)...*" (Acts 1:15)

However, once the *Ruach HaKodesh* (the Holy Spirit) arrived, the number of Jewish Believers increased tremendously; so that on the Day of Pentecost "... *those who gladly received his word were baptized; and that day about three thousand souls were added to them*". (Acts 2:41)

These new Believers were both natural born Jews and Jewish Proselytes: "... *'how is it that we hear, each in our own language in which we were born? Parthians and Medes and Elamites, those dwelling in Mesopotamia, Judea and Cappadocia, Pontus and Asia, Phrygia and Pamphylia, Egypt and the parts of Libya adjoining Cyrene, visitors from Rome, both Jews and proselytes, Cretans and Arabs -- we hear them speaking in our own tongues the wonderful works of God'*". (Acts 2:8-11)

The people who were at the Temple that day (where these events occurred) were all considered Jewish, even though they had come from the Four Corners of the known earth. This fact was confirmed when Peter addressed them saying, "*Men of Israel, hear these words:*" (Acts 2:22)

Combine this information with the knowledge that all those who come to Y'shua and accept Him as their Saviour become 'grafted-in' to the Commonwealth of Israel, whether they are members of the 'lost' tribes of the House of Israel or Gentiles: "*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*". (Rom 11:17-18)

So all Believers become part of the Commonwealth of Israel: "*And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise*". (Gal 3:29)

5:25-30 Thou shalt not commit adultery

"(25) Agree with thine adversary quickly, whiles thou art in the way with him; lest at any time the adversary deliver thee to the judge, and the judge deliver thee to the officer, and thou be cast into prison. (26) Verily I say unto thee, Thou shalt by no means come out thence, till thou hast paid the uttermost farthing. (27) Ye have heard that it was said by them of old time, Thou shalt not commit adultery: (28) But I say unto you, That whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath committed adultery with her already in his heart. (29) And if thy right eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell. (30) And if thy right hand offend thee, cut it off, and cast it from thee: for it is profitable for thee that one of thy members should perish, and not that thy whole body should be cast into hell".

In a similar fashion to his teaching on murder, Y'shua says lust in the heart is as much a sin as committing the act of adultery. The ensuing verses on "plucking out" your own eye are obviously not to be carried out

literally. Y'shua is, however, teaching that we have a responsibility to deal with our "evil inclination" (Hebrew = *yetzer ha'ra*).

Here, Y'shua is supporting two existing teachings of the Pharisees:

Babylonian Talmud, Kallah, Ch. 1: "*One who gazes lustfully upon the small finger of a married woman, it is as if he has committed adultery with her.*"

Babylonian Talmud, Niddah 13b: "*Better that one's belly burst than one should go down to the pit of destruction.*"

Believers do not take the words of verses 29 and 30 seriously enough. Is there never an occasion where a sincere man of faith might undergo surgery to become a eunuch for the sake of the Gospel? When, then, did Y'shua tell His disciples, "... *there are eunuchs who were born that way from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men; and there are also eunuchs who made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the Kingdom of heaven...*" (Matt 19:12). It may not be often that a Believer would need to consider surgery, but I would not dare to say that such a time could never come.

Getting to the heart of the matter, I believe what Y'shua is saying here is that unless we view the sin of adultery (including immoral thoughts) as so offensive to YHWH that we would be willing to undergo sexual surgery to solve the problem (if it would), we do not see this sin from Y'shua's perspective. Much of the immorality within the Believing community can be directly related to a casual attitude toward sexual sin.

5:31-32 Whosoever shall put away his wife...

"(31) It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorce: (32) But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery". (Matt 5:31-32)

Here is a rare case where Y'shua sides with the school of Shammai rather than Hillel (see Glossary section for more information). Shammai taught exactly as Y'shua did regarding this matter, interpreting "uncleanness" in the *Torah* commandment solely as sexual immorality. The school of Hillel offered a broader interpretation, allowing for a man to divorce his wife for many things that "did not find favour in his sight". Y'shua holds "to the letter of the law" in this case.

"We know that a current controversy about divorce was being conducted between the rival rabbinic schools of Hillel and Shammai. Rabbi Shammai took a rigorist line, and taught from Deuteronomy 24:1 that the sole ground for divorce was some grave matrimonial offence, something evidently 'unseemly', or 'indecent'. Rabbi Hillel, on the other hand, held a very lax view. If we can trust the Jewish historian Josephus, this was the common attitude, for he applied the Mosiac provision to a man who 'desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatsoever'. Similarly Hillel, arguing that the ground for divorce was something 'unseemly', interpreted this term in the widest possible way to include a wife's most trivial offences. If she proved to be an incompetent cook and burnt her husband's food, or if he lost interest in her because of her plain looks and because he became enamoured of some other more beautiful woman, these things were 'unseemly' and justified him in divorcing her". (Chrysostom (p. 93). as quoted by John R. W. Stott, *Christian Counter Culture* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1978), p. 71.)

Closely related to the prohibition of adultery is the biblical position on divorce. The Scribes and Pharisees assumed that divorce was a biblical option. They only quibbled over the grounds for divorce. Some felt a man could divorce his wife for virtually any reason; others only for marital impurity. Their interest was entirely procedural. But Y'shua refused to speak on this issue. Instead, He went back to the divine intention for marriage. Granted, YHWH had permitted divorce (not commanded it, as the Scribes maintained, Matt 19:7-8), but He did so only due to the hardness of men's hearts (Matt 19:8). The divine purpose, as described in Genesis, was that one man and one woman should be permanently united until separated by death. In the light of this purpose, Y'shua made a statement which was designed to discourage any divorce: *"But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except for the cause of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery"* (Matt 5:32).

One must recognise by the brevity of Y'shua's teaching on the subject of divorce here, that this is not the full revelation on divorce. Because the Scribes had focused on the exception (some 'indecency', Deut 24:1, which varied in Jewish interpretation from adultery to burning the breakfast eggs) and made it the rule, Y'shua here refused to expound on the exception—only to mention it. He stressed the principle of YHWH's attitude toward all (unbiblical) divorce. Unbiblical divorce leads to the sin of adultery on the part of the initiator of it (usually the husband in Y'shua's day, Matt 19:9); it puts the 'innocent' (or at least passive party) in a position where she will seek marriage to another, thereby committing adultery (Matt 5:32).

Here is yet another insight into the matter of legalism. Legalism looks only at the rules, Biblical liberty at the reason behind the rules. While the Law permitted divorce, we should avoid it at all costs.

Divorce

Divorce is inconsistent with the divine purpose and design for marriage (Genesis 2).

Unbiblical divorce is sin, and as such, YHWH hates separating from your wife and not giving her a Get (a Bill of Divorce document). This is what Y'shua meant by "put away". Nevertheless, YHWH has made provision for man's sinfulness. The bill of divorce was given as a protection for the innocent or passive party, thereby enabling them to remarry (Deut 24:1ff.). According to Barclay, the Jewish bill of divorce simply ran: "*Let this be from me thy writ of divorce and letter of dismissal and deed of liberation, that thou mayest marry whatsoever man thou wilt*". (William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1963), I, p. 149.)

YHWH permitted divorce, but never is it commanded (Matt 19:7-8).

Only in the case of spiritual or physical adultery is divorce permitted; and even here it is not commanded or encouraged. Forgiveness and a desire for reconciliation should be the attitude of the offended party. The Old Covenant example of Hosea and Gomer and the New Covenant model of Messiah and His bride (Eph 5:22f.) should be our pattern when our partner has been unfaithful.

The 'innocent' or 'non-aggressive' partner is not encouraged to initiate a divorce; but when the other party does seek divorce, Believers are not to legally resist this action, for we are 'called to peace' (1 Cor 7:10ff, especially verse 15).

If a person has been divorced by their partner on unbiblical grounds, it would seem best that they not remarry until after the initiator of the divorce has done so. This leaves the door open for reconciliation and keeps the innocent party from sexual involvement before the first marriage has been broken by the sexual immorality of the initiator. When the initiating party has remarried, not only has the previous marriage been terminated by adultery, but the Old Covenant forbids the first wife to be rejoined to her first husband anyway (Deut 24:1-4).

Anyone whose marriage has been biblically terminated is free to remarry without moral blame (Matt 5:31; 1 Cor 7:15, 27-28).

Desertion (by an unbeliever) is also grounds for divorce (1 Cor 7:15). According to Matt 18:15-17, especially verse 17, it is understood that a 'professed Believer' who refused to repent or to reconcile with his mate would then be treated as an unbeliever. In such a case, 1 Cor 7:15ff would apply to him as the unbelieving husband (or wife).

5:33-37 Thou shalt not forswear thyself

"(33) Again, ye have heard that it hath been said by them of old time, *Thou shalt not forswear thyself, but shalt perform unto the Lord thine oaths*: (34) But I say unto you, *Swear not at all; neither by heaven; for it is God's throne*: (35) *Nor by the earth; for it is his footstool: neither by Jerusalem; for it is the city of the great King*. (36) *Neither shalt thou swear by thy head, because thou canst not make one hair white or black*. (37) *But let your communication be, Yea, yea; Nay, nay: for whatsoever is more than these cometh of evil*".

This has nothing to do with the *Torah*-based practice of making an oath to YHWH. Rather, it is dealing with the practice of invoking YHWH's name or any part of YHWH's creation into common oaths (i.e., taking the Lord's name in vain).

This is yet another *Talmudic* teaching reinforced by Y'shua:

Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 49b: "*A righteous yes is a Yes; a righteous no is No*".

It should also be noted that the Essenes also made it a point not to take oaths other than the one someone took to enter into their brotherhood. Here we have a case where the Pharisees and Essenes may be in agreement.

The Old Testament Law and Oaths

The Old Covenant has much to say about the taking of oaths:

"*You shall not swear by My name falsely*" (Lev 19:12)

"*When a man makes a vow to YHWH or swears an oath ... he shall not break his word*". (Num 30:2)

"*When you shall make a vow to Jehovah your God, you shall not be slack to pay it*". (Deut 23:21)

YHWH had not forbidden the taking of an oath, but had cautioned the one who makes a vow to keep his word. There were two abuses of the oath in the days of Y'shua. One might be called *frivolous swearing*. It

was common practice to dress up an ordinary statement by attaching some kind of oath, such as “*By thy Life*”, or, “*May I never see the comfort of Israel if...*” The same practice is common today, particularly in the use of profanity. Men use oaths (or profanity) in order to give emphasis to their words—words of no real consequence. This is the kind of oath-taking forbidden by the Old Covenant commandment, “*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain...*” (Exod 20:7). Technically speaking, profanity is the common or indiscriminate use of YHWH’s name. And this YHWH Elohim has forbidden.

The second abuse of an oath was more deliberate and malicious. It was the use of evasive swearing. Here, the emphasis of the Old Covenant revelation was shifted from what might be called substantive righteousness to procedural or technical righteousness. YHWH Elohim had said, “*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*”. They shifted the emphasis: “*You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain*”. There is a substantial difference. An oath was not so much a matter of keeping your word, but of phrasing your vow in such a way that you evaded your commitment. Any vow, which included the name of YHWH, was considered a solemn oath which must be kept. But any vow which carefully avoided the name of YHWH, was not technically binding. One could thus swear by heaven, or Jerusalem, or the temple, or his head, and not feel bound to his oath. The effect was that people would be deceived in taking a man at his word (or vow), but the man himself felt no obligation to live by his word.

Later in the Gospel of Matthew, Y’shua had scathing words of rebuke for those who practiced this kind of casuistry:

“*Woe to you, blind guides, who say, ‘Whoever swears by the temple, that is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obligated’. You fools and blind men; which is more important? The gold, or the temple that sanctified the gold? And, ‘Whoever swears by the altar, that is nothing, but whoever swears by the offering upon it, he is obligated’. You blind men, which is more important, the offering or the altar that sanctifies the offering? Therefore he who swears, swears both by the altar and by everything on it. And he, who swears by the temple, swears both by the temple and by Him who dwells within it. And he who swears by heaven, swears both by the throne of God and by Him who sits upon it*” (Matt 23:16-22).

Y’shua is saying that no matter what I do as a Believer, I make Elohim a partner in my actions and commitments (1 Cor 6:12-20). Whether I vow using YHWH’s name, or some part of Elohim’s creation (my head, Jerusalem, etc.), I have still involved YHWH in my oath. It is shallow thinking to suppose that the avoidance of the name of Elohim divorces Him from an interest in my commitments.

Y’shua’s interpretation of the Old Covenant revelation restored proper emphasis in this matter. When you give your word, keep it. Vows are only needed when one’s integrity is in question. Live an honest and reputable life and avoid having to emphasise the truthfulness of your statements or commitments. Say what you mean, and mean what you say.

5:38-42 Eye for an eye...

“(38) *Ye have heard that it hath been said, An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth: (39) But I say unto you, That ye resist not evil: but whosoever shall smite thee on thy right cheek, turn to him the other also. (40) And if any man will sue thee at the law, and take away thy coat, let him have thy cloke also. (41) And whosoever shall compel thee to go a mile, go with him twain. (42) Give to him that asketh thee, and from him that would borrow of thee turn not thou away.*” (Matt 5:38-42)

This is one of the most commonly misunderstood concepts of Judaism. Ask most people and they will say that this has something to do with “retaliation in the Old Covenant” versus “love and forgiveness in the New Testament”. This is incorrect – Judaism has never interpreted the verse in this fashion. The *Torah* command regarding “*eye for eye*” had to do with providing for limited liability in matters of legal compensation. Here, Y’shua is teaching to go beyond the minimum required of you, especially when you have wronged someone.

The Old Testament and Retaliation

Perhaps no standard of justice is better known than this one: “*An eye for an eye, and a tooth for a tooth*” (Exod 21:24; Lev 24:20; Deut 19:21). Some of the Scribes’ and Pharisees’ interpretation took this instruction as biblical support for retaliation and revenge. If someone says something against me, I have every right to do so against him. If you hit me in the face, you’d better expect the same from me.

Y’shua reminded His listeners that this was never intended as a proof-text for revenge, but as a principle of justice. This is especially clear in the passage in Deut 19:16-18. This is an administration principle of justice, given as a guideline for the judges who arbitrate a dispute or a claim. The very purpose of this system was to

avoid personal revenge and vigilante law. Whenever we begin to retaliate, we always do so to a greater degree than when we were injured. No one has put this more plainly than Nikita Krushchev:

"We Communists have many things in common with the teachings of Christ. My sole difference with Christ is that when someone hits me on the right cheek, I hit him on the left so hard that his head falls off". (Nikita Krushchev, as quoted by David W. Augsburger, *Seventy Times Seven, The Freedom of Forgiveness* (Chicago: Moody, 1970), p. 118.)

The principle of both the Old and New Covenants is that we are not to retaliate against those who wrongfully use us; instead, we are to go beyond the minimum required of us, and in a cheerful spirit (Lev 19:18; Prov 25:21; 24:29; Lam 3:30). Four specific examples of response to distasteful situations are given.

The first comes out of a direct personal insult. What is described is not a right cross or fatal knife wound. It is an insulting slap on the right cheek given by the back of the hand. It was not so much an attempt to do bodily harm, but a deliberate effort to insult and perhaps provoke retaliation. We should 'go the extra mile' by giving opportunity to strike the other cheek to such an encounter. Here is a willingness to accept insult without revenge.

The second comes from the law courts. If someone should sue you for your shirt, you should be willing to go beyond this demand and give your outer garment as well. This is very interesting, because the Old Covenant forbade the keeping of one's outer garment overnight as it was that person's source of warmth and protection (Exod 22:26-27; Deut 24:12-13; etc.). It was, in effect, his blanket. What a man had every right to keep, he was to willingly give up in order to maintain harmony and unity (1 Cor 6:1-11, esp. verse 7).

The third illustration comes from the context of an occupied territory, under the military rule of Rome. Under such conditions, one might expect to find himself impressed into service (Matt 27:32). In such a case, service ought to be rendered with an attitude of willingness to do even beyond what was demanded. A spirit of cooperation is evidenced rather than one of begrudging service and rebellion.

Fourth, we are not to turn aside one who asks to borrow from us (verse 42). True Believer charity cheerfully responds to the needs of others. This was taught in the Old Covenant Law (Deut 15:7-11; Prov 19:17; 28:27; 31:20, etc.). Generous, cheerful giving to the one in need was YHWH's way for His people.

See explanation of verse 40 at Matt 23:5 under "Everyday Dress".

5:43-44 Love thy neighbour and hate thine enemy

"(43) Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. (44) But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you".

This is not a new concept, as the *Torah* taught love for one's enemy, too (Lev 19:18). *Y'shua* is giving the rationale behind the command.

This idea is found several places in *Talmud*:

Babylonian Talmud, Yoma 23a, Gitin 36b, Shabbat 88b: *"They who are insulted but insult not back; who hear themselves reproached but answer not; who serve out of love and rejoice in their affliction--of them it is written in Scripture: They that love God are as the going forth of the sun in its might".*

Who Is My Neighbour?

Nowhere is the abuse of the Old Covenant Scripture by the Scribes more evident than it is here: *"Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy"*. Here is a statement which finds no support in the Scriptures at all. The narrowness and sectarianism (devotion to a religious sect) of Judaism looked only within the ranks of their own to find their neighbour. It was no accident that the lawyer asked *Y'shua*, *"And who is my neighbor?"* (Luke 10:29). This was a crucial question to the Jews.

The Jews could easily proof-text their hatred of the Gentiles. After all, YHWH ordered Israel to kill all the Canaanites. The Psalmist prayed for the downfall of the wicked, who were his enemies. YHWH brought death and destruction to the Egyptians during the Exodus. Should not the Jew show love toward his fellow-Jews (the upstanding ones) and hatred toward the rest?

The Old Covenant instructed the Israelites to show kindness toward the foreigner, and even to their enemies (Exod 23:4-5; Prov 25:21-22). One's neighbour, as *Y'shua* clearly taught in the parable of the Good

Samaritan, was anyone in need. It was not enough to cease from retaliation. True faith goes even further than this—we are to return good for evil. This is the distinctiveness of true believers.

Different groups of people will tend to respond warmly to their own kind. Gentiles love Gentiles and Jews love Jews. The kind of love we must reflect is love for our enemies. In common grace, Elohim gives blessings (rain and sun) to all men without distinction. If we are to reflect Him, we must be indiscriminate in our acts of goodness, also.

Narrowness is often one of the criticisms against believers. Oftentimes this criticism is justified. According to YHWH's Word, it has no place among believers.

5:45-47 Sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust

"(45) That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. (46) For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? (47) And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more than others? do not even the publicans so?"

There are times when it seems as though "the wicked prosper" and "the righteous suffer". As such, (and in light of all the previous comments on the *Torah*) Y'shua reminds His audience that our reward is not on this earth but in heaven.

This teaching is also found in Talmud:

Babylonian Talmud, Taanit 7a: "*God causes it to rain for the wicked as well as for the righteous*".

5:48 Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect

"(48) Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect".

The Greek word, *teleios* (perfect), means "to be complete". This teaching mirrors the following: Sifri, Ekev No. 49: "*As God is, so shall you be: As God is merciful, so shall you too, be merciful*".

The Apostles

Some have said that although Yeshua did live and teach as a Jew, His followers soon abandoned their Jewishness and started a new religion; which became known as Christianity. This is simply not true.

Consider the case of Peter, who received the following accusation from his fellow Apostle, Paul: *"But when Peter had come to Antioch, I withheld him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. ... But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, 'If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews?'"* (Gal 2:11-12, 14)

This was a stinging condemnation. At issue here was the traditional Jewish attitude of that day concerning social intercourse with Gentiles. The hard-line Jewish position said that Jews and Gentiles could have no social contact at all, especially when it came to eating meals together.

The crux of the problem had to do with *Kashrut* (kosher), the way Jews handled their food. Not only were Jews forbidden to eat certain meats (as listed in Lev 11), they also had additional rules on how animals were to be slaughtered so that the maximum amount of blood could be drained from the carcass. This was done in order to fully obey the *Torah* command: *"And whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who sojourn among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust; for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. ... Whoever eats it (blood) shall be cut off"*. (Lev 17:13-14)

As quoted previously, there were also a number of other established traditions to ensure the proper washing of containers and utensils used in cooking. Since the Gentiles did not observe these traditions, some of the more strict members of the believing Jewish community had an aversion to eating meals with their believing Gentile brethren.

When Paul made the statement that Peter *"lived as a Gentile"*, he was not saying that Peter had given up the correct interpretation of the *Torah* commands or the food restrictions of Lev 11; but that he had fallen back into observing some of those Jewish traditions which served to separate Jew and Gentile. The problem Paul

was addressing here was that Peter stopped sharing meals with the Gentiles, not that he had abandoned Torah.

Peter should have known better. After all, he was the one YHWH had used to open the door so that uncircumcised Gentiles could become full-fledged members of the believing synagogues. This occurred when he was sent to the home of Cornelius in Caesarea and not only ate a meal with them, but baptised that entire household. At that time, it was apparent to Peter that the vision he had seen of the unclean creatures was meant to convey the message that all men could now be accepted into fellowship without first converting to Orthodox Judaism: "*Then he (Peter) said to them, 'You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean'.*" (Acts 10:28)

SECTION II A MIDRASH ON TORAH OBSERVANCE

MATTHEW 6:1-34

TEXT:

- (1) "Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven."
- (2) "Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
- (3) "But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth:
- (4) "That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly."
- (5) "And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
- (6) "But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly."
- (7) "But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking."
- (8) "Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him."
- (9) "After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name."
- (10) "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven."
- (11) "Give us this day our daily bread."
- (12) "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."
- (13) "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen."
- (14) "For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you:
- (15) "But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."
- (16) "Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward."
- (17) "But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face;
- (18) "That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly."
- (19) "Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal:
- (20) "But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal:
- (21) "For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also."
- (22) "The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light."
- (23) "But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!"
- (24) "No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon."
- (25) "Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment?"
- (26) "Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they?"

- (27) Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature?
- (28) And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin:
- (29) And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.
- (30) Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith?
- (31) Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?
- (32) (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.
- (33) But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.
- (34) Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.

NOTE: In this chapter, Y'shua continues to clarify and expound on the *Torah*. We will focus on how His teachings supported those of the Pharisees as seen in the *Talmud*. In many of these verses, Y'shua reiterates a fundamental principle for the life of a godly man: *we are but visitors here, and we need to understand that our real life and our rewards are in heaven*.

6:1-4 Do not your alms before men, to be seen of them

"(1) Take heed that ye do not your alms before men, to be seen of them: otherwise ye have no reward of your Father which is in heaven. (2) Therefore when thou doest thine alms, do not sound a trumpet before thee, as the hypocrites do in the synagogues and in the streets, that they may have glory of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (3) But when thou doest alms, let not thy left hand know what thy right hand doeth: (4) That thine alms may be in secret: and thy Father which seeth in secret himself shall reward thee openly".

The Pharisees were often guilty of not following their own teachings:

Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 17b: "Don't do good deeds to be noticed".

Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 9b: "He who gives alms in secret is greater than Moses"

Babylonian Talmud, Bava Batra 10b: "The greatest form of charity is when you give and do not know to whom you give, and the recipient takes and does not know from whom he takes".

6:5-6 The two principle prayer errors current at the time of our Lord's earthly appearance

"(5) And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (6) But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly".

Prayer had a significant role to play in the religion of the Jews. "There were two things the daily use of which was prescribed for every Jew. The first was the *Shema*, which consists of three short passages of scripture – Deuteronomy 6:4-9; 11:13-21; Numbers 15:37-41. *Shema* is the imperative of the Hebrew word to hear, and the *Shema* takes its name from the verse, which was the essence and centre of the whole matter: "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God is one Lord". The full *Shema* had to be recited by every Jew every morning and every evening. It had to be said as early as possible. It had to be said as soon as the light was strong enough to enable a man to distinguish between blue and white, or, as Rabbi Eliezer said, between blue and green. In any event it had to be said before the third hour, that is, 9 a.m.; and in the evening it had to be said before 9 p.m. If the last possible moment for the saying of the *Shema* had come, no matter where a man found himself, at home, in the street, at work, in the synagogue, he must stop and say it". "The second thing which every Jew must daily repeat was called the *Shemoneh 'esreh*, which means The Eighteen. It consisted of eighteen prayers, and was, and still is, an essential part of the synagogue service. In time the prayers became nineteen, but the old name remains. Most of these prayers are quite short, and nearly all of them are very lovely. The twelfth runs: "Let Thy mercy, O Lord, be showed upon the upright, the humble, the elders of Thy people Israel, and the rest of its teachers; be favourable to the pious strangers amongst us, and to us all. Give Thou a good reward to those who sincerely trust in Thy name, that our lot may be cast among them in the world to come, that our hope be not deceived. Praised be Thou, O Lord, who art the hope and confidence of the faithful". (Barclay, Matthew, I, p. 191 & 192.)

There were established times of prayer. Daniel, we know, prayed three times a day (Dan 6:10). The apostles apparently continued to observe these established times of prayer (Acts 3:1). The Jews eventually had a

prayer for nearly every occasion. “*There was hardly an event or a sight in life which had not its stated formula of prayer. There was prayer before and after each meal; there were prayers in connection with the light, the fire, the lightning, on seeing the new moon, comets, rain, tempest, at the sight of the sea, lakes, rivers, on receiving good news, on using new furniture, on entering or leaving a city. Everything had its prayer*”. (Ibid., p. 193.) In spite of what no doubt began with noble aspirations, prayer deteriorated to a mere ritual (lest we become too critical, let us think of some of our mealtime prayers). In spite of efforts to the contrary, prayer in Israel fell into the deadly throes of formalism. It is for this reason that Y’shua pointed to the practice of prayer as an example of externalism in verses 5-15.

There were two principle errors current at the time of Y’shua’s earthly appearance. The first error is described in verses 5 and 6. It is that of pretension.

“And when thou prayest, thou shalt not be as the hypocrites are: for they love to pray standing in the synagogues and in the corners of the streets, that they may be seen of men. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward”. (Matt 6:5).

Pretension was easily fallen into, without even sensing its existence. One would be about his affairs and suddenly realise that the time of prayer was at hand. Either he would fail to fulfill this obligation or he must do it where he was. If he was in the marketplace or on the street corner, he would simply stand there and commence his prayers. Of course, this was obvious to the passers-by who would nod to one another, noting this man’s devotion to his religious duty. One could easily accept public commendation and even seek it further. More and more, one would find himself in a public place at the appointed times of prayer.

In accordance with the principle established in verse 1, such public acts of worship would gain men’s praise, but not YHWH’s. They had, in the words of Y’shua, already received all the praise they would get. The expression “*they have their reward (in full)*” is interesting. The Greek term employed (*apechein*) is a technical business and commercial word for receiving payment in full. “*It was the word which was used on received accounts. For instance, one man signs a receipt given to another man: ‘I have received (apecho') from you the rent of the olive press, which you have on hire’. A tax collector gives a receipt, saying, ‘I have received (apecho...) from you the tax which is due’. A man sells a slave and gives a receipt, saying, ‘I have received (apecho,) the whole price due to me’*”. (Ibid., p. 185.) Those who pray in order to impress men have no further hope of reward from YHWH.

The solution to this problem of Pretension is suggested in verse 6: “*(6) But thou, when thou prayest, enter into thy closet, and when thou hast shut thy door, pray to thy Father which is in secret; and thy Father which seeth in secret shall reward thee openly*”. (Matt 6:6).

In contrast to the public exhibition of ‘piety’ by the hypocrites, true disciples are to seek the face of Elohim in private. Public prayer such as in a synagogue is not forbidden here, nor do we need to pray only in our closets.

“The Greek word tameion was used for the store-room where treasures might be kept. So the implication may be that in the inner room where the Christian regularly prays there are treasures already awaiting him which he can draw upon and add to”. (R. V. G. Tasker, The Gospel According to St. Matthew (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1968), p. 73). It is our motive that the Saviour is speaking to here. We are not to seek the approving nod of men, but to desire intimate fellowship with Elohim.

The second prevalent error in the matter of prayer is that of verbosity. We have all probably heard the story of the individual, who when meeting the pastor at the door after the service, commented, “Pastor, I really enjoyed both messages this morning”. “But”, the pastor objected, “I only preached once”. “I meant the one you preached and the one you prayed”, returned the observant member.

Two kinds of needless verbosity are common. The first is senseless, thoughtless repetition. We all know of the prayer wheels employed by the heathen. And we know of much prayer that is rattled off without touching either the mind or the heart of the one praying.

All of us are aware of prayers of our own of this type. Oftentimes my ‘spontaneous’ prayers sound strangely familiar and lack life and urgency. Ironically, the Lord’s Prayer is often ‘prayed’ with this mindless repetition.

Another variety of verbosity was that of needless longevity. The Greek term *battologeo* “meaningless repetition” (verse 7) is an unusual one. While most commentators take it in the sense of babbling or senseless utterances repeated over and over, Moulton and Milligan remind us that it was an expression

employed as a nickname for Demosthenes. If he was a man who had many words for any occasion, we can readily see the relationship to this abuse of verbosity in the matter of prayer.

Men actually believed that the effectiveness of their prayers was to be directly related to their length. This was the mentality of Judaism.

6:7-8 But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions

"(7) But when ye pray, use not vain repetitions, as the heathen do: for they think that they shall be heard for their much speaking. (8) Be not ye therefore like unto them: for your Father knoweth what things ye have need of, before ye ask him".

Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 55a: "One who prays too intensely and too lengthily brings on himself heartache".

6:9-13 "The Lord's Prayer"

"(9) After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. (10) Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. (11) Give us this day our daily bread. (12) And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. (13) And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen".

The verses, commonly known as "Lord's Prayer", can be paralleled to concepts found in other Jewish sources. It is a combination of ideas already familiar to His audience:

From Matthew chapter 6	From other Jewish writings
Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name.	<i>Our Father who art in heaven</i> (Babylonian Talmud; Yoma 85b, Sotah 49b, Avot 5:20; Vayikra Rabbah ch 32.)
Thy kingdom come,	<i>May God's kingdom be established during the days of your life.</i> (Kaddish prayer)
Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread.	<i>Do thy will above and give comfort to those below, and to everyone his need.</i> (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 29b)
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.	<i>One who is merciful toward others, God will be merciful toward them.</i> (Babylonian Talmud, Shabat 151b)
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:	<i>Bring me not into temptation, and lead me away from iniquity ... and save me from the evil one.</i> (Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 80b)
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.	<i>For Thine, O Lord, is the greatness and the power and the glory and the victory and the majesty</i> (Tenach, 1 Chronicles 29:10)

Our Father

Here, Matthew preserves the Hebrew idiom "*Our Father*" which is typically Hebraic. This emphasises that we are the Father's creation and that, as His children, we have a responsibility to Him. The use of the word "*our*" means that no single individual has a monopoly on YHWH and that, as His followers, we have responsibility to one another.

This is also a family or group prayer, a prayer that is prayed by at least two believers who acknowledge the Elohim of the Bible as their heavenly Father. We know this because the words "*our*" and "*us*" are used throughout. This fact (which we are praying as a group on behalf of the Almighty's believers, and our own particular responsibilities within it) lifts this prayer above ordinary prayers in which believers concentrate on personal needs and requests. I repeat, in this prayer we are praying as a believing body to our Father. We are not praying to an earthly father, a priest or pope; but to our Father which is in heaven. Also, it is not merely to "*our Father*", but to the God of our spiritual ancestors: Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

As many of you know, we believers belong to the Family of the Most High and are spiritually bound together by a common parentage.

(13) "And Moses said unto God, Behold, when I come unto the children of Israel, and shall say unto them, The God of your fathers hath sent me unto you; and they shall say to me, What is his name? what shall I say unto them?"

(14) And God said unto Moses, I AM THAT I AM: and he said, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, I AM hath sent me unto you.

(15) And God said moreover unto Moses, Thus shalt thou say unto the children of Israel, The LORD God of your fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, hath sent me unto you: this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations". (Exod 3:13-15)

(1) "Behold, what manner of love the Father hath bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God: therefore the world knoweth us not, because it knew him not."

(2) Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is". (1 John 3:1-2)

In short, this prayer is addressed to 'our Father: the YHWH of Abraham, Isaac and Israel'.

Which art in heaven

"*Which art in heaven*" is an indication of Elohim's supernatural qualities. The rich Hebrew imagery describes the disciple's relationship to Elohim, but does not neglect His connection to the family of YHWH. In a father/son relationship, the father will embrace his son, will look out for his best interest and will also chastise his son. This image is a common theme in many rabbinic parables.

The Father we are addressing is in heaven. He is not on earth. What or where is heaven? The Bible tells us of several heavens: the *atmospheric heavens* in which the birds fly; the *starry heavens* in which the stars and planets orbit; and the *third heaven*, a spiritual location in which our Heavenly Father dwells (Isaiah 63:15-16, 2 Cor 2:1). Physically, that may be a lot nearer than some imagine.

Hallowed be Thy Name

"*Hallowed be Thy name*" might be more easily understood if translated "May Your name be sanctified". This seems to parallel Ezek 38:23, which reads: "So I will show...my Holiness". This forms the background of many Hebrew prayers. The meaning of the word "sanctify" is often clarified by its antonym, "profane". We can again look at Ezekiel, who writes: "*And I will sanctify my great name, which was profaned among the nations, and which ye have profaned in the midst of them*". (Ezek 36:23) The name of the Lord can either be sanctified or profaned by the conduct of His people. One may sanctify YHWH's name by living a holy life!

The word "*hallowed*" means 'set apart for holy use'. YHWH's Name is sacred. He is the Holy One, HaKadosh. He wants His children to be holy and 'set apart for holy use', to hallow His name in their thoughts, words and deeds. YHWH wants His family to be holy like He is holy. A fashionable individual or a popular hero is not the best objective for any believer, especially if it means sacrificing godly behaviour. We must be people who hallow YHWH's Name by being holy. What we should aim for is: *Hallowed be thy name* in our lives.

Thy kingdom come

"*Thy kingdom come*" - the kingdom of Heaven, is it a future monarch? Or heaven? We do not read in the Gospels about the kingdom that "comes". In Hebrew, one talks of the "coming" of a kingdom. The *Kaddish* expresses the thought as, *MAY HE CAUSE HIS KINGDOM TO REIGN*. Therefore, our passage may be rendered, *MAY YOU CONTINUE ESTABLISHING YOUR KINGDOM*. You see, El Shaddai has a kingdom now and He reigns now. The kingdom is being continually established in the hearts of men. A person who accepts the Father's authority in his life has entered the reign of YHWH. This statement is the call to evangelism. El Elyon is establishing His kingdom in the hearts of men and believers are sharing the Gospel with mankind to affect the work of YHWH.

But the literal world is also in turmoil. There is chaos on every side and everything worthwhile seems to be fading away. No earthly government is able to stem humanity's slide into disaster. The world is suffering from a terminal disease called 'sin'; and sin is on the increase. The only ray of hope on the horizon is the coming Kingdom of YHWH. Fully aware of this fact, the Saviour tells us to look forward to the Kingdom and to pray for the Kingdom of Elohim to come.

The Kingdom of Elohim is also a Hebraic concept which is found in the Scriptures from Genesis through Revelation. Contained within this concept is the principle of an eternal, spiritual realm and a corresponding physical realm which parallels it and which exists on this earth.

The greatest teacher of the principles of the Kingdom of Elohim is Messiah Y'shua. Messiah is the King of YHWH's Kingdom on this earth. He is its chief cornerstone (Isaiah 28:16). He is the future King of Israel, the Son of David.

In Luke 11: 1 we read: "*And it came to pass, that, as he was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray....*" This request was based on the desire to know YHWH and His Kingdom in a deeper way. The disciples had witnessed in Messiah a depth and an understanding of the Father and His Kingdom that they themselves had not yet attained. Their request was therefore a desire to grow and to mature in this area. Prayer is a foundational principle of the Kingdom of YHWH. It is an act of communion with the King, *HaShem* (YHVH, God), which results in a greater depth of understanding about his Kingdom.

Thy will be done

"Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven". YHWH's will is that the human race accept salvation and obey His law; the law He gave through His servant Moses and which was magnified in the life of His Son Y'shua *HaMashiach*. That is YHWH's will. That is what He wants all mankind to do, to love and obey Him.

Alas! the world at large has rejected YHWH's Son and YHWH's law. Sad to say, even the majority of Christendom has rejected YHWH's law. Have you noticed how few believers are really interested in doing the Almighty's will? Comparatively few know what His will is. The Master, however, tells us to pray about this problem in these words: "*Thy will be done*".

"Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven". We do not pray "If Thy will be done", or "if it be Thy will"; but THY WILL BE DONE... YHWH's will is automatically and immediately done in Heaven and will be the same on Earth in time. It is YHWH's will that all repent and come to know the Father. In Psalms 40:8 we read, "*To do your will, O my God, is my desire; your law is within my heart*". Elohim's will is taught in His law. Many rabbinic teachings are similar. Rabban Gamaliel in about A.D.220 said, "*Do His will as if it were your will*". The sense is to defer to Elohim. Y'shua struggled with this at the Garden of Gethsemane when He said, *Not my will, but thine be done* in Luke 22:41.

Rabbinic sources refer to "*leaven in the dough*", meaning man's evil inclination to sin. This is the sin nature or iniquity that conflicts with man's desire to do good—to do God's will. Rom 7:22 tells us, "*For in my inner being I delight in God's law...*" We also see Paul's struggle and realise that we are rescued by Y'shua, according to Rom 7:23-25. We could say this: MAY YOUR WILL BE DONE—expressing an inward yearning.

After those initial, vital facts concerning YHWH's Name, His Kingdom and His Will—comes the *Requests Section* of this great prayer. Notice how often the word "*us*" is used. I repeat, this is a prayer we pray together. It is a family prayer for food (literal and spiritual), for forgiveness, for power and for protection.

Requests section

Give us this day our daily bread. There is much debate regarding the meaning of this phrase. The Hebrew background comes from Prov 30:8—"Feed me with the food that is needful for me". This is not asking for wealth or poverty, but that which the Father has assigned—our proper allotment. When Y'shua, who was speaking in Hebrew, alluded to the verse in Proverbs, those listening would have been acquainted well enough with the Hebrew Scriptures to have understood this. There is a problem when the text is translated into Greek and this reference is lost. This concept is also found in Exod 16:4-10 regarding the manna—sufficient for the day. Worry and anxiety have no place in the life of the believer. We shall have what is sufficient each day. We find in Matt 6:32-33, "*But seek ye first the kingdom of God and all these things shall be yours as well*". The Yehovah Yireh of Israel is well able to supply His children with food, even if it means dropping it from heaven. But in doing so, He may put them to the test to see whether or not they keep His commandments. Exod 16: 4: "*Then said the LORD unto Moses, Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a certain rate every day, that I may prove them, whether they will walk in my law, or no*". (See additional section below on this theme.)

And forgive us our debts (trespasses, sins) - as we forgive our debtors! Forgiveness, one man to another, is a responsibility YHWH has given us. Matt 18:23-35 tells us of the unforgiving servant. Early Jewish thought contains the theme of forgiving your fellow man and seeking his forgiveness before seeking forgiveness from YHWH. Forgive and make peace before you pray. YHWH shows mercy to the merciful. The Hebrew word for

debts, *chayav*, means guilt for which one is held accountable—a debt to be paid. In the Dead Sea Scrolls, the word appears to mean "to sin". In Luke 23:34, we see that Y'shua follows His own admonition when praying from the crucifixion stake. (Note how in Neh 1:6, the prophet prays on behalf of all Israel. We read: "*Let thine ear now be attentive, and thine eyes open, that thou mayest hear the prayer of thy servant, which I pray before thee now, day and night, for the children of Israel thy servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel, which we have sinned against thee: both I and my father's house have sinned*".) *And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil.* This phrase is a Hebrew parallelism where the second line reinforces the first. The Hebrew word for temptation has the sense of test or trial. Y'shua was tempted three times by Satan. The context of the Lord's Prayer seems to relate temptation to man's inclination to sin, known as iniquity. To avoid sin, one must not place himself in a position where he could be tempted or put to the test. You cannot determine beforehand the power of temptation or your ability to resist. Y'shua teaches us to pray that we may be led away from the temptation. The second line of the parallelism "*but deliver us from evil*" is repeated in Hebraic thought. From the Psalms to the *Talmud*, Paul tells us that Elohim will not allow us to be tempted without providing a way of escape (1 Cor 10:13). It is also reported that early Believers used the Lord's Prayer at baptism. It is a prayer of surrender, repentance, forgiveness and protection. Such a simple yet concise prayer of dedication! What else would you expect Y'shua to teach those who were most close to Him? To tempt means to "persuade", or "try to persuade (especially into doing something wrong or unwise)". A temptation, moreover, is "an attractive, inviting offer to do something wrong or unwise". In fact, if the offer is not attractive, it is not a temptation. Temptation has been with mankind since time began. It is not a new thing.

The word "for"

This word "for" precedes a vital fact in the Lord's Prayer—a fact that spells out 'why' all the preceding requests should or can be met. In effect it says, *All this is possible because:*

Thine is the Kingdom: Because Thou art the supreme and ultimate authority in the universe.

And the Power: Because with Thee alone is absolute power and no one can stand in Thy way. Because we are weak and powerless to arrive at these objectives without Thy help.

And the glory: Because in the final analysis, any glory that may come as a result is really Thine. Because the whole universe must recognise, for its own good, that Thy will is really the best course to follow. Because Thy name needs to be cleared of slander and blasphemy. Because the glory that is Thy due must be recognised and openly declared by all mankind. Only if we pray in this mode will we find our mental bearings and achieve worthwhile results. All other prayers are doomed to failure!

Satan, also called Lucifer the fallen archangel, is not happy that Believers voice this final summing up of the Lord's Prayer: "*For Thine is the Kingdom, and the power, and the glory, forever Amen*".

That is why Satan has arranged for this whole phrase to be either [bracketed] or omitted from modern translations of the Bible. In one swipe, the Devil has sought to remove the guarantee that this vital prayer will be answered. Full well does he know that El Shaddai of Israel alone has the authority, the power, and the will that it takes to answer this prayer. No other soul in the universe has this power.

When those vital words, "*thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory*" are omitted from the Lord's Prayer, it will not be answered—simply because it is not directed at the only One in the universe who is capable of answering it.

For ever Amen

The Most High is immortal. His Kingdom is everlasting and His power endless. Not only are these true and eternal facts, but this prayer ends with our total agreement and acceptance of them. The word "amen" means 'so be it' or 'so it is'.

So ends the perfect prayer that will always be answered - if prayed in its entirety by the 'body of believers' of Y'shua, the family of the living Elohim.

In the final analysis, a group is judged—not by its numbers, its knowledge, its wealth or its possessions: but by its effectiveness in prayer. We must continually ask ourselves this question: Are our prayers being answered? And if not, why not? We must also question ourselves concerning how often we pray. What do we pray for? Do we get results? Does the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and Israel listen to our prayers? If not, why not?

Matt 6:9-13: After this manner therefore pray ye:

Our Father which art in heaven,

Hallowed be thy name.
Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven.
Give us this day our daily bread.
And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors.
And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil:
For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever.
Amen.

Are you over or under-familiar with Matt 6:11?

Hearing something repeatedly can diminish its significance. I suspect that this is particularly true of Scripture. Over-familiarity with a biblical passage can contribute to its misunderstanding. Sometimes it can reduce a profound concept to nothing more than a cliché.

The Lord's Prayer (Matt 6:9-13) ranks among one of the most popular passages in the New Covenant. Most people who regularly attend a church or synagogue can recite it from memory. It is a prayer that we have heard and said many times. One of the more memorable lines of the prayer is, "*Give us this day our daily bread*" (Matt 6:11). Let us pause for a moment and consider this entreaty phrase by phrase.

The line begins with the blunt imperative, "*Give us!*" This is a curious manner in which to address YHWH. I have heard parents scold a spoiled child for using similar language.

The middle phrase is "*this day*". I suppose that *Y'shua* intended for his disciples to say this prayer each morning, as they looked forward to YHWH Yireh's provision throughout the day.

The third and final phrase is "*our daily bread*", which seems to mean simply the necessary portion of food that a disciple needed to sustain him or herself. Apparently, *Y'shua* taught his disciples to expect that YHWH Yireh would meet their fundamental needs day by day.

For the majority of Believers who live in Western Europe, North America, and other prosperous areas, "*Give us this day our daily bread*" has little relevance. As audacious as this assertion may be, it can be easily verified: simply go to the nearest refrigerator and take inventory of its contents. This line of the prayer is largely irrelevant for me, too. My kitchen contains ample food for at least a week.

Unfamiliarity with *Y'shua*'s social and religious environment can also muffle the significance of his words. "*Give us this day our daily bread*" makes excellent sense within the rich conceptual world of late Second Temple-period Judaism. More specifically, this imperative aimed at YHWH belongs to the culture of what would be called at a later time *Talmud Torah* (the joining of oneself to a sage in order to learn *Torah* from him).

Y'shua gathered disciples around him like the tannaic rabbis would continue to do in the Second Century A.D. *Y'shua*'s agenda, however, was distinctive in that it centered on the Kingdom of Heaven. His agenda was firmly rooted in Israel's *Torah*. He never dishonoured or violated it; but in focusing upon YWHW's Kingdom, he stretched its parameters.

Y'shua's demands for entering the Kingdom of Heaven were high. Among them was a readiness to leave family, property and careers (Luke 5:11, 28; 14:25-33; 18:22). After a person joined *Y'shua*'s group of disciples, the demands for remaining at the center of YHWH's Kingdom remained high. "*Give us this day our daily bread*" resonates with the values and priorities of this cultural context. *Y'shua* expected his followers to make moving with YHWH's redemptive activity their priority. Once committed to this program, they had no reason to worry about their basic necessities – food, clothing and shelter. YHWH Yireh would take care of these.

Y'shua reiterated similar ideas on other occasions. Just before sending his disciples out two by two, he said: "*The harvest is plentiful, but the laborers are few...Go your way...Carry no purse, no bag, no sandals...Whenever you enter a town and they receive you...heal the sick in it and say to them, 'The Kingdom of God has come near to you'*" (Luke 10:2-9). As the conclusion for a short lecture on anxiety, he exhorted his audience, "*Seek first his Kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So, do not worry about tomorrow...The day's troubles will take care of themselves*" (Matt 6:33-34). ("These things" refer to food, drink and clothing.)

These sayings of *Y'shua* were apparently not intended as an exaggeration or symbol. *Y'shua* said what he meant. Our hectic lifestyles with the prosperity and materialism of modern, Western society make them,

however, difficult to accept. When a sprawling food market is just minutes away by foot (and fewer by car), "Give us our daily bread" resists a literal interpretation. Nevertheless, despite the difficult choices of re-ordering priorities and re-building the macro-structure of a lifestyle (which are often necessary for entering the Kingdom of Heaven), tremendous liberty and privilege accrue to those who make them. They may confidently pursue a life full of assisting those in need: feeding the hungry, clothing the naked, educating the unlearned, visiting those in prison and the hospital, caring for the forgotten, and praying for the sick. Such a program can be pursued without the financial backing of a charitable organisation or church. It requires only the vision, tenacity and fortitude to pray: "Give me this day my daily bread!"

6:14-15 For if ye forgive men their trespasses

"(14) For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: (15) But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses"

Babylonian Talmud, Rosh Hashanah 17a: "Only if you forgive others will God forgive you".

Babylonian Talmud, Shabat 151b: "One who is merciful toward others, God will be merciful toward him".

6:16-18 Fast

"(16) Moreover when ye fast, be not, as the hypocrites, of a sad countenance: for they disfigure their faces, that they may appear unto men to fast. Verily I say unto you, They have their reward. (17) But thou, when thou fastest, anoint thine head, and wash thy face; (18) That thou appear not unto men to fast, but unto thy Father which is in secret: and thy Father, which seeth in secret, shall reward thee openly".

A fast was a voluntary abstinence from food observed as a religious exercise. It was frequently accompanied by prayer in the Old Covenant (1 Sam 7:5,6; 2 Chron 20:3-4; Ezra 8:21-23, etc.). It expressed genuine repentance for sin (Jonah 3:5), lamentation over calamity (Judges 20:26), or the death of a loved one (2 Sam 1:12). In addition, fasting was observed as an aid to religious concentration and the preparation for divine revelation (Exod 34:28; Deut 9:9, 18).

The Law required only one fast, and this is on the Day of Atonement (Lev 16:29, 31; 23:26-32; Num 29:7). After the exile, four other annual fasts were added (Zech 8:19). According to the *Talmud*, each of these commemorated a disaster in Jewish history. Devout Jews in Y'shua's day seemingly fasted twice a week (Luke 18:12).

In Old Testament days, too much value was placed on the external rite of fasting as opposed to the proper condition of the heart (Isaiah 58). In the days of Y'shua, this same kind of error was prevalent. The two Jewish days of weekly fasting were on Monday and Thursday (Barclay, *Matthew*, I, p. 237). It was probably no coincidence that these were also the market days when people from the countryside crowded into the city to buy and sell. It was a golden opportunity for the public display of piety. The so-called 'religious Jews' knew how to wring every drop of self-gratification out of this practice. They left their hair unkempt, their faces dirty, and they wore a gaunt look on their faces that worked upon the sympathy and admiration of the less committed.

The condemnation of such pretension can be seen in Y'shua's remarks in verses 16-18. They have received all the reward they can expect – the commendation of their fellowmen. But in order to please YHWH, they must carry out their acts of devotion in private. Their hair should be combed, they should wash their faces and conceal the fact that they have chosen to abstain from food for a time. The Elohim Who knows the secret intentions and motives of men, the Eloah Who observes our every deed, will surely reward true piety (verse 18).

Instruction concerning fasting seems like a leftover to those of us who know little of deprivation, especially voluntary deprivation. We would rather focus upon the principle and pass over the practice hastily. But I would be honest with the entire text of Scripture only if I made several additional comments.

First, Y'shua Himself fasted (Matt 4:2). His disciples did not fast, but only because it would be inappropriate while the Messiah was with them (Matt 9:14-15). The New Covenant church observed the practice of fasting (Acts 13:2-3; 14:23), and Paul spoke of it also (2 Cor 6:5; 11:27).

Second, although fasting is not compulsory, it is an option for Believers to consider and it has real value. Far from being detrimental to one's health, it is likely beneficial. Most Western people eat far more than they need. Fasting develops and practices the little-known art of self-discipline. Paul said that a man should learn to rule over his body, and not give into its every appetite (1 Cor 9:24-27). Fasting also teaches us to do without things which are not really essential. In a day of luxuries (which are considered necessities), it is

beneficial to remind oneself of what is really vital to our existence and what is simply desirable. Finally, abstinence intensifies our pleasure and satisfaction of the good things in life. It helps us to really enjoy the special 'treats' in life.

6:19-22 Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth...

“(19) Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt, and where thieves break through and steal: (20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt, and where thieves do not break through nor steal: (21) For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also. (22) The light of the body is the eye: if therefore thine eye be single, thy whole body shall be full of light”.

Jerusalem Talmud, Pe'ah 15b: "It happened that manobaz had squandered his father's wealth to charity. His brothers admonished him: "Your father gathered treasure and you wasted it all!" He replied: "My father laid up treasure where human hands control it; I laid it up where no hands control it. My father laid up a treasure of money; I laid up a treasure of souls. My father laid up treasure for this world; I laid up treasure for the heavenly world".

6:23 But if thine eye be evil

“But if thine eye be evil, thy whole body shall be full of darkness. If therefore the light that is in thee be darkness, how great is that darkness!”

Here we have a verse that is consistently misinterpreted. What is this "evil eye?" Note the context of the verses before and after the term. In both cases, Y'shua is talking about serving YHWH and not money. Why would He interrupt this discussion about "YHWH and money" to interject something about an "evil eye?"

The answer is that the term "evil eye", in this context, is a Hebrew figure of speech for being "stingy with your material wealth". This verse alone offers evidence that the book of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew; as whoever translated it into the Greek was not aware of what the term "evil eye" meant. They simply copied the phrase which loses its meaning in the Greek and English.

It is therefore tragic that seminaries and Bible colleges focus attention on Greek and Hellenistic theology. Their students are not given the proper tools for doing serious Biblical study. The Greek of the New Covenant manuscripts is not only poor but most expressions in the New Covenant are meaningless in Greek. For example, Matt 6:22-23 literally reads:

"The lamp of the body is the eye. If your eye is good, your whole body is full of light; but if your eye is evil your whole body is full of darkness..."

Greek has no such idioms, nor does English. However, the expressions "good eye" and "bad eye" are common Hebrew idioms for "generous" and "stingy". This is also found in the writings of Israel's Sages (Avot 5:15).

In the Bible, the 'eye' is reflective of a man's character (Deut 25:12; 28:54, 56; Prov 28:22, etc.). A man with an 'evil eye' is explained to be one who is greedy and miserly when confronted with the need of another:

- (7) *If there be among you a poor man of one of thy brethren within any of thy gates in thy land which the LORD thy God giveth thee, thou shalt not harden thine heart, nor shut thine hand from thy poor brother:*
(8) *But thou shalt open thine hand wide unto him, and shalt surely lend him sufficient for his need, in that which he wanteth.*
(9) *Beware that there be not a thought in thy wicked heart, saying, The seventh year, the year of release, is at hand; and thine eye be evil against thy poor brother, and thou givest him nought; and he cry unto the LORD against thee, and it be sin unto thee". (Deut 15:7-9)*

Good eye (ayîn tôwbh) / Evil eye

The literal Greek of Matt 6:22 (*ean oun ê ho ophthalmos sou haplous*) "if therefore your eye is single" has been translated several ways. The Greek word only occurs in this saying of Y'shua and literally means 'single'.

Other translations have rendered it '*unclouded, sound, clear, healthy*' or '*good*'.
"unclouded eye" (Westcott & Hort).

"sound eye" (Weymouth, Philipps, NEB, Williams, Amplified, GNB, NAB).

"clear/diseased eye" (Knox, NASB [clear/bad]).

"single eye" (KJV, Bagsters, Tyndale, Rheims) - literally correct.

"healthy eye" (Beck, NRSV).

"good eye" (NKJV, NIV) - Hebraically correct.

Only the Paraphrases of Moffatt and Barclay are correct with their idiomatic 'generous eye': "generous / selfish eye" (Moffatt, Barclay).

For the phrase is indeed a Hebrew idiom for generosity, as 'evil eye' is for 'selfishness'. The Hebrew phrase (*tōwbh-`ayîn*), 'good eye' is used in Prov 22:9 where it is sometimes translated "a generous man". A good eye 'sees' a need and meets it. In Modern English idiom, one might use "open handed" and "tight fisted".

Other Hebrew sources such as the Jewish *Mishnah* and *Talmud* speak of 'good, middling and evil' eyes. For example, in the offerings of the first fruits: "*a good eye gave the fortieth, the house Shammai say, the thirtieth part; a middling one, the fiftieth; and an evil one, the sixtieth part*". (*Mishnah, Trumot*, 4.3)

Upon which the Jewish commentators say: a 'good eye' means one that is liberal, and an 'evil eye' the contrary. Elsewhere, one reads of 'trading, dedicating' and 'giving with a good' or 'an evil eye'; that is, either generously, liberally, or in a niggardly and grudging manner. "*A good eye and a humble spirit and a lowly soul, those who have these are disciples of Abraham our Father*" (*Mishnah, Abôth*, 5.19)

Thus, Y'shua's meaning is that if a man is not covetous but is generous he will be blessed and righteous in all areas of life. "*Your whole body*" is simply a Hebrew metaphor for 'your whole person', 'you yourself'.

6:24 Ye cannot serve God and mammon

"(24) No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon". (Mat 6:24)

"Jesus goes on to say, 'You cannot serve God and mamon'. The correct spelling is with one m. Mamon was a Hebrew word for material possessions. Originally it was not a bad word at all. The Rabbis, for instance, had a saying, "Let the mamon of thy neighbour be as dear to thee as thine own". That is to say, a man should regard his neighbour's material possessions as being as sacrosanct as his own. But the word mamon had a most curious and a most revealing history. It comes from a root, which means to entrust; and mamon was that which a man entrusted to a banker or to a safe deposit of some kind. Mamon was the wealth, which a man entrusted to someone to keep safe for him. But as the years went on mamon came to mean, not that which is entrusted, but that in which a man puts his trust. The end of the process was that mamon came to be spelled with a capital M and came to be regarded as nothing less than a god". William Barclay, *The Gospel of Matthew* (Edinburgh: The Saint Andrew Press, 1963), I, p. 252.

Put in its simplest form, the principle could be stated: 'Money is either your slave or your master'. Money is like the flesh (our bodily appetites). Either we will master it, or it will be our master. One may try to deceive himself into believing that he can pursue both goals simultaneously, YHWH and money. But Y'shua said only one will be our Master.

It is difficult for the Western mind to grasp the meaning of Y'shua's words. Many of us have second jobs. We may leave one job in the evening and go on to another at night. A man may work in a factory to earn a living and find his real fulfillment in playing in an orchestra. But the language Y'shua used was that of slave and master. A slave was the exclusive property of his (one) master. He had no 'time of his own'. His master could dispose of him as he wished.

Perhaps an analogy which might be easier to grasp is that of drug addiction. Materialism is very similar to dependence upon drugs. At first, a man begins to use drugs but eventually they use him. His body builds up a tolerance for a certain quantity of a drug and he finds he must have more and more. Finally, the drug is his master and he is its slave. The more money one gets, the more one desires. The more one is dominated by a desire for money, the more one is mastered by it and is its slave. This is what Y'shua is saying. Materialism is dangerous, indeed destructive; because like communism, it is not content until its control over men is total.

"Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God" (Luke 6:20).

Job's friends immediately concluded that it must have been sin that led to his disaster (Job 4:7). Suffering and poverty were thought to be the immediate result of sin.

You will recall that it was largely for economic (and political) reasons that the Jewish leadership rejected Y'shua as their Messiah (John 11:47-48). We are told that it was the high priest who actually owned the business venture operating within the Temple precincts. For the Jew, the pursuit of financial gain and the practice of righteousness were thought to be synonymous. Y'shua said they were opposites. One must serve either YHWH or money. One will ultimately become your master, the other your slave. They used 'religion' to further their own personal and economic interests. Such also was the case of Judas the betrayer (John 12:4-6).

On the basis of these principles, Believers have been cautioned about viewing their material possessions as a means of ensuring comfort and security in this earthly life. Instead, we should invest in eternal things, for such an investment is secure and the benefits are everlasting.

The question, which is not answered here, is, "How?" How do you lay up treasure in heaven? We need to realise that Y'shua is probing into men's motives rather than prescribing specific practices during this sermon. From other portions of Scripture (e.g. Luke 16) and in Matthew, I would suggest that this involves supporting the proclamation of the Gospel and caring for the physical needs of the helpless (Matt 19:21, Acts 2:45; 4:32-35).

6:25-31 Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat...

"(25) Therefore I say unto you, Take no thought for your life, what ye shall eat, or what ye shall drink; nor yet for your body, what ye shall put on. Is not the life more than meat, and the body than raiment? (26) Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feedeth them. Are ye not much better than they? (27) Which of you by taking thought can add one cubit unto his stature? (28) And why take ye thought for raiment? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow; they toil not, neither do they spin: (29) And yet I say unto you, That even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these. (30) Wherefore, if God so clothe the grass of the field, which to day is, and to morrow is cast into the oven, shall he not much more clothe you, O ye of little faith? (31) Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?" (Matt 6:25-31)
Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 48b: "He who has what to eat today, and says, "What shall I eat on the morrow?" has little faith".

Due to the unfortunate rendering of the King James Version, "*Take no thought*", it would be well to begin by defining what we mean by 'worry'. Y'shua is not discouraging the use of our minds here. Faith is not contrary to sound thinking; rather, it is to be rooted in thought. In fact, Y'shua is urging us to use our heads and not to panic. We are to consider the birds of the air (verse 26) and the flowers of the field (verse 28). We are shown that worry is both illogical and unprofitable; in fact, it actually is *sin* because it lacks faith.

"The word which is used is the word merimnan, which means to worry anxiously. Its corresponding noun is merimna, which means worry. In a papyrus letter a wife writes to her absent husband: "I cannot sleep at night or by day, because of the worry (merimna) I have about your welfare". A mother, on hearing of her sons' good health and prosperity writes back: "That is all my prayer and all my anxiety (merimna)". Anacreon, the poet, writes: "When I drink wine, my worries (merimnai) go to sleep". In Greek the word is the characteristic word for anxiety, and worry, and care". (Barclay, Matthew, I, pp. 258-259.)

Worry is not to be confused with thinking and planning to meet future needs. Worry is not to be confused with genuine concern. Rather, worry is the preoccupation and dissipation of our mental and physical powers with things that are future, hypothetical, and beyond our control. Worry is the antithesis of faith. Faith perceives potential problems with a view to the infinite power and fatherly concern of the Father Who has saved us. Worry sees only the obstacles (actual or imaginary) and meditates on all the possible disastrous possibilities, while neglecting the fact of the Father's divine care and control in our lives. In verses 25-32, Y'shua outlined the reasons why worry is both foolish and faithless.

- 1) Worry is a distortion of values and a reversal of priorities, verse 25. "*Is not life more than food, and the body than clothing?*" (Matt 6:25b).

Most scholars inform us that this is an argument from the greater to the lesser. If Elohim is our Creator and He has given us life, will He not also provide the incidentals such as food and clothing? This is the kind of argument Paul employed in Romans chapter 8: "*He who did not spare His own Son, but delivered Him up for us all, how will He not also with Him freely give us all things?*" (Rom 8:32; cf. 5:10).

Certainly this is a valid argument, but I am not convinced that this is the main thrust of Y'shua's words. It seems to me that Y'shua is focusing upon the issue of priorities. Materialism, at its base, is a reversal of

priorities. It places the temporal above eternal things. It is shortsighted, and misses the long view of matters. It is ‘this world’ centered.

Y’shua simply calls upon us to rethink our priorities. Which is more important: life itself, or the food we put in our mouths? Which is of higher value: our body or the clothing we put on it? Worry is preoccupation with matters of lowest priority (as is materialism).

I do not believe that the meal over which we are so distressed is the difference between life and death. It is not our ‘last meal’. If we were to miss that meal, so what? Our life is not ‘on the line’. If we do not get that suit or a dress, will our bodies suffer for it? In the vast majority of cases, I think not. Paul gladly suffered deprivation for the sake of the Gospel (cf. 2 Cor 11:24-27). Worry is a symptom of reversed priorities, and Y’shua calls this to our attention.

2) Worry is a failure to see things as they really are—verse 26. You will remember that in verses 22 and 23, materialism was described in terms of bad eyesight. Such is really true, for it fails to see things as they really are. That is what the Master taught in verse 26:

“Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they?”

Worry flies in the face of everyday life. Simply look about you. Look up in the skies and look at the birds. Have you ever seen a skinny sparrow? Do they spend hours in worry and anxiety? No, even by instinct they live their lives in thoughtless dependence upon the Creator. Has Elohim failed to care for insignificant birds? If He cares for birds, which are creatures of much less value than man, will He not care for you? To the birds, Elohim is both Creator and Sustainer. To the Believer, YHWH is our Heavenly Father. Dare we doubt His care? Worry does not see matters clearly. It allows the vision of our Heavenly Father to be obscured. It overlooks the providential care of Eloah for insignificant creatures, such as the birds.

3) Worry is a waste of energy, verse 27. Worry is the most unproductive use of one’s time possible. It accomplishes nothing but disbelief, doubt and fear. It distracts our attention from matters of higher priority and paralyses us from doing what is needful at the moment. It fears what ‘could be’ rather than follow what should be done at the moment.

We cannot by worrying add so much as a cubit to our life’s span. In fact, all the evidence would indicate that all we can do by worrying is to shorten life and undermine our health.

4) Worry is an act of disbelief, verses 28-30. Leaving the matter of food, the Master proceeded to that of clothing. Such anxiety over what we will wear is surely unfounded. Look around and consider the wild flowers of the field. Do they fret and fume? And yet look at their beauty. Even Solomon’s clothing was no match. Indeed, good clothing can do little but to attempt to imitate nature’s beauty.

And the beauty, which Elohim has given these wild flowers, is all the more impressive when you realise how temporary and expendable such flowers are. They are magnificent in their beauty for a short while and then they are gone. Men value them so little that they gather handfuls of the dried grass to throw into the ovens to increase their heat. If these flowers are so insignificant and yet Elohim gives them such beauty, will He not care for His own?

The issue, then, is more than one of mere lack of knowledge—it is lack of faith: “... will He not much more do so for you, O men of little faith?” (Matt 6:30). Worry is a serious sin because it doubts the goodness and the integrity of YHWH. In effect, we disregard the word of YHWH and call Him a liar when we worry. We question His sovereignty, His omniscience, His omnipotence, His tender love and care for His own. Worry is a kind of backhanded blasphemy—totally unbecoming to the child of YHWH. It completely forgets that YHWH is our Heavenly Father.

5) Preoccupation with food and clothing is a characteristic of the Gentile, verse 32. There is a very shocking statement in verses 31 and 32, “*Do not be anxious then, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘With what shall we clothe ourselves?’ For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things*” (Matt 6:31-32).

Y’shua said that when we worry about what we will eat or drink or wear, we are acting just as the pagans do. These are the things which dominate the thinking and the striving of the pagans. And if you don’t believe this, just look at the media and its advertising. They try to sell us deodorant to cover our body odor, after shave lotion to make us irresistible, toothpaste which gives our mouth sex appeal, and clothing which makes us

look suave and sophisticated. Food, drink and clothing—that's what the world is into. And when we become preoccupied with these things, we are just like unbelievers. We have departed from our distinctives when we allow ourselves to worry and fret over these things.

6:32-34 Take therefore no thought for the morrow

"(32) *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.* (33) *But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you.* (34) *Take therefore no thought for the morrow: for the morrow shall take thought for the things of itself. Sufficient unto the day is the evil thereof.*"

Babylonian Talmud, Berachot 9b: "Each day has enough of its own troubles".

The Kingdom of YHWH

The essence of the Kingdom of YHWH that Messiah was teaching is service to the King (*HaShem*) and His Kingdom. Service to YHWH is submission to His will in faith and obedience. This is the essence of the Kingdom of YHWH also known as the community of YHWH. Service to YHWH is the basis of all true fellowship, and the foundational principle of YHWH's community.

Y'shua teaches that fellowship based on service to YHWH and His Kingdom takes precedence over our human, earthly relationships. In Matt 12:48-50, Messiah states:

"(48) *But he answered and said unto him that told him, "Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?"* (49) *And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, "Behold my mother and my brethren!* (50) **For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother".**

The teachings of Messiah show us that we are to pray for the Father's Kingdom to come to this earth. This will finalise Elohim's rule and authority over the earth before the eternal age begins. It will be an age of discipleship when YHWH's *Torah* (His divine instruction) will be taught to all peoples and all nations. It will be a time when Messiah Y'shua will rule the earth from Jerusalem on the throne of his father David. It will be the promised Messianic Age that will exist on this earth for one thousand years. During this millennial kingdom on earth, the Law (*Torah*) will go forth from Zion and the word of the Lord (the principles of the Kingdom of YHWH) from Jerusalem (Micah 4:2). It will be a literal fulfillment of the Kingdom of YHWH upon this earth. It will be headquartered in the physical nation of Israel, to a nation and a people redeemed and restored back to her Elohim. It is during this time that Israel will fulfill YHWH's call upon her and become a light to the Gentiles.

It is during this time that she will honour her Elohim and accept as her king Messiah Y'shua. Messiah will be the chief cornerstone of the Kingdom of YHWH upon this earth. He will fulfill his role as the promised king of Israel, Messiah ben David. He will be YHWH's delegated authority to rule and reign during this age of discipleship. This Messianic Age will fulfill YHWH's Kingdom and His will shall be done on this earth, even as it was purposed by YHWH in the eternal realm. The two will become one: "*as in heaven, so in the earth*".

Two parallel realms exist. There is the eternal, spiritual realm and the corresponding physical realm which exists on earth. There are also two parallel kingdoms: the Kingdom of Elohim, which is nourished and sustained by the Tree of Life; and the kingdom of this world, which feeds from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

In Genesis 2, we see the appearance of both these trees representing these opposing kingdoms. In Gen 2:9, we see that there existed in *Gan Eden* (the Garden of Eden) two trees: the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. In Gen 2:15, we see that Elohim placed man in the Garden of Eden to tend and to keep it (N.K.J. version). However, in the original Hebrew, these words "to tend and to keep" actually mean "to serve" and "to guard". The Hebrew word for "serve" transliterated into English is *'avdah*. The word for "servant" in Hebrew is from the root *eved*, which is the same root word for the verb "to serve". From this same root also comes the word *avadah*, which means to do service. The second Hebrew word is *L'shamrah*, which means, "to guard". It comes from the root word *shomer*, which means to guard, to protect, or to act as a watchman.

We can see from these Hebrew words that the original service of man to YHWH was not only to cultivate and tend the garden on the physical plane; but **much more importantly, it was to serve YHWH by protecting and guarding the things of the Kingdom of YHWH**. Adam was placed in the garden as a servant of *HaShem* to guard, protect and watch over the things of the Kingdom of Elohim. The Garden of Eden, before

the fall of Adam (mankind), was the Kingdom of Elohim on this earth. It was mankind in perfect harmony, fellowship and communion with Elohim and with one another. As all servants of Elohim are tested, so was Adam tested. In Gen 2: 16-17 we read,

- (16) "And the Lord God commanded the man, saying, "Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat;
(17) but of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat of it you shall surely die". (NKJV)

So Adam was commanded by Elohim to serve Him by guarding, protecting and being a watchman over the things of the Kingdom of Eloah in *Gan Eden*. He was also commanded not to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil. This was his test. **All of YHWH's servants must be tested as to whether or not they will submit and obey the will of YHWH.**

It is always the nature of *HaSatan* (Satan) to oppose YHWH and to try to deceive mankind to turn in rebellion against YHWH. Thus did the serpent tempt the man and the woman to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thereby relinquishing the dominion given to them by YHWH and turning dominion of the kingdom of this world, which had previously been in the perfect state of *Gan Eden*, over to *HaSatan*. In Hebrew, *HaSatan* means "the adversary". As a result of this act of disobedience and rebellion, *HaSatan* is the present ruler of the kingdom of this world—the kingdom of darkness. It is this adversary and this kingdom of darkness which opposes YHWH and the Kingdom of Elohim.

In Isaiah 14:12, we see that *HaSatan* was previously known as Lucifer, or *Qalal*. *Qalal* in Hebrew means to be clear, to shine or to be bright, indicating that he was anointed with the *Shekinah* of *HaShem*. He was previously a son of light, a servant of *HaShem* among the angelic beings. However, we see in verse 12: "*How you are fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning*". His nature was transformed from light to dark, from being an angelic servant of *HaShem* (as *Qalal*) to being the adversary of YHWH's servants (*HaSatan*).

We also see in Gen 1:4 that Elohim created light and separated it from the darkness (note that this differs from the creation of the lights in the firmament, which divide day and night (Gen 1:14-18). There are scholars who believe that the light referred to in Gen 1:3-4 is the light of Messiah, the beginning of the Creation of Elohim; and that the dark referred to is the fallen angel Lucifer. It is Messiah *Y'shua*, the second Adam, who will defeat the god of this world, *HaSatan*. Those who follow Messiah *Y'shua* will be the sons of light and will feed from the Tree of Life—the laws and principles of the Kingdom of YHWH. Those who follow the god of this world will be the sons of darkness who feed from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and who oppose YHWH's ways and laws. The final conflict of this age will be between the sons of light—those who obey the *Torah* of YHWH and the principles of His Kingdom, and those who are sons of darkness and rebel against YHWH's Kingdom and His *Torah* of truth.

The second Adam, Messiah *Y'shua*, was tested just as was the first Adam—to see if he would submit in obedience to the will of YHWH. The temptation which faces all of mankind is whether to submit to the Kingdom of YHWH (the Tree of Life) or to eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil—thereby rebelling against YHWH and yielding to the kingdom of darkness. The Tree of Life is the Kingdom of YHWH as found in His *Torah*. The Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil is the kingdom of darkness. Each time we eat from the Tree of Life and submit our will in obedience to the *Torah* of YHWH (His divine instructions and principles), we are participating along with Messiah *Y'shua* in restoring the Kingdom of YHWH to this earth. **Indeed, the renewed interest in the study of *Torah* among both Jew and Gentile is a very real indicator that the coming of the Kingdom of YHWH on this earth is imminent.**

Scripture plainly teaches us that we are not of this world (John 17:16). We are in this world but not of this world, because when we walk in accordance with Elohim's ways and His laws we are not of this world, even though we may be physically present in it. We belong to the Kingdom of YHWH. We are in covenant with the Father because we are walking according to the Tree of Life (the *Torah* of YHWH). Most people recognise the *Torah* as being the first five books of the Bible: Genesis, Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy. This is accurate; but in a broader sense, all of Scripture is Torah and can be considered as an unfolding of the foundational principles laid down in these first five books.

All of mankind is tested to reveal whether their hearts belong to YHWH's kingdom or to the kingdom of this world. Even Messiah *Y'shua* was tested. In Matt 4:8-10, *HaSatan* tempted Messiah with all that the kingdom of this world could offer. We read in verses 8-9:

- "(8) Again, the devil took Him up on an exceedingly high mountain, and showed Him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory. (9) And he said to Him, "All these things I will give You if You will fall down

and worship me". (10) Then Jesus said to him, "Away with you, Satan! For it is written, 'You shall worship the Lord your God, and Him only you shall serve". (NKJV)

The essence of true worship is total submission to YHWH and His Kingdom. We worship YHWH when we submit to His Kingdom and His rule in our lives. Conversely, when we submit to the kingdom of this world and idolise (worship) the glory, power, fame or fortune it can give us, we are really worshipping *HaSatan*. As we continue on, in verse 11 we read, "*Then the devil left him, and angels came and ministered to him*". It was this total submission and dedication to YHWH and His Kingdom that caused *HaSatan* to leave. It was also after this test of Messiah's total submission to the Kingdom of YHWH and his total rejection of the kingdom of this world that Messiah began his public teaching ministry and to preach the good news of the Kingdom of YHWH with signs, wonders and miracles attesting to the power of YHWH and His Kingdom.

Like Messiah Y'shua, we all will be tested in our loyalty to the Kingdom of YHWH, which is the Tree of Life. In James 4:4 we read:

"(4) Adulterers and adulteresses! Do you not know that friendship with the world is enmity with God? Whoever therefore wants to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God". (NKJV)

I believe that the apostle James is telling us in this passage that if our hearts are still bound to the things of this world, we cannot be bound in faithfulness and loyalty to G-D and His Kingdom, and we are therefore likened to adulterers. In verse 8 of this same chapter we read:

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

James is saying that those who walk in both kingdoms are double-minded and lukewarm. Remember the words of admonishment to the Laodicean Church in Rev 3:15-16:

(15) "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot.
(16) So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth".
(NKJV)

Returning again to James 4:7 we read:

"(7) Therefore submit to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you". (NKJV)

We learn from this verse that as we submit to YHWH and submit to the laws and principles of His Kingdom, we have the power to resist the kingdom of darkness and overcome it; but if we are lukewarm and double-minded we will suffer defeat at the hands of the kingdom of darkness. Messiah, when tempted by *HaSatan* in the wilderness, totally submitted to YHWH and His Kingdom (the Tree of Life) and resisted the allure of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil (the kingdom of this world). Because He did so, the enemy, *HaSatan*, had to flee because the Kingdom of YHWH always defeats the kingdom of darkness. Those who are totally faithful to YHWH and to His Kingdom will ultimately defeat the god of this world and the kingdom of this world (John 12:31).

The battle at the close of this age will be a clash of these two kingdoms. The power of YHWH and His Kingdom will confront the power of *HaSatan* and the kingdom of darkness. It will demonstrate the power of YHWH and those who belong to His Kingdom, the sons of light (John 12:36). They will be opposed by the power of the god of this world, *HaSatan*; and those who belong to this world, the sons of darkness. It will culminate in the false messiah (the Antichrist), empowered by *HaSatan*—being defeated by the true Messiah, the Lion of the tribe of Judah—Messiah Y'shua (Rev 11:15). This victory of light over dark will usher in the Messianic Age of the Millennial Kingdom where Messiah Y'shua, the second Adam, will teach all those remaining on this earth the ways of the Kingdom of YHWH. He will be what the first Adam was not: the guardian and protector of the *Torah* of YHWH, the Tree of Life.

Israel as a nation and a people, will be restored back to *HaShem* her Elohim. She will fulfill the meaning of her name, *Israel*: "the one who overcomes the world through YHWH". She will become a light to the Gentile nations which remain, showing by her example the ways of *Torah*, the Tree of Life. In Isaiah 60: 1-3 we read:

(1) "Arise, shine; For your light has come! And the glory of the Lord is risen upon you.
(2) For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, And deep darkness the people; But the Lord will arise over you, And His glory will be seen upon you.
(3) The Gentiles shall come to your light, And kings to the brightness of your rising". (NKJV)

Following the same theme, we read in Isaiah 62:2-4:

- (2) **"The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, And all kings your glory.** You shall be called by a new name, Which the mouth of the Lord will name.
- (3) You shall also be a crown of glory In the hand of the Lord, And a royal diadem In the hand of your God.
- (4) You shall no longer be termed Forsaken, Nor shall your land any more be termed Desolate; But you shall be called Hephzibah (My Delight is in Her), and your land Beulah (Married); **For the Lord delights in you, And your land shall be married".** (NKJV)

Like her Messiah Y'shua, Israel will then become the guardian (*shomer*) of the Kingdom of YHWH (the Tree of Life) and the servant (*eved*) of the Most High El Elyon.

SECTION II **A MIDRASH ON TORAH OBSERVANCE**

MATTHEW 7:1-29

TEXT:

- (1) "Judge not, that ye be not judged.
- (2) *For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again.*
- (3) *And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye?*
- (4) *Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye?*
- (5) *Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye.*
- (6) *Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you.*
- (7) *Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:*
- (8) *For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened.*
- (9) *Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone?*
- (10) *Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent?*
- (11) *If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?*
- (12) *Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.*
- (13) *Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:*
- (14) *Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.*
- (15) *Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.*
- (16) *Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?*
- (17) *Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.*
- (18) *A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.*
- (19) *Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.*
- (20) *Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.*
- (21) *Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven.*
- (22) *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?*
- (23) *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity.*
- (24) *Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:*
- (25) *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock.*
- (26) *And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:*
- (27) *And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it.*

- (28) And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine:
(29) For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes".

NOTE: At this level of *Torah* fundamentals, we find great unity between the teaching of the Pharisees as exemplified by Paul's letters and the *Talmud*, and those of the Essenes as exemplified by James' letter. The name "James" is a Christian supplantation. The actual name in the Greek text is Jacob, from the Hebrew "Ya'acov". The name "James" was most likely added at the time the "King James" Bible was created. As mentioned earlier, Y'shua had one foot in each of these camps (the Pharisees and the Essenes.)

7:1 Do not judge, or you too will be judged

"Judge not, that ye be not judged".

As throughout this *Midrash*, Y'shua's warning is a reflection of Pharasaic opinion:
Babylonian Talmud, Avot 2:14: "*Do not judge your fellow until you have been in his place*".

Babylonian Talmud, Avot 4:10: "*Do not be a judge of others, for there is no judge but the one (God)*".

7:2 ... with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again

"*For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again*".

This is the same standard as found in the Talmud:

Babylonian Talmud, Mishnah Sotah 1:7: "*By a person's standard of measure, is he, too, measured*".

Babylonian Talmud, Shabat 127b: "*How you judge others, does God judge you*".

The *Torah* is the "perfect law of liberty" that we are to judge by:

- (23) "For if any be a hearer of the word, and not a doer, he is like unto a man beholding his natural face in a glass:
(24) *For he beholdeth himself, and goeth his way, and straightway forgetteth what manner of man he was.*
(25) *But whoso looketh into the perfect law of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed in his deed*". (Jam 1:23-25)

Some Christians have a hard time understanding what Y'shua says about judging, because when they hear it outside of its context, it sounds as if Y'shua is saying, "Have no discernment – just ignore sin!" This doesn't seem right to them, so they put it aside; but if they knew what His words meant in His time, they would see their brilliance. It seems to be related to a well-known saying of Y'shua's day, which was, "*Judge every person in favourable terms*" (Mishnah, Avot 1:6). That saying came from a rabbinic interpretation of Lev 19:15, "*You shall do no injustice in judgment; you shall not be partial to the poor nor defer to the great, but you are to judge your neighbor fairly*". The rabbis said that if we want to be entirely fair in judging our neighbors, we should always give people the benefit of the doubt, or "judge favourably".

A parable was told about a man who works for a farmer for three years and when he goes to him to ask for his pay, the farm owner says he has nothing to give him. The man refrains from anger but leaves in sorrow. A few days later, the farmer brings him everything he owes him plus three carts of extra gifts, and asks him what he was thinking when he said he couldn't pay him. The worker said that he had assumed that the farmer must have had a legitimate reason and that he was acting honourably. The farmer exclaimed that this was exactly the case! His son wouldn't study the Scriptures, and he had rashly vowed all his possessions to Abba Father in his prayers for his son. He had been excused from the vow; and now that he could give the worker the money, he had hurried to pay him what he owed—plus much more. The farmer praised the hired hand, saying, "*And as for you, just as you have judged me favourably, may the Lord judge you favourably!*" (B. Talmud, Shabbat 127b). It is fascinating to see that this last line is very reminiscent of the words of Y'shua – "*For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you*". (Matt 7:2, Luke 6:38)

In almost every situation, we have the choice to look for a good motivation or a bad motivation behind other people's behaviour. The way we interpret others' motivations has a profound effect on our reactions toward them. If we practice this habit of judging favourably, it can transform our personalities! We will become kinder and more patient, and our attitudes towards others become more loving as we assume the best, rather than the worst about them.

Interestingly, Jewish culture even up to the present time, has tried to instill in its people the ethic to "judge favourably". There is a Jewish group that meets simply to practice finding ways to give the benefit of the doubt when it appears someone has done something unkind. They reflect on hurts in their lives and then propose ways to excuse the perpetrator. For example, when one of them didn't receive an invitation to a wedding, they would say, "Perhaps the person was under the impression that they had already sent an invitation", or, "Perhaps they couldn't afford to invite many people". (See *The Book of Jewish Values*, by Joseph Telushkin, p. 35.) One Jewish website called, "*The Other Side of the Story*" is filled with stories of situations where a person looked like he was doing wrong, but then turned out to be innocent. The point is simply to teach others the importance of judging favourably.

Y'shua's words, "Do Not Judge"

So, how does Y'shua's words that say, "Do not judge" compare with the ethic of judging favourably? The idea behind judging favourably is to find ways to assume that other's intentions are good. But, given what we know about human nature, we expect that people will sin willfully and intentionally. So at some point when we have been offended, we need to realise that if we are sinners ourselves and that we can't demand judgment on others. We need to put aside judgment and extend mercy instead. As Y'shua said, "(36) *Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful.* (37) *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:* (38) *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again*". (Luke 6:36-38)

Obviously, we are not saying this to avoid having discernment. We can discern whether an action or an outward attitude is wrong. According to Paul, the Believers are also obligated to discipline sinful practice among its members (1 Cor 5:1-5). And if the wrong is committed against us personally, Y'shua tells us to show the person his sin in hopes of his being repentant so that we can forgive. (Matt 18:15-17)

Also, in Lev 19:17-18 it says, "(17) *Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbour, and not suffer sin upon him.* (18) *Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD*".

While we can discern sin in practice, only YHWH knows the true motive of the heart; so we need to leave final judgment of the person up to Him. To judge another is to presume to have both the knowledge and authority of YHWH Himself. So when we are in a situation where we are tempted to pass judgment, we need to step back and hand it up to YHWH and to remind ourselves that it is His job and not ours. As James says, "*There is one lawgiver, who is able to save and to destroy: who art thou that judgest another?*" (Jam 4:12) and Paul reminds us, "*But why dost thou judge thy brother? or why dost thou set at nought thy brother? for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ*". (Rom 14:10)

What is Judging?

If judging (negatively) is defined as believing the worst about others, it encompasses many other kinds of behaviour that we know are wrong. All insults are forms of judgment. If we like a woman, we may describe her as "bold and self-assured"; but if we don't, we will judge her negatively by calling her "arrogant and loud-mouthed". A man may simply be uninformed; but when we call him "stupid", we have judged him negatively. James says, "*Speak not evil one of another, brethren. He that speaketh evil of his brother, and judgeth his brother, speaketh evil of the law, and judgeth the law: but if thou judge the law, thou art not a doer of the law, but a judge*". (Jam 4:11)

Gossip relies heavily on judgment. People who love to gossip usually have a habit of looking for wrongdoing in a person's life in order to share it with others. Criticism, cynicism, and complaining are all based on searching out the negative everywhere we can find it. Even people who struggle with chronic anger can often find the root of their problem in always looking for something wrong in other peoples' actions - by their own act of judging negatively.

Unfortunately, our culture is also filled to the brim with "judging". Politics seems not to be able function without it. Various parties accuse each other of ugly, self-interested reasons for every action. Editorials are filled with cynicism about the evil motives of the government and inept handling of international affairs. Tabloids, comedians, and political talk shows delight in finding prominent peoples' faults and holding them up for ridicule. Unfortunately, we don't notice that participating in that kind of judgment slowly fills us with the same ugly attitude toward others—even poisoning our relationships with loved ones.

Applying this idea to our own lives

Believers should be finding information about the Hebraic Roots, which gives insights that cast new light on the Bible which fill in many gaps. It is not uncommon when a person starts learning more to have an attitude of judgment on Christianity, to ask, "Why wasn't I told this ever before?" and even to assume that some malicious intent is behind the lack of knowledge of this background. People who formerly expressed their love for YHWH in traditional Christian ways suddenly feel that those who observe Christian traditions are practicing paganism, and become angry and accusatory of others.

We can have a neutral discussion about whether a tradition is sound, using the Bible as guide; and may even change our own practice—which is exercising discernment. But that is different than to accuse people of worshipping idols when the true intent of their hearts is to lovingly worship YHWH. It seems that any time when some new, good insight enters the Believing world, it can become a source of division instead—because of our habit of judging negatively. Whether it is learning about their Jewish heritage, or using spiritual gifts, or adopting contemporary worship styles—Believers often reflect the pervasive habit of condemnation that is part of our world, one they hardly realise is wrong.

Believers would do well to focus more on the ethic to judge favourably. We emphasise sexual purity, and rightly so; but while sexual promiscuity damages some marriages, probably no marriage has ever escaped terrible wounding from unfair accusations and judgments. In the same way, while a few children grow up scarred from physical abuse, many more grow up scarred from relentless criticism from parents who did not judge them favourably. Indeed, the worst "judges" are often those who never received mercy themselves, and never learned to extend it to others. We should realise this and even refrain from condemning the most judgmental, because we don't know how much criticism they have endured themselves.

To hear Y'shua one more time,

- (36) *"Be ye therefore merciful, as your Father also is merciful."*
- (37) *Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven:*
- (38) *Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again". (Luke 6:36-38)*

7:3-5 Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye?

"(3) And why beholdest thou the mote that is in thy brother's eye, but considerest not the beam that is in thine own eye? (4) Or how wilt thou say to thy brother, Let me pull out the mote out of thine eye; and, behold, a beam is in thine own eye? (5) Thou hypocrite, first cast out the beam out of thine own eye; and then shalt thou see clearly to cast out the mote out of thy brother's eye".

Paul and James had similar messages about double standards:

- (21) *"Thou therefore which teachest another, teachest thou not thyself? thou that preachest a man should not steal, dost thou steal?"*
- (22) *Thou that sayest a man should not commit adultery, dost thou commit adultery? thou that abhorrest idols, dost thou commit sacrilege?*
- (23) *Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?" (Rom 2:21-23)*

- (1) *"My brethren, have not the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with respect of persons.*
- (2) *For if there come unto your assembly a man with a gold ring, in goodly apparel, and there come in also a poor man in vile raiment;*
- (3) *And ye have respect to him that weareth the gay clothing, and say unto him, Sit thou here in a good place; and say to the poor, Stand thou there, or sit here under my footstool:*
- (4) *Are ye not then partial in yourselves, and are become judges of evil thoughts?" (Jam 2:1-4)*

Again, Y'shua's words are a reflection of the teachings of the Pharisees:

Babylonian Talmud, Er'chin 16b: *Rabbi Tarfon said, "I wonder if there be anyone in this era who will allow himself to be reproved. If someone says to another, 'Cast out the speck that is in your eye!' he will retort, 'Cast out first the beam that is in your own eye!'"*

Babylonian Talmud, Kidushin 70a: *"He who condemns others, sees in them his own faults".*

Babylonian Talmud, Bava Mezia 59a: "Do not rebuke your fellow with your own blemish".

7:6 Give not that which is holy unto the dogs

"Give not that which is holy unto the dogs, neither cast ye your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn again and rend you".

What is it that is "Holy" that we can misuse? The topic has not changed -- it is the *Torah*.

A similar sentiment is found in the *Talmud*:

Babylonian Talmud, Ket. 111a: "R. Levi said: "God made Israel swear that they should not reveal the [Messianic] end, and should not reveal the secrets of [of the Torah] to the idolators"."

7:7 Ask and it will be given to you; seek and you will find

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you."

Ask for what? Money, fame or happiness? No, the spiritual man seeks spiritual things in the form of the truth and blessings of the *Torah*:

- (17) "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and cometh down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning.
- (18) Of his own will begat he us with the word of truth, that we should be a kind of firstfruits of his creatures.
- (19) Wherefore, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath:
- (20) For the wrath of man worketh not the righteousness of God.
- (21) Wherefore lay apart all filthiness and superfluity of naughtiness, and receive with meekness the engrafted word, which is able to save your souls". (Jam 1:17-21)

The primary example of what we are to pray for was given to us by Y'shua. He prayed for us to become one (a unity - Hebrew: *echad*) with the Father, as He is *echad* with the Father:

- (20) "Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word;
- (21) That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.
- (22) And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:
- (23) I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me.
- (24) Father, I will that they also, whom thou hast given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which thou hast given me: for thou lovedst me before the foundation of the world.
- (25) O righteous Father, the world hath not known thee: but I have known thee, and these have known that thou hast sent me.
- (26) And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them". (John 17:20-26)

7:8-12 Do to others what you would have them do to you

"(8) For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened. (9) Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? (10) Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? (11) If ye then, being evil, know how to give good gifts unto your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him? (12) Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets".

This time Y'shua is directly quoting Hillel (see Glossary section for more info), the grandfather of Gamaliel. Gamaliel taught Paul:

Babylonian Talmud, Shabat 31a; "What is hateful to you, do it not unto others -- this is the entire Torah, and the rest is commentary".

(Yes, we can actually thank the Pharisees for the "Golden Rule" that we all teach our children! – Also see section "James the Brother of Y'shua" under "Matt 13:53-54 And when he was come into his own country")

... for this is the law and the prophets

Y'shua does not say, "for this replaces the Law and the Prophets". He clearly said that He did not come to do that (Matt 5:17-21). He is summarising His teachings that the whole of *Torah* is given for the good of man—to establish and improve His relationship with YHWH and with his fellow man. It is by learning and following YHWH's *Torah* that we "do what is right unto others".

James had a similar way of summarising what true faith is:

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world". (Jam 1:27)

James brings together several of these points in one section of his letter. He reiterates the idea of "do unto others", but says that if you show favouritism, then you sin. He then states that you cannot pick and choose what parts of the *Torah* (the "royal law") you feel like keeping, as it is a unity:

- (8) *"If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:*
- (9) *But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.*
- (10) *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all.*
- (11) *For he that said, Do not commit adultery, said also, Do not kill. Now if thou commit no adultery, yet if thou kill, thou art become a transgressor of the law.*
- (12) *So speak ye, and so do, as they that shall be judged by the law of liberty". (Jam 2:8-12)*

Paul and James agree that knowing the *Torah* is not enough - we are to DO the *Torah*:

*"(For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified". (James 1:22)
"But be ye doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving your own selves". (Rom 2:13)*

Paul and James also state that willfully violating the *Torah* is tantamount to blaspheming YHWH:

- (23) *"Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?*
- (24) *For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written". (Rom 2:23-24)*

- (7) *"Do not they blaspheme that worthy name by the which ye are called?*
- (8) *If ye fulfil the royal law according to the scripture, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself, ye do well:*
- (9) *But if ye have respect to persons, ye commit sin, and are convinced of the law as transgressors.*
- (10) *For whosoever shall keep the whole law, and yet offend in one point, he is guilty of all". James 2:7-10*

7:13-14 Enter ye in at the strait gate

"(13) Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereto: (14) Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it".

The question at this point is, "Has YHWH indicated to us which the straight and correct gate is and what the broad ways of destruction are – or do we simply pick what sounds good to us?"

Of course the answer is that He has given us the *Torah* as our guideline to define sin, how to live, how to sanctify ourselves, and how to learn more of Him.

Narrow is the way

Here we have a picture of two paths from which we can choose – one is broad and followed by the majority, but it ends in eternal death. The other is narrow and followed by few, yet it leads to life everlasting.

Until I studied these verses and their context in detail, I had always thought of these as being either the way of the world - rejection of the Messiah, or the other way of following Y'shua. But having made closer examination of the context, I find that this is not accurate. These verses are actually a warning to those who follow Y'shua!

This same warning is repeated in the following verses, right down to verse 27 in greater detail. In verses 15-20, we are warned that there are those who would deceive us and we are told how to distinguish them from those who are on the 'narrow way', "*beware of false prophets... in sheep's clothing, but inwardly are ravenous wolves*". Those who are attempting to lead us down the path to destruction make a pretence to be following Y'shua. How do we know them? "*Every tree that brings forth not good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you shall know them*". Matt 25:31-46 (not quoted in full) clearly shows on which fruits we can judge, "I was hungry, and you gave me to eat; I was thirsty, and you gave me to drink; I was a stranger, and you took me in; naked and you clothed me; sick and you visited me; I was in prison, and you came to me. Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Sovereign, when did we see you hungry, and fed you?... the King shall answer them and say to them, Truly I say to you, Since you did it to one of these my brethren, even these least, you did it to me".

It is verses 21-23 that make it very clear for me, "*Not everyone that says to me, Master, Master, shall enter the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Master, Master, did we not prophesy by your name, and by your name cast out demons, and by your name do many mighty works? And then I will profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me you that work lawlessness*". Here we have the two paths portrayed plainly, the narrow way - those who do the will of the Father in heaven, and the broad path to destruction - those that work lawlessness. The people on both paths think they are following Y'shua, but the majority have been deceived by the wolves in sheep's clothing. They believe they have the Spirit and are working great miracles in the Messiah's name, yet he says he does not know them. Their marvelous works are not a gauge of the truth they have, but are rather the means of their seduction. Many times I have heard the argument that the name 'Jesus' must be correct because of the miracles performed through it, but here we see that miracles are not a measure of righteousness. The broad path is very attractive because of the apparent power, and it's easy to follow as YHWH's laws are not respected; this being the case, as it attracts large numbers of people; but it ends in the lake of fire. Here stands a warning we do well to heed—indeed, Y'shua says no less than five times in Matthew that "*there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth*" when speaking of those who think they are on the path of life but fail to enter the kingdom.

The narrow way, however, is much less attractive to the majority of people as the main requirement is neither easy nor popular. The parable regarding the wise and foolish men in verses 24-27 brings this primary factor to the fore: that we not only hear Y'shua's words, but do them. Indeed, that we do the will of our Father in heaven – to keep his laws and seek his will with all our strength; this is the way that leads to eternal life. "*For many are called, but few are chosen*" (Matt 22:16.) "*And they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful*" (Rev 17:14.)

7:15 Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves".

The sad fact is that there are some in the Body (including certain shepherds) who have strayed from the will of YHWH; and most importantly, have strayed from, and or/never knew the Word of YHWH!

Let us prayerfully commence this investigation of what is happening in the Body of Believers in "the latter days".

As we ponder on the precious Scripture of those things taking place in the latter days, we know with assurance that as we faithfully run the race, being spiritually minded in all things, we have life and peace in Messiah Y'shua, our Master!

(24) "*Know ye not that they which run in a race run all, but one receiveth the prize? So run, that ye may obtain.*

(25) "*And every man that striveth for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible*". (1 Cor 9:24-25)

This work contains an urgent warning to all Set Apart Ones in Messiah Y'shua in relation to the many wolves in sheep's clothing that are parading within churches.

Some may say, "You should stick to positive and uplifting messages". Beloved, firstly this teaching is a positive ministry in every way, for we share the Good News to Jew and Gentile: that Y'shua the Messiah is Lord and that His Guilt Offering Sacrifice is the only way to Salvation. This teaching will continue to share the Gospel truth that Y'shua is YHWH's Arm of Salvation. Who gave His life for us, in order that those who

believe in Him repent of their sins and live a clean and acceptable life before Him will be saved and have everlasting life! The very purpose is to call lost souls to Return to YHWH to repent and live a life of obedience! Now, I believe this is Good (positive) News indeed!

Secondly, the Master Y'shua himself clearly spoke on the matter of *the latter days (end of days)* in order that we, the faithful, would clearly understand of what the evil one is doing in these times. (Matt 24) The adversary is attempting to deceive, if possible, even the very elect. Sadly, this fact is all part of the end times. However, due to the signs of these times, we know with certainty that the coming of our Saviour for His faithful is near! Finally, beloved, it was our Master Y'shua and His Apostles that clearly warned us to try and test all things.

7:16-20 Ye shall know them by their fruits

"(16) Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles? (17) Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit. (18) A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. (19) Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire. (20) Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them".

Starting with verse 15 to get the contexts:

"(15) Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. (16) Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?" (Matt 7:15-16)

(7) *Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ.*
(8) *But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel unto you than that which we have preached unto you, let him be accursed". (Gal 1:7-8)*

(11) *"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.*
(12) *And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (13) But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved". (Matt 24:11-13)*

Among some (so-called) Protestants today, the great issues of the Reformation apparently have been forgotten or are no longer considered important.

Robert Schuller of the Crystal Cathedral in California, describing his feelings as he watched Pope John Paul II perform Mass during his visit to Los Angeles, September 1987, stated: *"I cried through most of the Mass, because there was nothing he said in words or theological content that didn't harmonize with my own belief system".* Reported in the 'the Christian News', June 13, 1988, page 18.

Schuller's public remarks will confuse true believers, for the Pope fervently believes that "Only through the performance of the sacraments (such as the mass and holy communion) in the Roman Catholic Church, will lead lives to heaven with divine certainty. Outside the Roman Catholic Church, nobody can be saved".

We must not forget that in 1989 the Pope declared in unison with the "Re-constructionalists" (**Kingdom NOW Theology**), that, *"We the Church (Roman Catholics) are the true Israel of God"*. This kind of teaching is being taught throughout much of the Hyper Charismatic world today. Kenneth Hagin's Rhema Bible Training Center uses a book called "The Eternal Church" by Bill Hamon as a training manual. What does it teach? The same as the Pope did in 1988. *"The Church is Israel. Heir to ALL of Israel's promises. He further states that natural Israel has been CUT OFF from God and has No further place in the prophetic scene"*. Men such as Kenneth Copeland, Jerry Savelle, Gary Greenwald, Earl Paulk, John Gimenez and others have called this book, *"a valuable and indispensable tool"*.

Earl Paulk stated, *"The hour has come for us to know that His Spirit of Anti-christ is now at work in the world through so-called "the Holy Spirit" filled teachers who say 'If you bless national Israel, God will bless you'. Not only is this blatantly deceptive, it is not part of the New Covenant at all!"* From Earl's book *"The Handwriting on the Wall"*.

Speaking at Oklahoma City on April 11 1988, Rick Godwin, another popular speaker on the US the Christian Media, delivered a type of anti-Israel rhetoric that is becoming so typical in many Power of Positive thinking Circles. This is part of his statement: *"They (the Jews) are not chosen, they are cursed, they are not blessed, they are cursed! The Church is the Israel of God, not that garlic one over there on the Mediterranean Sea!"*

Even that so called 'great leader' of South Africa's black people Bishop Desmond Tutu stated, as reported by the Messianic publication "Hadderech", also reported by Peter Lalonde in the Omega-Letter (June '89): "*According the New Testament, the Jews must suffer. We will definitely put it into practice when we are in power. As soon as we rule, there will be no more sympathy for the Jews*". What a comfort this statement brings to Jews living in South Africa today! Reported on the ABC TV News, 28 February, 1990.

Also, in these Latter Days (just as Y'shua has warned us), there are some Christians that continue to pursue health, wealth and the self; thus, they follow charismatic personalities that exude great charisma—the likes of some American TV Evangelists. These evangelists, both male and female, feed the self with the never-ending "Gospel of prosperity" which only feeds the flesh. Nevertheless, beloved, decision-time must come for many as we are accountable before Blessed YHWH Elohim, for "**You cannot serve two masters!**"

We, the Body of Messiah Y'shua, must beware of the wiles of men such as that of Rev 2:8 & 9, "**They are the Synagogue of Satan!**" There is no doubt that we are in the end times. Let us therefore be aware of what is happening and not be deceived.

These are only some of the many examples of "deceived" Christian movements. Sadly, these so-called "spirit filled" preachers deceive many Believers who are being led right into end-time deception; the worst, however, is the blatant rejection of YHWH's *Torah*.

What are the "fruits" we shall know them by? They are certainly not "miraculous manifestations", as satan and his angels can and do perform miracles as YHWH allows. Nor are the fruits simply "good results"—such as healed marriages, release from addictions, etc. Even secular, pagan and atheistic groups and cults can and do get good results.

The key here is that the fruits are coming from "the tree". What is the tree? In Judaism, the *Torah* is called the Tree of Life, as mentioned in the notes in Matt 6:32-34 under "The Kingdom of YHWH".

The phrase "*to bring forth ... fruit*" in a Hebraic spiritual context, refers to deeper spiritual insight and teachings.

Are the "fruits" (teachings) true to the *Torah*; or are they in opposition to it, as Y'shua warned about at the beginning of this sermon? (5:17-20) As with any good teacher, Y'shua is "closing the loop" to his argument, summarising with what He began with. This is expounded on (with a warning) in the section of verse 21-29:

7:21-29 Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord...

"(21) Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven. (22) Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? (23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (24) Therefore whosoever heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock: (25) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell not: for it was founded upon a rock. (26) And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand: (27) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and beat upon that house; and it fell: and great was the fall of it. (28) And it came to pass, when Jesus had ended these sayings, the people were astonished at his doctrine: (29) For he taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes".

These verses have often been used by some groups to point a finger at other "apostate" or "more liberal" groups who "claim the name of Y'shua". But what is Y'shua's criteria for those who fall into this group?

At the beginning of this *Midrash* (Matt 5:17-20), Y'shua had given three examples to make a point about *Torah* still being in effect.

He did not come to do away with the *Torah*

This included even the tiniest part (jot and tittle) of the *Torah*

Those who taught otherwise would be "*least in the Kingdom*"

Here at the conclusion of His *Midrash*, He again shows in three different ways who falls in this category of those *He does not know*.

He describes them as follows:

Matt 7:21: "Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven".

Matt 7:23: "And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity".

Matt 7:26: "And every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not, shall be likened unto a foolish man, which built his house upon the sand:"

Regarding the first, Matt 7:21 – At the time Y'shua spoke, where was the Father's will to be found? Only in the *Torah* (and its extension through the rest of the *Tenach*).

Concerning what He next says in verse 23 – How is iniquity (sin) defined, even in the New Covenant? It is the breaking of *Torah*:

"Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law". (1 John 3:4)

The word for "iniquity" in verse 23 is "lawlessness", from the Greek *anomia*. Y'shua clearly states that those who practice lawlessness will not enter into His kingdom. What "law" are these people violating with their "lawlessness"? As it has been clearly shown, the context of Matt 5:17 through 7:29 is that of religious law - the *Torah*.

Lastly, in verse 26 when Y'shua says "these sayings of mine", He is in no way stating that His commandments now replace those of the Father's. Such a statement would immediately disqualify Him from being the Messiah. Yet, this doctrine (usually in a round-about way) is taught in many places today. Y'shua's sayings are those of the Father's - they are One. If you have heard Him, you have heard the Father—and vice-versa. He makes this clear throughout all four Gospel accounts.

Paul also reminds us that this does not change for believers in Messiah. The *Torah* remains:

"Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law". (Rom 3:31)

Every one that heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them not...

Y'shua concludes His Midrash about the *Torah* (that began in Matt 5:17-20) with a warning to those listening. His words about the house being knocked down mirror those found in the *Talmud*, which equates "these sayings of mine" to the *Torah*:

Babylonian Talmud, Avot 3:17: "One who studies Torah but does not do good deeds is likened to one who builds with a foundation of straw, so that even a minor flow of water will destroy it".

For he taught them as one having authority

Y'shua is teaching and making definitive rulings on the *Torah*. Rabbis in His day would typically teach "in the name of" of another Rabbi who preceded them – even if the other Rabbi was long-since deceased. Y'shua taught in His own name. The authority He has stems from the fact that He IS the *Torah* in the flesh – as John's Gospel says in its Hebrew context:

From John 1 – "In the beginning was the Torah, and the Torah was with God and the Torah was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through him all things were made ... In him was life and that life was the light of men ... And the Torah became flesh and made his dwelling among us".

At the time John wrote this, the term "Word" was equated both with YHWH and with the *Torah*. In fact, the last book of the *Torah* is called *Devarim* (Deuteronomy) and it means "words".

END OF Section II - A Midrash on Torah Observance

SECTION III

MESSIAH'S MIRACLES

MATTHEW 8:1-34

TEXT:

- (1) "When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him.
- (2) And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean.
- (3) And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed.
- (4) And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them.
- (5) And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him,
- (6) And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.
- (7) And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him.
- (8) The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.
- (9) For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.
- (10) When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.
- (11) And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.
- (12) But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (13) And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour.
- (14) And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever.
- (15) And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them.
- (16) When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick:
- (17) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses.
- (18) Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side.
- (19) And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.
- (20) And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.
- (21) And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.
- (22) But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead.
- (23) And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him.
- (24) And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep.
- (25) And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish.
- (26) And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm.
- (27) But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!
- (28) And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way.
- (29) And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time?
- (30) And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding.
- (31) So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine.
- (32) And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters.
- (33) And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what was befallen to the possessed of the devils.
- (34) And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts".

8:1-4 And, behold, there came a leper ... shew thyself to the priest

"(1) When he was come down from the mountain, great multitudes followed him. (2) And, behold, there came a leper and worshipped him, saying, Lord, if thou wilt, thou canst make me clean. (3) And Jesus put forth his hand, and touched him, saying, I will; be thou clean. And immediately his leprosy was cleansed. (4) And Jesus saith unto him, See thou tell no man; but go thy way, shew thyself to the priest, and offer the gift that Moses commanded, for a testimony unto them".

This is a very significant section of Scripture; the meaning of which is, however, missed in modern Bible commentaries. Many Bibles cross-reference this section to Leviticus chapter 13 and 14 and what they call the "laws regarding leprosy". Although the link to Leviticus is correct, the common interpretation of the ailment being "leprosy" is incorrect. For instance, the *Geneva Study Bible* even has a caption in chapter 14 entitled, "The Law Concerning Leprous Houses".

Of course, the idea of a house having leprosy is absurd. The text of Leviticus clearly shows this is not the disease of leprosy:

None of the physical skin conditions described are those of leprosy.

The method of examination and treatment is not that for leprosy.

Leprosy does not appear on clothing and walls of homes.

The affliction spoke of in Leviticus is known in Jewish Bibles as *tzaraat*. (The first two letters are pronounced like the double z in "pizza"—broken down, it's pronounced "zara-at".) Scripture shows that this was a specific disease inflicted directly by YHWH Himself for hidden sin among the people. It is taught in Judaism that *tzaraat* was directly associated with the sin of *lashon hara* (an evil tongue). This was when people would speak evil of others behind their backs. In the book of Numbers, chapter 12, we see Moses' own sister, Miriam, afflicted with *tzaraat* when she spoke against Moses.

Only YHWH could give and take away the affliction of *Tzaraat*. Only YHWH knew of the hidden sin and also if the sinner was truly repentant in their heart. The disease would go away only upon true repentance. YHWH gave the priests specific instructions on recognising both the appearance and disappearance of *tzaraat*. Upon its healing, it was recognised that the sinner had been forgiven by YHWH and they would then have certain steps to take prior to being allowed to re-enter the community.

If the man approaching *Y'shua* in these verses is indeed afflicted with *tzaraat* (and by *Y'shua*'s instructions to him, it would appear so), then we have a significant proof text for His deity. For *Y'shua* to remove *tzaraat* from a man was even more significant than other types of diseases, as *tzaraat* could only be removed by Elohim.

Another point to note in this section is that *Y'shua* commanded the man not to tell anyone but to inform the priests. As already mentioned, He was once again following the *Torah* by instructing the man to go see the priest. *Y'shua* adhered to Positive Law 110: Lev 14:2 On the specified procedure of cleansing: "*This shall be the law of the leper (tzaraat) in the day of his cleansing: He shall be brought unto the priest:...*"

A question to consider is: why does *Y'shua* (here and later on as well) tell people not to spread the word of His miracles? We will address this in the next section of this study.

Let's go back to the subject of "*tzaraat*". There is another interesting story in the New Covenant that seems to be related to this sin-related condition. One could ask, "Who, more than anyone else, was speaking *lashon hara* against the Messiah and his followers?

This was Sha'ul (Paul/Saul), of course. In Acts chapter 9, we read of Paul's encounter with *Y'shua*. He is stricken with an ailment that blinds him. The details of this affliction are given when it comes to an end: "*And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized*" (Acts 9:18 on).

The Greek word for "leprosy", as found in the New Testament, is *lepra* (from the root *lepis*) – meaning a *flake or scale* (Strong's #3014, #3013). This is the word used to describe the "scales" that Paul received on his *Road to Damascus*. It is also the word used to describe the man healed by *Y'shua* in verses 8:1-4. Thus, an argument could be made that Paul was stricken with *Tzaraat*, which was healed through his encounter with *Y'shua*.

While we are on the subject of Paul's "conversion" (as some call it), it is important to note that Paul did not lose all of the knowledge he had acquired in his training as a Pharisee. His problem was the same, as he would later note concerning his fellow Pharisees:

"*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge*". (Rom 10:2)

The word "knowledge" is *epignosis* (Strong's #1922), meaning to have full discernment. Paul, like the other Pharisees, had abundant understanding of the Scriptures. (They had "knowledge" in this sense.) However, it required the illumination of Elohim's Spirit to take that understanding and turn it into wisdom – the wisdom that then showed him that Y'shua was the goal of the *Torah*.

8:5-11 There came unto him a centurion

"(5) *And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, (6) And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented.* (7) And Jesus saith unto him, *I will come and heal him.* (8) The centurion answered and said, *Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed.* (9) For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, *Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it.* (10) When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, *Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel.* (11) And I say unto you, *That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven*".

The centurion clearly knew the *Torah* and Jewish culture to recognise that Y'shua was the Messiah. Many Gentiles of that day were attracted to the faith of Israel. In Scripture and other writings, we see Gentiles in various stages of practice and growth in the faith of Israel. Some were known as "God-fearers" (i.e. Cornelius of Acts), who acknowledged that the Elohim of Israel was the one true Aviad (everlasting Father) and followed some of the *Torah* commandments. They would not be on an active path of conversion. Others would be actively learning and taking on more of the *Torah* with the intent of full conversion.

The issue of the necessity of conversion (taking on all of the *Torah*) for Gentiles coming to faith in Y'shua would become a point of discussion in the early Messianic community, as seen in the fifteenth chapter of the book of Acts, as well as in some of Paul's writings.

Although conversion to Judaism and taking on the *Torah* is not a prerequisite to faith for Gentiles, YHWH makes it clear that Gentiles have (and will always have) a relationship to *Torah* and the faith of Israel. In fact, those who claim to be of the faith of Elohim are warned about separating themselves from YHWH's Sabbath and Israel's covenant - the *Torah*:

- (1) "Thus saith the LORD, Keep ye judgment, and do justice: for my salvation is near to come, and my righteousness to be revealed.
- (2) *Blessed is the man that doeth this, and the son of man that layeth hold on it; that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and keepeth his hand from doing any evil.*
- (3) *Neither let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the LORD, speak, saying, The LORD hath utterly separated me from his people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree.*
- (4) *For thus saith the LORD unto the eunuchs that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;*
- (5) *Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off.*
- (6) *Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the LORD, to serve him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be his servants, every one that keepeth the sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant;*
- (7) *Even those I will bring to My holy mountain, And make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples".* (Isaiah 56:1-7)

Scripture is clear that, at the end of days it will be the Gentiles who come into the faith of Israel and its Messiah, Y'shua – NOT the Jews who enter into some Gentile church that has replaced the faith YHWH established with Israel:

"Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you". (Zech 8:23)

"Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes; For thou shalt break forth on the right hand and on the left; and thy seed shall inherit the Gentiles, and make the desolate cities to be inhabited". (Isaiah 54:2-3)

"Rejoice, O ye nations, with his people: for he will avenge the blood of his servants, and will render vengeance to his adversaries, and will be merciful unto his land, and to his people". (Deut 32:43)

Y'shua's authority

"(5) And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came unto him a centurion, beseeching him, (6) And saying, Lord, my servant lieth at home sick of the palsy, grievously tormented. (7) And Jesus saith unto him, I will come and heal him. (8) The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that thou shouldest come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. (9) For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goeth; and to another, Come, and he cometh; and to my servant, Do this, and he doeth it. (10) When Jesus heard it, he marvelled, and said to them that followed, Verily I say unto you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel ... (13) And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour". (Matt 8:5-10, 13)

The Jews were constantly questioning and challenging Y'shua's authority to teach the word of YHWH and to perform the great works that He did; however, there were a few individuals who understood His authority to do these things.

The centurion understood that the power Y'shua had did not come from Him, but that Y'shua was under the authority of a Higher Power and had been delegated the authority and power to heal and perform supernatural acts at His discretion (verse 10, 13.)

Y'shua did not come to earth representing Himself and His own authority. He came by and with the authority of Aviad to represent the Father and His kingdom to the world:

"I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me" (John 5:30). See also verses 36-38.

The Kingdom of YHWH is extremely organised and functions within a hierarchical structure. The Father, who is the Supreme Sovereign over all that exists, has delegated all authority to His Son to perform His will throughout His kingdom; and His Son has delegated some of His authority to the Father's elect children.

Before Y'shua Came

Before Y'shua came to earth, most people did not know of the existence of Aviad "the Father" and could only communicate with the "Creator" Elohim, who later became the Messiah. But after Y'shua's death, resurrection, and return to heaven, those called to salvation during the Gospel age were authorised to communicate directly with the Father:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name: ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. ...At that day you shall ask in my name: and I say not to you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved Me, and have believed that I came out from God" (John 16:23-24, 26-27 KJV).

It is through the authority that is represented by the name of our Saviour that we are allowed to have access to the Father. This is an extremely important point, because the Father will not hear our requests unless we approach Him through the office of his Son. One must be authorised to communicate with the Father, and this authorisation comes through our Saviour because Y'shua is our advocate and High Priest.

8:12-15 But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out

"(12) But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (13) And Jesus said unto the centurion, Go thy way; and as thou hast believed, so be it done unto thee. And his servant was healed in the selfsame hour. (14) And when Jesus was come into Peter's house, he saw his wife's mother laid, and sick of a fever. (15) And he touched her hand, and the fever left her: and she arose, and ministered unto them".

Although many Jews rejected Y'shua at that time and throughout history, Paul (in Romans, chapters 9 through 11), warns Gentiles not to boast against the natural branches (the Jews) as YHWH can easily cast out the Gentiles to put them back in. As Paul teaches in Romans, there is always a remnant of faithful Jews; and in the end, all of Israel will be saved.

8:16-17 They brought unto him many that were possessed with devils

"(16) When the even was come, they brought unto him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: (17) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses".

There are moments in history when significant spiritual activity occurs. When Moses was born, there were miraculous events and an increase of demonic activity – much of it geared to killing Moses. The same occurred just prior to the arrival of Y'shua. This is seen not only in the Gospels, but also in the text of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The book of Revelation paints the same picture occurring prior to the return of the Messiah, in the period of time known as "the Great Tribulation".

That it might be fulfilled

"Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted". (Isaiah 53:4)

8:18-22 Let the dead bury their dead

"(18) Now when Jesus saw great multitudes about him, he gave commandment to depart unto the other side. (19) And a certain scribe came, and said unto him, Master, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest. (20) And Jesus saith unto him, The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head. (21) And another of his disciples said unto him, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father. (22) But Jesus said unto him, Follow me; and let the dead bury their dead".

And from Luke:

(57) *"And it came to pass, that, as they went in the way, a certain man said unto him, Lord, I will follow thee whithersoever thou goest.*

(58) *And Jesus said unto him, Foxes have holes, and birds of the air have nests; but the Son of man hath not where to lay his head.*

(59) *And he said unto another, Follow me. But he said, Lord, suffer me first to go and bury my father.*

(60) *Jesus said unto him, Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God.*

(61) *And another also said, Lord, I will follow thee; but let me first go bid them farewell, which are at home at my house.*

(62) *And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God". (Luke 9:57-62)*

At first reading, this reply of Y'shua's seems rather harsh. It was given as a response to someone who said they wished to become a disciple of Y'shua. It seems like a strange answer anyway, for how can the dead bury their dead? It cannot have a literal meaning in this sense; because when we die, of necessity we need someone else to bury us. As is always the case, we need to put this saying of the Master into its context. When did He make this point to His listeners and why? What were the circumstances? Let's explore this incident, because it has some very powerful lessons for would-be disciples of Y'shua today.

There are two accounts in the Gospel records: Matthew chapter 8 and Luke chapter 9. The context or perhaps the background to this command of Y'shua is the calling to be a disciple. The ministry of Y'shua was approaching its end, when He would go to Jerusalem and there be crucified. He had called His twelve disciples to Him and had sent them out to continue the work of preaching the Gospel that He had initiated more than three years earlier. Y'shua now turned His back on Galilee in the north of Israel; and as Luke tells us, *"he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem"*. (Luke 9:51) It was on this journey towards the final phase of His ministry that three would-be disciples approached Messiah.

Matthew tells us that the first of these men was, in fact, a Scribe. He was one of Israel's elite class and an essential part of the religious hierarchy at the time of Y'shua. We have no reason to doubt the sincerity of any of these would-be disciples, but Y'shua was able to discern the genuineness or otherwise of those who

approached him. It is written of him that “he knew what was in man”. (John 2.25) Discipleship is not an easy matter and Y’shua had made that very clear:

“...you will be hated by all for my name's sake. But he who endures to the end will be saved. But when they persecute you in this city, flee to another... A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master...” (Matt 10.22-25 NKJV)

Was this Scribe prepared for such a hard life? Was he ready to leave his comfortable college and lodgings to take up the rough-and-ready work associated with being a disciple of Y’shua? Clearly, Y’shua had His doubts; hence, His warning that as He was the Master who did not have somewhere He could call a home of His own and neither would this Scribe if he chose to follow Y’shua. We do not know if the man did, in fact, become a disciple – perhaps he did! If so, it would be with a clear-sighted view of life ahead walking in the footsteps of Y’shua.

The second of this trio of would-be disciples was not a Scribe. He was already a disciple and for this reason alone, Y’shua’s words to him are all the more to the point. Luke tells us that Y’shua simply said, “Follow me”; but Matthew tells us he was already a disciple. So the point that Y’shua makes is about this man’s attitude as a disciple.

“Then another of his disciples said to him, Lord, let me first go and bury my father. But Jesus said to him, Follow me, and let the dead bury their own dead”. (Mat 8.21,22 NKJV)

Note that the New King James Version adds the word “own” in this passage. This is significant, as we shall see. Was Y’shua really that harsh to a genuine disciple? If the man’s father was indeed dead, it could only just have happened; for burial was required before sunset as per the Jewish custom, and surely Y’shua would not have stood in the way of this man? Or was there another reason why the man hesitated to follow Y’shua? Perhaps there was an inheritance to sort out first, before following Y’shua! There is little doubt that Y’shua was either unconvinced of the man’s sincerity or that he wished to drive home the lessons associated with becoming a disciple of Y’shua. What did Y’shua mean?

When Y’shua referred to “the dead”, He was clearly not talking about those who were physically dead, but rather those who were spiritually dead. We have a very good example of this in John’s Gospel record where Y’shua speaks of his great work in preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom and the hope of everlasting life in YHWH’s kingdom to come. What he says is that those who have the knowledge of the Gospel and have acted upon it by faith and are walking in obedience to YHWH’s commands have taken a huge step away from an eternal grave:

- (24) Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that heareth my word, and believeth on him that sent me, hath everlasting life, and shall not come into condemnation; but is passed from death unto life.
(25) Verily, verily, I say unto you, The hour is coming, and now is, when the dead shall hear the voice of the Son of God: and they that hear shall live.
(26) For as the Father hath life in himself; so hath he given to the Son to have life in himself; And hath given him authority to execute judgment also, because he is the Son of man”. (John 5:24-26)

Understanding the true Gospel message is like spiritually moving from death to life and the disciple of Y’shua is surely in that position. It remains for such a man or woman to follow Y’shua, which is why Y’shua told his disciple “Follow me” (*meaning to obey or to take action*). Whilst duties to dead relatives must be attended to, there is that greater object in life for the true disciple: “*Let the dead bury their dead: but go thou and preach the kingdom of God*”. The reward for true and faithful discipleship is everlasting life in due time when YHWH’s Kingdom is established on the earth. Y’shua had promised his disciples:

“...Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life”. (Matt 19:28-29)

Those whom Y’shua referred to as “the dead” were those who had not responded to the call of the Gospel. They were dead, just as the Apostle Paul wrote to the Ephesians:

“And you he made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins...” (Eph 2:1 NKJV)

For those who are alive to the truth of the Gospel, it is a time to dissociate from those who are dead to the truth. This is the reason why Y'shua spoke words that may seem at first sight to be harsh. He leaves us in no doubt about what He means in his reply to the third would-be disciple. This man (not unreasonably) says that before he gets on with the work of being a disciple, he would like to say goodbye to his family:

"And another also said, "Lord, I will follow you, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house". But Jesus said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God". (Luke 9:61-62 NKJV)

"Let me first..." These are not the words of one who is putting Y'shua first! Y'shua has already made the point: we must put Him before family and friends and once we are committed to Him, there can be no turning back.

In conclusion, we see how Y'shua warned the Scribe of the price of true discipleship and gently reproved these two would-be disciples who were minded to squander some of their Lord's time in unprofitable activities. The lessons are as real for us today as they were some 2,000 years ago. The Apostle Paul, who once walked in trespasses and sins but was called to the Gospel and responded in faith, wrote:

"But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ.

(8) *But indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ*

(9) *And be found in him...*

(10) *That I may know him and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being conformed to his death,*

(11) *If, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead". (Phil 3:7-11 NKJV)*

We could have no finer example of following Messiah!

To conclude: The man's father was not dead yet. The request to "bury my father" was a Hebrew idiom meaning, "Let me take care of all the affairs of my family". However, Elohim required an instantaneous response. The Kingdom offer was present with Y'shua. Anyone placing the physical cares of this world ahead of the spiritual concerns of Elohim was not worthy to take part in the latter.

8:23-27 Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea

"(23) And when he was entered into a ship, his disciples followed him. (24) And, behold, there arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. (25) And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. (26) And he saith unto them, Why are ye fearful, O ye of little faith? Then he arose, and rebuked the winds and the sea; and there was a great calm. (27) But the men marvelled, saying, What manner of man is this, that even the winds and the sea obey him!"

There is an interesting section found at Qumran in a fragment that deals with a priest that is to appear in the future, whose righteousness brings light to his generation; but who also arouses fierce opposition (*The Dead Sea Scrolls a New Translation*, Wise, Abegg and Cook, 1996, HarperSanFrancisco, p. 260.):

4Q541: "The hid(den mysteries) he shall reveal (...) (for the one) who does not understand he shall write (...) the Great Sea shall be quiet because of him".

Although a literal-level connection can clearly be made to "the sea being made quiet", this terminology (the "sea") is rooted in deep Jewish mystical teachings regarding the end times.

8:28-34 Art thou come hither to torment us before the time?

"(28) And when he was come to the other side into the country of the Gergesenes, there met him two possessed with devils, coming out of the tombs, exceeding fierce, so that no man might pass by that way. (29) And, behold, they cried out, saying, What have we to do with thee, Jesus, thou Son of God? art thou come hither to torment us before the time? (30) And there was a good way off from them an herd of many swine feeding. (31) So the devils besought him, saying, If thou cast us out, suffer us to go away into the herd of swine. (32) And he said unto them, Go. And when they were come out, they went into the herd of swine: and, behold, the whole herd of swine ran violently down a steep place into the sea, and perished in the waters. (33) And they that kept them fled, and went their ways into the city, and told every thing, and what

was befallen to the possessed of the devils. (34) And, behold, the whole city came out to meet Jesus: and when they saw him, they besought him that he would depart out of their coasts".

Even the demons know their time is limited. The demons begged Y'shua in Luke 8:31: "*And they besought him that he would not command them to go out into the deep*". Most scholars accepted this place as the "Bottomless pit". Their dread and terror of the pit (abyss) was so great that they would rather be incarnated into the swine.

It is a place or compartment under *Sheol* (known in most places in the *Tanach* as Hades) to restrain or hold beings (extremely evil/demonic spirits) which have come under the judgement of YHWH.

This is the place that will be opened during the Tribulation period:

- (1) *"And the fifth angel sounded, and I saw a star fall from heaven unto the earth: and to him was given the key of the bottomless pit.*
- (2) *And he opened the bottomless pit; and there arose a smoke out of the pit, as the smoke of a great furnace; and the sun and the air were darkened by reason of the smoke of the pit".* (Rev 9:1-2)

The country of the Gergesenes

In Isaiah 9:1, it is prophesied that the Messiah would make his earthly appearance in the Galilee, near the area of heavy Gentile occupation. The prophet says: "*Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan*".

Indeed, in Y'shua's time, there were many Gentiles living in the Galilee just as there are today. One large area of Gentile domination was known as the Decapolis. This area had its historical beginnings after the invasion of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C. It was in Alexander's heart to thoroughly spread Hellenism with its culture and religion. He left in his wake great Hellenistic cities like Alexandria in Egypt and the ten cities of the Decapolis.

The Decapolis

These city-states of the Decapolis had for their capital, Scythopolis; or Bet Shean on the west side of the Jordan. However, for the most part their areas fell east of the Jordan River and the Sea of Galilee. Two of the states either bordered or else were close to the Sea of Galilee. One was Gadara to the south, which had a harbour on the lake; and the other more geographically prominent one was Hippos or Susita. The unusual dome-shaped hill where Hippos once stood is still visible on the east side of the lake, just behind the fishing kibbutz of Ein Gev.

Interestingly, Y'shua commanded his disciples not to enter these lands. In Matt 10:5-6 it is said: "*These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel'*". For this reason, Y'shua and His disciples ministered primarily in the Jewish cities to the north and western shores of the Sea of Galilee. These were the cities of Capernaum, Bethsaida and Korazin. Perhaps on only one or two occasions did Y'shua actually venture through Decapolis as is mentioned in Mark 7:31. This instruction of Y'shua concerning Gentiles sets a clear precedent in Scripture, that the Gospel must go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel.

Y'shua visits Kursi

One day Y'shua likely instructed his disciples to get into the boat that they might go to Decapolis. Perhaps He made this announcement after listening all night to the screams of a demon-possessed man as they wafted across to Capernaum on the quiet Sea. We can almost imagine the astonishment of these disciples as they heard Y'shua's direction. They might have queried him: "Excuse us Sir, Did - did you say - Decapolis?"

What was wrong with a good Jewish disciple going to Decapolis? The immediate problem was that Jews did not mix with the Gentiles and Decapolis was predominately a Gentile area. They did not eat Gentile food, or intermarry, or even mix socially to any large degree with Gentiles. YHWH had given this command in order to keep his people separate from the nations (Deut 7:3-6). YHWH knew that if his people intermingled with the nations they would soon become like the nations and worship the gods of the nations. Some Jews had gone to the extreme to teach that even if the shadow of a Gentile fell on a Jew, the latter would become defiled.

What was likely to happen to a good Jewish disciple in the Gentile country of Decapolis? If he ordered fish for lunch it would likely be catfish from the lake. That was probably the fish that the Jews threw away (Matt 13:48). If he ordered other meat, it might turn out to be pork. In both cases, a good Jewish disciple would be defiled by eating forbidden food (Lev 11:7-9). It is likely that the Prodigal Son of Y'shua's famous parable found himself in the Decapolis. There, he finally became so hungry that he agreed to herd swine and was ready to eat their food. Jewish people didn't normally herd swine.

Y'shua probably got his disciples into the boat and they headed for the area of Kursi in the edge of the Decapolis. As the boat docked, Y'shua immediately confronted the demon-possessed man, named "Legion". Although this man was possessed with "legions" of demons, Y'shua quickly delivered him and cast them all out. The Gospel accounts tell us how the demons begged to go into the swine and Y'shua accommodated them. The herd of about 2,000 swine then ran violently down into the sea and were all drowned.

The miracle

The site of this miracle has undergone some debate, especially with the mentioning of the country of the Geresenes in Matt 8:28 and the Gadarenes in Luke 8:26 in connection with this miracle. In the Fifth and Sixth Centuries, a Christian church was built to mark the spot of the biblical location. However, the church was lost to history until it was uncovered by the building of a new road in 1970. Archaeological excavations continued at the site from 1970-74. Around the vicinity of the church, caves are still visible—no doubt like the ones the demon-possessed man frequented. There is also a mountain that drops down into the sea. It is the only place in the whole area where a mountain actually extends down to the seashore.

After this astounding miracle, the previously demon-possessed man sat at the feet of Y'shua. He was now clothed and in his right mind. As Y'shua was about to depart, this man begged Y'shua that he might go with Him and become a disciple. It is interesting what Y'shua replied to this eager follower: "*Return home and tell how much God has done for you....*" (Luke 8:39). The man obeyed and returned to minister among his own people, the Gentiles.

Jews and Gentiles

We might ask what would have happened had this man gotten into the boat with the twelve? They may have done back-flips out of the boat and into the water. The reason: they had no close association with the Gentiles.

We see that great crowds followed Y'shua in the Gospel accounts. Some of the people in these crowds were from Decapolis and other Gentile areas. They overheard the Good News that Y'shua was proclaiming to the Jews. However, at this point, the Gospel was delivered primarily to the Jews.

At the close of his ministry, some Greeks came seeking Y'shua (John 12:20 ff.). Their request seems on the surface to be a simple one—just to see Y'shua. We would suppose that such a request would bring joy to the disciples and to Y'shua. However, we see that Philip and Andrew struggled with the request. Finally they timidly brought it to Y'shua. It is interesting that Y'shua apparently never answered the Greeks. Instead, He began to speak about his approaching crucifixion and resurrection. Only after these events would the door be finally opened to the Gentiles who would come into covenant.

One writer has remarked about this dilemma in the early church, saying: "In the first century, the most heated, controversial, doctrinal issue of all that the church faced was: 'How do the Gentiles fit into all this?'...Today the most heated, controversial, doctrinal issue that the church faces is: 'How do the Jews fit into all this?'" (Daniel Gruber, *The Church and the Jews The Biblical Relationship*, General Council of the Assemblies of God, Springfield, MO, 1991, page 2)

The episode at Kursi illustrates clearly that Y'shua came first of all to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. It was true then and it is true today that the first job of the Messiah is always to save and care for Israel. The second job is to save and bring in the Gentiles with Israel, and ultimately to unite the two. Over the years, the church has somehow gotten the whole thing backwards.

SECTION III
MESSIAH'S MIRACLES

MATTHEW 9:1-38

TEXT:

- (1) "And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city.
(2) And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee.
(3) And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth.
(4) And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts?
(5) For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk?
(6) But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house.
(7) And he arose, and departed to his house.
(8) But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men.
(9) And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him.
(10) And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples.
(11) And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?
(12) But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick.
(13) But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
(14) Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?
(15) And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.
(16) No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse.
(17) Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved.
(18) While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live.
(19) And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples.
(20) And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment:
(21) For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole.
(22) But Jesus turned him about, and when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour.
(23) And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise,
(24) He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn.
(25) But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose.
(26) And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land.
(27) And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us.
(28) And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord.
(29) Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. (30) And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it.
(31) But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country.
(32) As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil.
(33) And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel.
(34) But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devil.
(35) And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people.

(36) *But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd.*

(37) *Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few.*

(38) *Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest".*

Matthew Chapter 9 is an important section whose main lesson is largely overlooked. Here we find the definition of what the Gospel message is. Contrary to what some teach, the Gospel message is not the "death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah". It can't be that, as we have Y'shua Himself "*preaching the Gospel*" in this chapter—and He is still alive before the crucifixion. Add to that the fact that His disciples also preach the Gospel while He is alive, and that in Heb 4:2 we are told the Gospel was preached to the children of Israel with Moses in the wilderness. Just what is the Gospel message, then?

9:1-7 "Son of Man"

"(1) And he entered into a ship, and passed over, and came into his own city. (2) And, behold, they brought to him a man sick of the palsy, lying on a bed: and Jesus seeing their faith said unto the sick of the palsy; Son, be of good cheer; thy sins be forgiven thee. (3) And, behold, certain of the scribes said within themselves, This man blasphemeth. (4) And Jesus knowing their thoughts said, Wherefore think ye evil in your hearts? (5) For whether is easier, to say, Thy sins be forgiven thee; or to say, Arise, and walk? (6) But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. (7) And he arose, and departed to his house. (8) But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men".

In this context, "Son of man" is a Messianic term found in the *Tenach* and numerous Hebrew sources including: "*I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him*". (Dan 7:13)

Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 98a: "*R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction. it is written, in its time [will the Messiah come], whilst it is also written, I [the Lord] will hasten it! — if they are worthy, I will hasten it: if not, [he will come] at the due time. R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua opposed two verses: it is written, And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven whilst [elsewhere] it is written, [behold, thy king cometh unto thee...] lowly, and riding upon an ass!"*

Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 145b: "*And, behold, there came with the clouds of heaven one like unto a son of man*" (Dan. VII, 13), alluding to the Messiah, concerning whom it is also written: "*And in the days of those kings shall the God of heaven set up a kingdom, etc*". (Ibid. II, 44).

Enoch XLVIII: "*In that hour was this Son of man invoked before the Lord of spirits, and his name in the presence of the Ancient of Days... In his presence they shall fall, and not be raised up again; nor shall there be any one to take them out of his hands, and to lift them up: for they have denied the Lord of spirits, and his Messiah".*

9:6-9 Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins

"(6) But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (then saith he to the sick of the palsy,) Arise, take up thy bed, and go unto thine house. (7) And he arose, and departed to his house. (8) But when the multitudes saw it, they marvelled, and glorified God, which had given such power unto men. (9) And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him".

What Y'shua claims for Himself:

"Follow ME ... " (Matt 4:19)

"That you may know that the Son of Man HAS POWER ON EARTH TO FORGIVE SINS". (Matt 9:6)

Him that has Power to give out Healing Power and Power over Death to His followers (Matt 10:8)

"The Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath Day" (Matt 12:8)

"I cast out devils by the Spirit of God" (Matt 12:28)

"A Greater than Solomon is here" (Matt 12:42)

"Many Prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see... and to hear the things which you hear " (Matt 13:17)

"The Son of Man shall send forth HIS ANGELS and they shall gather out of HIS KINGDOM all things that offend ... and shall cast them into a furnace, ... then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in THE KINGDOM OF THEIR FATHER" (Matt 13:41-43)

"And I will give unto thee the KEYS OF HEAVEN" (Matt 16:19)

"For the Son of Man ... shall reward every man according to his works" (Matt 16:27)

"They will see the Son of Man coming in HIS KINGDOM". (Matt 16:28)

"O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I suffer you?" (Matt 17:17)
"For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost" (Matt 18:11)
"For where two or three are gathered IN MY NAME, THERE AM I" (Matt 18:20)
"When the Son of Man shall sit in THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY..." (Matt 19:28)
"...For one is your Master, even Messiah" (Matt 23:10)

"When the Son of Man shall come in HIS GLORY and all the holy angels with Him, then shall He sit UPON THE THRONE OF HIS GLORY and before Him shall be gathered all nations, and He shall separate them..." (Matt 25:31)
"For this is MY Blood of the New Covenant..." (Matt 26:28)
"All Power is given unto Me in heaven and earth". (Matt 28:18)
"I am with you even unto the end of the world". (Matt 28:20)

Does this sound like He regarded Himself as "merely another man"...? Listen to more of what HE said of Himself:

"Destroy this Temple and in three days I WILL RAISE IT UP!" (John 2:19)
"No man has ascended up to Heaven but HE THAT CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN EVEN THE SON OF MAN WHICH IS IN HEAVEN" (John 3:13)
"Whosoever drinks of the Water that I shall give him... it shall be in him a well of water springing up into Everlasting Life" (John 4:14)
"All men should honor the Son even as they honor the Father. He that honoureth not the Son, honoureth not the Father". (John 5:23)
"Search the Scriptures (OT)...for they are they which testify of ME". (John 5:39)
"I am the Bread of Life..." (John 6:35)
"For I CAME DOWN FROM HEAVEN..." (John 6:38)
"What if you shall see the Son of Man ascend up WHERE HE WAS BEFORE?" (John 6:62)
"I am the Light of the World..." (John 8:12)
"You are from beneath, I am FROM ABOVE - I am not of this world". (John 8:23)
"Abraham rejoiced to see My day and he saw it and was glad... Verily, verily I say unto you: Before Abraham was, I AM". (John 8:56-59)
"I am the Door. By Me, if any man enters in, he shall be saved..." (John 10:7)
"I am the Good Shepherd". (John 10:11)
"No man takes (My Life) from Me. I lay it down OF MYSELF. I have Power to lay it down AND I HAVE POWER TO TAKE IT UP AGAIN!" (John 10:18)
"I and My Father ARE ONE". (John 10:30)
"I am the Resurrection and the Life". (John 11:25)
"And if I be lifted up from the earth, will draw all men unto Me". (John 12:32)
"You call me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am". (John 13:13)
"I am the Way, the Truth and the Life". (John 14:6)
"If you had known Me, You would have known My Father also: and from henceforth you Know Him and HAVE SEEN HIM". (John 14:7)
"Don't you believe that I AM IN THE FATHER and the Father is in Me?" (John 14:10-11)
"And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that will I DO". (John 14:13)
"In that Day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in Me and I IN YOU". (John 14:20)
"I came forth from the Father and came into the world; again I leave this world and go to the Father". (John 16:28)
"I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End" (Rev 1:8)
"I am the First and the Last" (Rev 1:11 & 18 and 22:13)
"And he that overcomes and keeps MY WORKS unto the End, to him will I GIVE POWER over the nations to rule them with a rod of iron..." (Rev 2:26)
"To him that overcomes, will I grant to sit with Me in MY THRONE..." (Rev 3:21)

Undoubtedly, except in the estimation of the rebellious, He was, is, and will remain El Shaddai, YHWH Himself!

The receipt of custom

It is a tax imposed by the Romans. The tax-gatherers were termed "*publicans*" (Matt 9:10 and 11 below), who had their stations at the gates of cities and in the public highways; and at the place set apart for that purpose, called the "*receipt of custom*" (Mark 2:14)—where they collected the money that was to be paid on certain goods (Matt 17:25). These publicans were tempted to exact more from the people than was lawful; and were in consequence of their extortions, objects of great hatred. The Pharisees would have no interaction with them (Matt 5:46-47).

Every adult Jew annually paid a tax or tribute of half a shekel for the Temple. It had to be paid in Jewish coin (Matt 22:17-19; Mark 12:14-15). Money-changers were necessary, to enable the Jews who came up to Jerusalem at the feasts to exchange their foreign coin for Jewish money; but as it was forbidden by the law to carry on such a traffic for emolument (Deut 23:19-20), Y'shua drove them from the Temple (Matt 21:12; Mark 11:15).

"It has been calculated that the total taxation, Jewish and Roman together, may have exceeded 40% of an ordinary man's income. An elaborate taxation system demands an elaborate civil service, and it was here that the grievances were multiplied. The lucrative privilege of tax-collection went to the highest bidder, who then farmed the work out to smaller fry, and they in turn to others. The top men would be Romans. The lower ranks, who actually made contact with the people, were Jews. And each had to make his position profitable to himself. Provided the correct tax was produced, the officials would not worry about how it was collected. So the officially required tax was swollen by the necessary rake-off at each level of civil service, and the name 'tax-collector' became in common parlance a synonym for an unscrupulous quisling and extortioner". (R.T. France, I Came to Set the Earth on Fire, Portrait of Christ, p. 20.)

9:10-13 Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?

"(10) And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples. (11) And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners? (12) But when Jesus heard that, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. (13) But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance".

This is an important section. Here, a group of legalistic Pharisees is critical of Y'shua for associating with those "publicans" (see "The receipt of custom" above) whom they consider to be sinners. Y'shua responds by gives these Pharisees a direct command to go "learn something". Later in Matt 12:7, we see Y'shua will criticise them again for not doing what He told them to do here.

Y'shua's instruction to them is a quote from the prophet Isaiah. The context in Isaiah's original message and that of Y'shua's is similar. In each case, there were people "going through the motions" of the instructions YHWH gave in His *Torah*. What Y'shua is telling these Pharisees, is that their reliance on performing YHWH's commands—although absolutely part of their faith—was secondary to what YHWH wants first: a trusting relationship with Him. In no way does this mean the *Torah* is not to be followed. Rather, the message here is that, just as faith without works is dead (James, chapters 1 and 2); the same goes for works without faith. This is the message YHWH has given his chosen people throughout the Bible:

"But we are all as an unclean thing, and all our righteousnesses are as filthy rags; and we all do fade as a leaf; and our iniquities, like the wind, have taken us away". (Isaiah 64:6)

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither is that circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he is a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the spirit, and not in the letter; whose praise is not of men, but of God". (Rom 2:28-29)

"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it". (Heb 4:2)

If these Pharisees had gone back to learn what Isaiah was talking about, they would have seen that they were just as much "in need of a physician" as these other people were. One could say that their legalistic view of the *Torah* made them more in need of Y'shua than the people they were criticising.

It is evident to most that these Pharisees were outwardly performing the commandments of YHWH but lacked the humility and trust YHWH desired. This caused them to not recognise Y'shua for who He was. They made themselves "blind".

It should be noted however, that there is a "flip side" to this situation that is prevalent today. Anyone claiming to "believe in the Messiah", but who rejects the *Torah* as YHWH's instruction, (i.e., "we're not under the Law") is no better off than these Pharisees. You cannot separate the "*Torah in the flesh*" from the *Torah of Scripture*. Y'shua said so (Matt 5:17-21, 7:21-29), Paul said so (Rom 2:13, 3:31) and James said so (James, chapters 1 and 2). John goes so far as to have said that if you claim to know YHWH but don't obey His commandments (His *Torah*), you are a liar and the truth is not in you (1 John 2:3-4).

Of course, this message goes against the overwhelming consensus today—just as it did in Y'shua and Isaiah's times.

9:14 The disciples of John

"(14) Then came to him the disciples of John, saying, Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not? (15) And Jesus said unto them, Can the children of the bridechamber mourn, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast. (16) No man putteth a piece of new cloth unto an old garment, for that which is put in to fill it up taketh from the garment, and the rent is made worse. (17) Neither do men put new wine into old bottles: else the bottles break, and the wine runneth out, and the bottles perish: but they put new wine into new bottles, and both are preserved".

We know from Scripture that John the Baptist was raised in the Wilderness area and had a following of his own (Matthew chapters 3 and 11, Acts 18:25; 19:3). Discoveries in the Dead Sea Scrolls have shown a very Messianic-oriented community in the Wilderness, dating from about 100 B.C. to A.D. 135. These people included Essenes, a community that formed their own system of sacrifices due to corruption of Saducees. The latest research indicates that John and his followers probably were a breakaway group from the Essenes.

Why do we and the Pharisees fast oft, but thy disciples fast not?
And new cloth unto an old garment ... new wine into old bottles

Y'shua's statement of not placing new wine in old bottles (wineskins) is one of many Scripture verses often taken out of context to support some group's latest (non-Hebrew) doctrine. The proper interpretation of verse 17 would seem to be in relation to verse 14, as it is part of Y'shua's answer to the question posed to Him by John's followers about why His disciples were not fasting.

Fasting was part of following the *Torah*, and Y'shua certainly never broke the commandments. Nor would we expect His immediate followers to do so; yet they seem to be at this time. Y'shua replies to this question using three consecutive and related images:

You don't fast when the bridegroom is still with you - only later.
You don't put a new piece of cloth on an old garment
You don't put new wine into an old wineskin

There is a teaching in the *Talmud* that compares an experienced *Torah* teacher to a wineskin and his knowledgeable teaching to "old wine".

Mishna Avoth 4:20: "...he who learns from the young, unto what is he [to be] compared? Unto one who eats unripe grapes, and drinks wine from his vat; and he who learns from the old, unto what is he [to be] compared? Unto one who eats ripe grapes, and drinks old wine. ...regard not the container but that which is therein: there is a new container full of old [wine], and an old [container] in which there is not even new [wine]."

Y'shua's teachings were "old" as they were from YHWH (John 7:16), and therefore He is the old wineskin with old wine. The connection between these items can now be seen as follows:

new piece of cloth = new wine = fasting
old garment = old wineskin = Messiah still present

With these three examples, Y'shua is simply stating that there is a proper time and place for everything and this does not abrogate the *Torah*. The time while He (Elohim in the flesh) was walking among man, was a time for enjoyment (old wine) and not fasting.

A similar situation occurs in chapter 12, when his disciples are again accused of breaking the *Torah* (by their picking and eating ears of corn). As we will see, Y'shua will counter their argument in a similar fashion as He did in this chapter. There He cites examples from the *Tenach* showing how the *Torah* allows (in fact, commands) for certain actions under specific circumstances.

9:18-26 If I may but touch his garment

"(18) While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. (19) And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples. (20) And, behold, a woman, which was diseased with an issue of blood twelve years, came behind him, and touched the hem of his garment: (21) For she said within herself, If I may but touch his garment, I shall be whole. (22) But Jesus turned him about, and

when he saw her, he said, Daughter, be of good comfort; thy faith hath made thee whole. And the woman was made whole from that hour. (23) And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, (24) He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. (25) But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose. (26) And the fame hereof went abroad into all that land. (Matt 9:18-26)

A difficult question can be asked at this point. Did Y'shua become ritually unclean by either the woman touching His garment or by Him touching the dead girl? (If she was indeed dead!) Or was he not made unclean (by anything) because of his Deity? This is a very deep issue and one that merits further study.

Let's start with the women. The answer obviously is no, or else Y'shua would have broken the Torah, specifically Positive Law 99: Lev 15:19 On Tumah of a menstruate woman as well as Positive Law 106: Lev 15:19 On Tumah of a zavah (woman suffering from a running issue). This Law says, "*And if a woman have an issue, and her issue in her flesh be blood, she shall be put apart seven days: and whosoever toucheth her shall be unclean until the even*". This Law clearly says that the person (in this case, Y'shua) would have been unclean until the even. But we saw the opposite in the Scripture. Y'shua proceeded to the ruler's house to resurrect his twelve year old girl. If Y'shua was unclean he would have had to do the following, of which the Scriptures speak nothing about: "*And whosoever toucheth any thing that she sat upon shall wash his clothes, and bathe himself in water, and be unclean until the even*". (Verse 22).

The faith of the women healed her before touching Y'shua, as Y'shua Himself said so: "*thy faith hath made thee whole*". If she was not made whole and Y'shua allowed her to touch him, he would have been guilty of transgressing the Law and therefore would have been a sinner. This would mean that Y'shua was not perfect, but praise YHWH we know our Messiah is perfect!

The Jewish Y'shua and the “hem of his garment”

In Y'shua's day, Jewish men wore a simple tunic both at home and at work. When appearing in public, they would cover their tunic with a large rectangular cloth, which draped over the shoulder and fell to the ankles. This cloth was called a *tallit* and served as protection from cold and rain. Hanging from the end of each of its four corners (wings) was a *tzitzit* (tassels/fringes) in obedience to the biblical command. (Through the centuries that followed (during times of persecution), Jews were often forbidden to wear the *tzitzit* on the outside of their garments. This forced them to wear a small, four-cornered *tallit* under their shirts. Today the prayer shawl is called a *tallit*.)

Y'shua looked like a Jew even on the outside. In faithfulness to the Law, He wore a *tallit* (prayer shawl) with the *tzitzits* (Matt 14:36; Luke 8:44) on the four corners of the *tallit*. In English, these are obvious by the translations 'hem' or 'fringe of his garment' which the crowds were keen to touch in order to be healed. Let's see why:

Y'shua was squeezing through the crowded streets of Capernaum because of the tremendous amount of people who followed Him, when something happened that stopped him. A woman with an issue of blood reached out to touch the hem of *Y'shua*'s garment. Mark 5:24-34 gives us more details:

- (24) "And He went with him. And a large crowd was following, and they were pressing on Him.
(25) And a certain woman being with an issue of blood twelve years,
(26) and who had suffered many things by many physicians, and had spent all things that she had, and having gained nothing, but rather coming to worse,
(27) hearing about Jesus, coming in the crowd behind Him, she touched His garment.
(28) For she said, If I may but touch His garments, I will be cured.
(29) And instantly the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she knew in her body that she was healed of the plague.
(30) And knowing instantly within Himself that power had gone forth out of Him, turning in the crowd, Jesus said, Who touched My garments?
(31) And His disciples said to Him, You see the crowd pressing on You, and do You say, Who touched Me?
(32) And He looked around to see the one who had done this.
(33) And the woman, being afraid and trembling, knowing what had happened on her, she came and fell down before Him and told Him all the truth.
(34) And He said to her, Daughter, your faith has healed you. Go in peace and be whole from your plague".

(Mark 5:25-34)

What is so significant about the hem of Y'shua's garment? At first reading, it seems like an odd practice. However, once we understand the significance of the hem of one's garment, these passages will have much more meaning.

The word translated "hem" is actually referring to the fringes, called *tzitzit* in Hebrew of the tallit (prayer shawl), as said earlier. The *tzitzit* is required to be on the four corners of the *tallit*, in accordance with YHWH's instruction in Num 15:37-40:

- (37) "And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,
(38) Speak unto the children of Israel, and bid them that they make them fringes in the borders of their garments throughout their generations, and that they put upon the fringe of the borders a ribband of blue:
(39) And it shall be unto you for a fringe, that ye may look upon it, and remember all the commandments of the LORD, and do them; and that ye seek not after your own heart and your own eyes, after which ye use to go a whoring:
(40) That ye may remember, and do all my commandments, and be holy unto your God".

The word translate "hem" in Matt 9:20, is actually the Greek word *kraspedon* and means 'fringe'. She was reaching for the *tzitzit* on Y'shua's *tallit* and not on his coat as the many pictures show. What she was actually doing was reaching for the name of Yod-He-Vav-He! The name of Y-H-V-H is actually spelled out in the way the knots are tied on each of the tassels, and how many strings are used. This is why the tallit is such a precious garment!

"Jesus said, If you ask anything in my name, I will do it". (John 14:13)

Let's stop for a moment and discuss this incident. When she pressed through the crowd, she was not content to just pat Y'shua on the back. She was a desperate woman who had spent all of her money on cures that did not work. It was a bold step for her to push through that crowd of people; for according to the Levitical Law, it was forbidden for her to be out in public with her condition as she was considered unclean—that we have already seen (Lev 15:25).

However, she was at the end of her rope. She had nothing to lose. She had heard of the Messiah who could heal, and she anxiously sought Him out. But why did she want to touch the hem of his garment – the *tzitzit* of his *tallit*?

These *tzitzit* were a point of contact she needed to help her release her faith to receive a miracle in her life. What did the *tzitzit* represent? First, they represented the Word of YHWH, which is always the place we can find healing for all the needs in our life.

These *tzitzit* can also be associated with a person's authority. In the case of king Saul and David, we find that David humiliated him by sneaking up to him in a cave at the spring of *Ein Gedi* and cutting off Saul's *tzitzit*, a symbol of his authority – David literally cut YHWH's name off Saul's garment, of which he was sorry he did (will discuss YHWH's name in the *tzitzit* later). David's men said:

- (4) "And the men of David said unto him, Behold the day of which the LORD said unto thee, Behold, I will deliver thine enemy into thine hand, that thou mayest do to him as it shall seem good unto thee. Then David arose, and cut off the skirt of Saul's robe privily.
(5) And it came to pass afterward, that David's heart smote him, because he had cut off Saul's skirt.
(6) And he said unto his men, The LORD forbid that I should do this thing unto my master, the LORD'S anointed, to stretch forth mine hand against him, seeing he is the anointed of the LORD". (1 Sam 24:4-6)

Why was David upset with himself? Because he understood that to steal someone's *tzitzit* was to steal his authority. Even though David did this to prove to Saul that he was not trying to kill him, the symbol of taking the corner fringe was humiliating to Saul. This bothered David. David immediately went out of the cave and prostrated himself in humility before Saul to prove to Saul that he was not trying to kill him. David said:

- (8) "David also arose afterward, and went out of the cave, and cried after Saul, saying, My lord the king. And when Saul looked behind him, David stooped with his face to the earth, and bowed himself.
(9) And David said to Saul, Wherefore hearest thou men's words, saying, Behold, David seeketh thy hurt?
(10) Behold, this day thine eyes have seen how that the LORD had delivered thee to day into mine hand in the cave: and some bade me kill thee: but mine eye spared thee; and I said, I will not put forth mine hand against my lord; for he is the LORD'S anointed.

(11) *Moreover, my father, see, yea, see the skirt of thy robe in my hand: for in that I cut off the skirt of thy robe, and killed thee not, know thou and see that there is neither evil nor transgression in mine hand, and I have not sinned against thee; yet thou huntest my soul to take it".* (1 Sam 24:8-11)

Everyone, including Saul, knew that David had been anointed by Samuel to be the next king—which is why Saul feared David. At *Ein Gedi*, David had literally taken Saul's authority and at that point, he probably could have taken the throne from Saul. But, he didn't; rather he let YHWH choose the time for him to receive the throne. This act convinced Saul that David was telling the truth. David's act of giving back Saul's authority also reconciled the two men as Saul said:

(19) *... wherefore the LORD reward thee good for that thou hast done unto me this day.*

(20) *And now, behold, I know well that thou shalt surely be king, and that the kingdom of Israel shall be established in thine hand".* (1 Sam 24:19b-20)

The Name of YHWH in the *tzitzit*

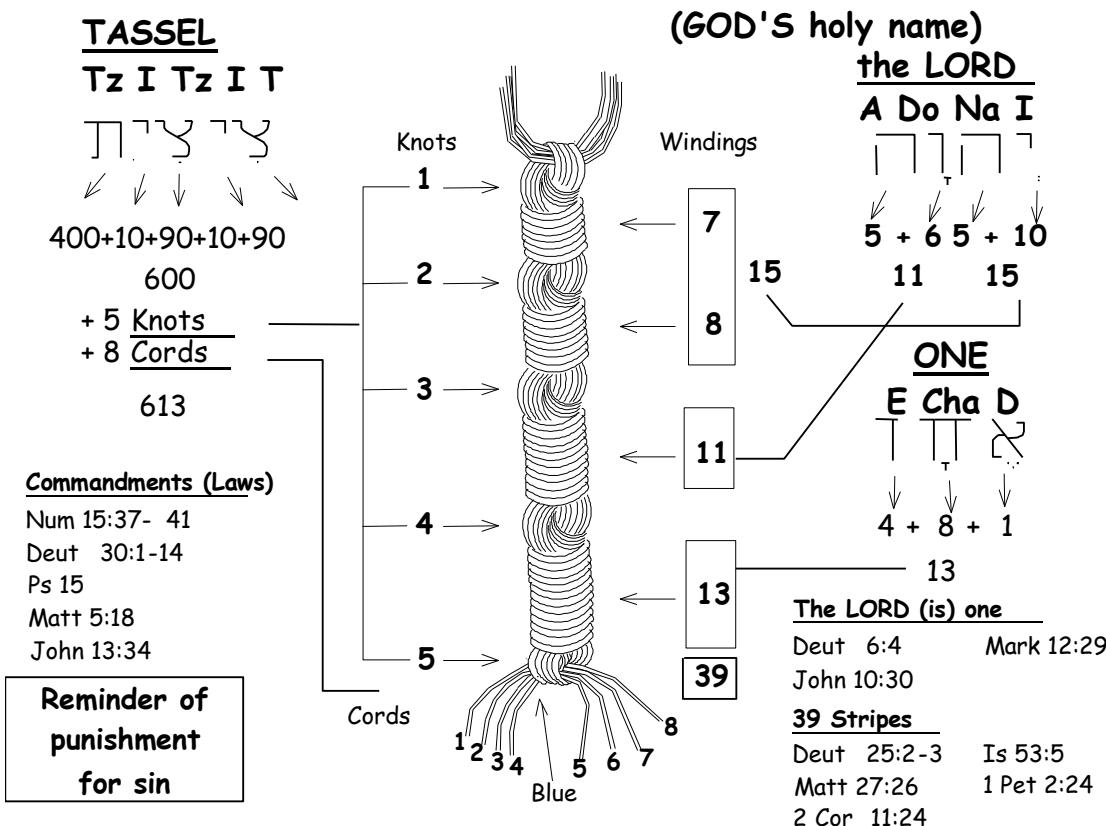
The fringes/tassels symbolises the connection with YHWH and serves as a reminder of the commandments in general. When one adds the numerical equivalent of the word *tzitzit* (fringes) and the number 5 (equivalent to the number of knots on each fringe) plus the 8 strings, one arrives at the number 613 (see sketch on next page), which corresponds to the number of commandments mentioned in the *Tanach* (Positive and Negative laws).

This actually explains the continuation of the verse, which states that when one sees the fringes one is reminded of the commandments. Jews do not view the commandments as a mechanical ritualistic formula that ensures the “world to come”, but rather as an exposition of YHWH's Divine Will. Just as with any loved one that clearly expresses his or her desires—they attempt to fulfil that will in the most complete of ways. They view the fulfillment of YHWH's will as their way of showing their love for Him. Rather than the Law hindering spiritual closeness, it actually prepares the groundwork for it. The wrapping of the prayer shawl around them is actually the act of wrapping themselves in the will of YHWH. Also, if you count the number of times the fringe is wrapped around, you arrive at the number 26; which is the numerical equivalent of one of the names of YHWH. Specifically, the one which is related to the Divine attribute of mercy is wrapped in YHWH's mercy.

In the Ashkenazic tradition, the fringes are wrapped around 26 plus 13 times. The number 13 are equivalent to the word “*Echad*” or one. The *tzitzit* becomes the declarative statement, “*Hashem Echad*” (YHWH is one)! This refers to the “*SHEMA*” which every good Jew repeats daily on numerous occasions – “Hear, O Israel: The LORD our God is one LORD” (Deut 6:4).

The verses in Num 15:38 also relate the need for a blue “*Tchelet*” string to be used as part of the fringes. The blue dye came from a mollusk and was also used in the priestly garments. After the destruction of the Temple, the Romans banned the use of the dye, as it was the colour of royalty. Over the years the secret of the dye was lost and people took to replacing blue stripes on the body of the shawl itself, with black ones symbolising the lack of clarity as to which shade of blue the fringe was.

NUMERIC VALUES OF THE HEBREW LETTERS ASSOCIATED WITH A TASSEL



A Jewish biologist discovered the blue dye in a shellfish in the Mediterranean Sea in 1984. (If you study the *Prophetic Psalms*, you will find that the Tabernacle is blessed in Psalm 84 which plays off in 1984. The Hebrew for Tabernacle, "Mishkan", is used in the plural sense. This refers to all the divisions in the Temple / Tabernacle where YHWH was worshipped. For the first time since A.D. 70, the Jews can dye their tallits *blue* again—a miracle in itself. This is part of YHWH's divine plan to rebuild their Temple very soon, as they will need the blue dye for the Temple priestly garments). The blue resembles the sea, and the sea resembles the heavens, and the heavens resemble the Throne of Glory.

Being covered in the prayer shawl is like being enveloped in the *Shechina*, (the Divine Presence) and affords you that special place in which to be alone with YHWH. The Blessing: (said while wrapping oneself in the *Tallit*).

"Blessed Art Thou Lord, God, King of the Universe, Who has made us Holy with His commandments and Who Has Commanded us to wrap ourselves in the fringes".

The four corner fringes of the *tallit* are also longer than the rest and represent the four names of YHWH as seen in Revelation chapter 19:

Verse 12: *"he had a name written, that no man knew"* – the Covenant name of Y'shua (Rev 2:17)

Verse 13: *"The Word of God"* – John was the only New Covenant writer that called Y'shua the "Word of God" (John 1:1, 14).

Verse 16: *"KING OF KINGS, and LORD OF LORDS"*

Tallit's custom when praying for the sick

It was also the biblical custom to throw the *tallit* over a sick person when praying for that person. The Christian has missed the point. If you study the Book of Acts 19:12, it says you must throw an anointed "handkerchief" over a sick person when you pray for that person. When a person died, it was not kosher to touch the dead body; and when they tried to raise the person from the dead, the *tallit* was thrown over the dead body and the four long fringes were wrapped around the hands. The person would then lie on top of the body with the *tallit* between him and the dead body, which acts as insulation if I may use the word—and breathe life into the dead body's mouth.

Tallits in the Old Testament

2 Kings 1:8 - An "hairy" man wearing a leather belt around his waist (Elijah's *tallit* was made of camel's hair) - indicating priestly garments.

2 Kings 2:13 - Elisha received Elijah's "mantle".

And many more.

Tallits in the New Testament

Note that the New Covenant was written in Greek, and there is no word in Greek for the Hebrew word *tallit*—various other names are used. The New Covenant is full of *tallits* and yet we read over them without even knowing it. Let's look at some examples:

Matt 3:4 – John the Baptist was clothed in "camels hair", and a leather belt around his waist—indicating priestly garments.

Mark 5:41 – Y'shua raised the little girl with these words "*Talitha cumi*". Although "*Talitha*" refers to the little girl, it was a Jewish custom to lay a *tallit* over a sick/dead person. Y'shua could possibly have meant, "prayer shawl (*tallit*) and that within it (*talitha*) arise."

John 11:44 – Lazarus' face was wrapped with a "napkin".

Rev 1:13 – Y'shua's "garment" down to His feet.

John 20:7 – Y'shua's "napkin" was wrapped around His head.

Acts 19:12 – Paul's "handkerchief / apron" used to heal the sick.

Rev 19:13 – Y'shua clothed in a "robe dipped in blood".

The importance of the *tallit* at Y'shua HaMashiach's appearance

The Roman soldiers cast lots over Y'shua's *tallit*, but somehow He must have gotten it back because He was buried in it (John 20:7 - The "napkin", *tallit* of Y'shua that had been around His head was folded up and placed on one side).

When Y'shua returns at the Second Advent, the Jews will recognise Him – Zech 12:10 says they will see Him whom they have pierced.

The marks on His hands and feet as well as His "bloody clothes", His *tallit* will be evidence that they crucified Him as it is the custom of the Jew to be buried in his bloody clothes. (See the section of Y'shua's *tallit* folded up neatly in Matthew chapter 28.)

The day He returns, Y'shua will wear the clothes that He was murdered in.

Y'shua will return with his bloody *tallit* and His names in the four long *tzitzityot*.

From Hebrew to Greek – the *Tallit*

If the story of Y'shua's miracle in healing the woman "*being with an issue of blood*" originally existed in Hebrew, as the Jerusalem School conjectures; then it seems certain that it was not the hem, but one of the *tsi·tsi·YOT* of Y'shua's garment that the woman touched.

The Greek word that the King James translators rendered "hem" is *kraspedon*. This is the same word that is used in the Septuagint (the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures) to translate *tzi·TZIT* (the singular of *tzi·tzi·YOT*). It is found three times in Num 15:37-41, where the wearing of *tzi·tzi·YOT* is commanded (Num 15:37-41 is also the last part of the Shema which is declared each day).

In Hebrew, therefore, the story would have been told of the woman touching the *tzi·TZIT ta·li·TO*, that is the *tzi·tzit* (tassel) of his *ta·LIT* (mantle).

The issue with Y'shua being a Nazarite and the dead girl

Did the touching of the dead girl make Y'shua unclean? Before we address the issue, let us look again at what a Nazarite had to adhere to in Y'shua's time, as was discussed in Matt 2:22-23 "*That he should be called a Nazarene*".

The definition of a "nazir" by Encyclopedia.com: "*In the Bible, a man dedicated to God. The Nazarite, after taking a special vow, abstained from intoxicating beverages, never cut his hair, and avoided corpses. An inadvertent breach of these rules called for purificatory rites. His vow was for a fixed term (though it could also be for life), at the end of which he was released. Samuel, the prophet, and Samson were Nazarites. The name is also spelled Nazirite*".

The following collection of singular commandments in the *Torah* applies specifically to the *nazir*. For that reason they are allowed to have long hair, etc. Again, only technically speaking, here's what *nezirut* would take:

Nothing "from the vine", meaning alcoholic drinks (Negative Law 202: Num 6:3 - A Nazir may not drink wine or any beverage from grapes) in addition to any grape (Negative Law 203: Num 6:3 - A Nazir may not eat fresh grapes), raisin (Negative Law 204: Num 6:3 - A Nazir may not eat dried grapes), grape seed (Negative Law 205: Num 6:4 - A Nazir may not eat grape seeds/kernels) or grape rind (Negative Law 206: Num 6:4 - A Nazir may not eat grape peels/husks), may be ingested.

The *nazir*'s hair may not be cut (Negative Law 209: Num 6:5 - A Nazir must not shave his hair) and must be allowed to grow unhindered (Positive Law 92: Num 6:5 - The Nazir letting his hair grow during his separation).

To stay within that bubble of spirituality, the *nazir* cannot enter a building or facility – a "tent" as the *Torah* puts it – in which a dead body is located (Negative Law 208: Lev 21:11- Nazir must not become tameh entering house with corpse), and neither can he come into physical contact with the dead (Negative Law 207: Num 6:7 - Nazir may not rend himself tameh (unclean) for the dead).

And upon completion of the accepted term of *nezirut*, the *nazir* must bring certain sacrifices to the Temple and shave his head (Positive Law 93: Num 6:18 - Nazir completing vow shaves his head & brings sacrifice).

Let's look again very carefully at the Scripture concerning the resurrection of the little girl:

"(18) While he spake these things unto them, behold, there came a certain ruler, and worshipped him, saying, My daughter is even now dead: but come and lay thy hand upon her, and she shall live. (19) And Jesus arose, and followed him, and so did his disciples ... (23) And when Jesus came into the ruler's house, and saw the minstrels and the people making a noise, (24) He said unto them, Give place: for the maid is not dead, but sleepeth. And they laughed him to scorn. (25) But when the people were put forth, he went in, and took her by the hand, and the maid arose". (Matt 9:18-26)

The fact is that the miracle happened already before Y'shua entered the house. Y'shua clearly said "*the maid is not dead, but sleepeth*". Technically speaking Y'shua, therefore, never broke the Nazarite commandments.

The same applies to the resurrection of Lazarus. Y'shua never entered Lazarus' tomb; in fact, he instructed Lazarus to come out (John 11:43-44).

9:27-34 See that no man know it

"(27) And when Jesus departed thence, two blind men followed him, crying, and saying, Thou Son of David, have mercy on us. (28) And when he was come into the house, the blind men came to him: and Jesus saith unto them, Believe ye that I am able to do this? They said unto him, Yea, Lord. (29) Then touched he their eyes, saying, According to your faith be it unto you. (30) And their eyes were opened; and Jesus straitly charged them, saying, See that no man know it. (31) But they, when they were departed, spread abroad his fame in all that country. (32) As they went out, behold, they brought to him a dumb man possessed with a devil. (33) And when the devil was cast out, the dumb spake: and the multitudes marvelled, saying, It was never so seen in Israel. (34) But the Pharisees said, He casteth out devils through the prince of the devil".

Why did Y'shua "play down" who He was? One thought is that He didn't want the masses taking up arms against Rome as many had the false idea that this would be a role of the Messiah.

In addition to this idea, looking back at the Hebrew *Tenach*, we find the following:

(8) "Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me.

(9) And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

(10) Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed.

(11) Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate,

(12) And the LORD have removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land.

(13) But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in them, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof".
(Isaiah 6:8-13)

Y'shua's actions are in accordance to what YHWH told the prophet Isaiah. The people in Isaiah's time, just as in *Y'shua's* time, had strayed from YHWH. As such, it was not for those who were haughty and arrogant to understand who He truly was. Those of a humble and contrite heart would receive the message, however. As we will see later in this study, *Y'shua* makes a similar statement regarding His parables which He says were not for all to understand.

9:35 Preaching the gospel of the kingdom

"(35) And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people".

As previously mentioned, many today believe the "Gospel message" is the death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah. This creates a conflict when faced with verses such as this one or Heb 4:2, or other places where the disciples are preaching "the gospel" before *Y'shua* has died. To counter this, it is taught that the "*gospel of the kingdom*" is not the same as the "gospel of the Messiah's death, burial and resurrection". Scripture doesn't offer support for such a teaching, however.

The correct explanation is that there is one gospel message and it has never changed. It was indeed given to the Hebrews in Moses' time and preached by *Y'shua* Himself and his apostles. This "*gospel*" was "pictured" in the commandments regarding the *Yovel* Year, also called Jubilees; where every 50 years debts were forgiven and properties returned to their original owners. The *Yovel* Year has heavy Messianic significance in Jewish literature. The prophet Isaiah in chapter 61 makes the connection between the elements of the *Yovel* year commandment and their ultimate fulfillment by the Messiah.

Just as the *Yovel* year brought freedom to captives, forgiveness of debts and a restoration of things to their original order—the Messianic kingdom will bring freedom, forgiveness and a restoration of the name of YHWH, Israel and creation—complete and everlasting physical and spiritual healing (Revelation 21 and 22).

The "death, burial and resurrection of the Messiah" is not the Gospel. Rather, it is YHWH's personal "signet" on *Y'shua* confirming that He was/is the one bringing in what is called the "Jubilee release" – the "good news" or "gospel" from YHWH. This will all come fully into place when the New Covenant is established in the Millennium.

9:36-38 As sheep having no shepherd

"(36) But when he saw the multitudes, he was moved with compassion on them, because they fainted, and were scattered abroad, as sheep having no shepherd. (37) Then saith he unto his disciples, The harvest truly is plenteous, but the labourers are few. (38) Pray ye therefore the Lord of the harvest, that he will send forth labourers into his harvest".

The shepherds of the people were the priesthood. Just as in the days of Malachi, they had become corrupted, leaving the people without godly leadership. But as the prophet foretold, the true Shepherd (YHWH's Messiah) would one day come: *"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the LORD, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts"*. (Mal 3:1)

The book of Malachi closes with a reminder that YHWH does not change. It also makes it clear that the end times and arrival of the Messiah are linked to the keeping of the *Torah*:

(1) *"For, behold, the day cometh, that shall burn as an oven; and all the proud, yea, and all that do wickedly, shall be stubble: and the day that cometh shall burn them up, saith the LORD of hosts, that it shall leave them neither root nor branch."*

(2) *"But unto you that fear my name shall the Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings; and ye shall go forth, and grow up as calves of the stall."*

(3) *"And ye shall tread down the wicked; for they shall be ashes under the soles of your feet in the day that I shall do this, saith the LORD of hosts."*

(4) *"Remember ye the law of Moses my servant, which I commanded unto him in Horeb for all Israel, with the statutes and judgments."*

(5) *"Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD:*

(6) *"And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse". (Mal 4:1-6)*

Coming back to the *tallit*. It is interesting to note that during the First Century, a tradition associated with the *tallit* is that the *tzitzit* of the Messiah had healing powers. This was taken from Mal 4:2: “*The Sun of righteousness arise with healing in his wings*”.

What does “his wings” represent?

The same word used in Num 15:38 for “*border*” is used in Mal 4:2 for “*wings*”. With this understanding in mind, an ancient Jew who was under the prayer shawl could be said to be dwelling in the secret place of the Most High and under His wings (Psalm 91:1-4). The Hebrew word for “*wings*” used in this passage is *kanaph*, which is a word that specifically means the fringe-like feathers or edges of a bird's wing, not the whole wing. All of us have seen an eagle or a hawk circling in the summer sky and have seen these fringe-like feathers. This word, therefore, had two meanings and could be translated wings, or *tzitzit*.

When one realises the significance of this concept to the First Century Hebraic mind, it becomes clear why this woman was instantly healed. She was expressing her faith in *Y'shua* the Messiah as the Sun of Righteousness with healing in His wings and declaring her faith in YHWH's prophetic Word. She must have remembered this Messianic promise from the scroll of Malachi and thought, “if I am to be healed, then will it be found in his wings”... his *tzitzit*? By faith, she reached out, touching the fringes and was healed.

It is interesting that all though the *Tanach*, the Hebrew word for wings in most passages is *kanaph* of the Lord; i.e., under His word and His authority!

In a different passage, some time later *Y'shua* arrived at the town of Genessaret—also on the shores of the Sea of Galilee. The men of the town recognised *Y'shua* and sent the word out so that many people brought their sick to him and begged him to let the sick just touch the *tzitzit* of his garment. The Bible reports:

“(53) And when they had passed over, they came into the land of Gennesaret, and drew to the shore. (54) And when they were come out of the ship, straightway they knew him, (55) And ran through that whole region round about, and began to carry about in beds those that were sick, where they heard he was. (56) And whithersoever he entered, into villages, or cities, or country, they laid the sick in the streets, and besought him that they might touch if it were but the border of his garment: and as many as touched him were made whole”. (Mark 6:53-56)

These people were not healed simply by touching the fringes of *Y'shua*'s garment in a crowd. They were healed when their faith touched the power of YHWH Who is the one who could heal their infirmities. It was their point of contact to release their faith to receive a touch from *Y'shua*.

As said, the woman must have known the Scripture; and in faith, she touched the wings of His garment showing she believed *Y'shua* is the Messiah!

END OF Section III - Messiah's Miracles

SECTION IV
MESSIAH'S TEACHINGS

MATTHEW 10:1-42

TEXT:

- (1) "And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.
- (2) Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;
- (3) Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;
- (4) Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.
- (5) These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not:
- (6) But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- (7) And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.
- (8) Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.
- (9) Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses,
- (10) Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat.
- (11) And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.
- (12) And when ye come into an house, salute it.
- (13) And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.
- (14) And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.
- (15) Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city.
- (16) Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves.
- (17) But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues;
- (18) And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles.
- (19) But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.
- (20) For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.
- (21) And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death.
- (22) And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.
- (23) But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come.
- (24) The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord.
- (25) It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?
- (26) Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.
- (27) What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops.
- (28) And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell.
- (29) Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father.
- (30) But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.
- (31) Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows.
- (32) Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven.
- (33) But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven.

- (34) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword.
- (35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law.
- (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household.
- (37) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me.
- (38) And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me.
- (39) He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.
- (40) He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me.
- (41) He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward.
- And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward".*

10:1-4 Disciples/Apostles

"(1) And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. (2) Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; (3) Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; (4) Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him".

These men became emissaries on behalf of the Messiah and in the power of Messiah. The miracles they were able to perform (as Y'shua did) were continued evidence that the offer of the Kingdom of YHWH was real.

One of the little-mentioned facts about Y'shua, is that He was able to attract followers from all of the major religious groups within Judaism, many of whom were usually at odds with each other. This included:
 Essene types, such as Peter and Andrew (who were disciples of John),
 Zealots (such as Simon and Judas?),
 "Outcasts" such as Matthew, who was a tax collector working for Rome
 Pharisees were also a part of his following as seen by Paul, Nicodemus, and those mentioned in Acts 15 and Luke 13. (See section "James the Brother of Y'shua" under "Matt 13:53-54 And when he was come into his own country")

Power against unclean spirits

The power against demons was, and remains, directly related to the advancement of YHWH's kingdom. Though it may be possible to "cast out" demons even today, one must carefully consider the root and ultimate result of this activity. As Y'shua said earlier, not all those casting out demons in His name, would be recognised by Him (Matt 7:15-27).

The criterion to judge these things by is this: What is being promoted—*Torah*-observant faith in Y'shua or some anti-*Torah* system of belief that says it is of YHWH? The former advances the Kingdom: the latter is not the faith YHWH established and, therefore, it is of darkness and not the light. It is not the Gospel of the true Y'shua (2 Corinthians, chapter 11), even though it may totally have the appearance of light.

Unclean spirits

What's with all this "demonic" activity in the four Gospels? There are several specific periods in history where a rise in demonic activity occurred or will occur. Each of these coincides with a "birth" of someone (or something) very significant. Each period is also a time of Elohim causing a great "spiritual awakening".

They are as follows:

The birth of Abraham: In chapter eight of the book of Jasher, an account is given of the birth of Abraham. Here we find Nimrod, who was ruling the known world, learning from his astrologers about the birth of a child born to Terah who would usurp him and whose descendants would possess all the earth. Their attempts to kill the baby Abraham are thwarted by Elohim. (The book of Jasher is mentioned in the books of Joshua and Second Samuel. It is also referred to in Jewish Biblical commentaries. The book parallels the events from creation to Joshua's entering of the Land. Jasher was rediscovered in Ethiopia in the last century. A forged version was soon released (and is still available). What is believed to be the actual text may be purchased on

<http://www.amazon.com/> . To avoid the recognised forgery, the edition ISBN: 0-934666-25-3 is recommended).

The birth of Moses: In the beginning of the book of Exodus, a new Pharaoh feels threatened by the growing number of Hebrew slaves and orders the execution of newborn males. Moses miraculously survives. Pharaoh's guidance comes from his own mystics who later do spiritual battle with Moses.

The births of John the Baptist and Y'shua the Messiah: The Gospel of Matthew recounts the story of how Y'shua escaped death at the hand of Herod's decree. During his lifetime, we see Him and His apostles casting out many demons. What isn't explained is how his cousin John, only six months younger than Him, survived Herod's massacre. There is an account in the Pseudepigrapha concerning John being protected by YHWH through this ordeal and thus ending up living in the wilderness, where he was "taken in" by the community of people who lived in that area and was trained to be a priest.

The return of Y'shua: The book of Revelation shows that the most ferocious period of demonic activity the world will have seen is yet to come – it precedes the return of Y'shua and is part of what is called the *birthpangs of the Messiah*.

Quick Review of the Names of the 12 *Talmidim* (Apostles)

<i>Shimon Kefa</i>	- Simon Peter
<i>André</i>	- Andrew
<i>Ya'akov Ben Zavdai</i>	- James son of Zebedee
<i>Yochanan</i>	- John his brother
<i>Philippos</i>	- Philip
<i>Bartalmai</i>	- Bartholomew
<i>Toma</i>	- Thomas
<i>Mattityahu</i>	- Matthew the tax collector
<i>Yaakov bar Halfai</i>	- James son of Alphaseus
<i>Taddai</i>	- Thaddaeus
<i>Shimon Zealot</i>	- Simon the Cananite
<i>Yhudah K'riot</i>	- Judas Iscariot

It is interesting to note that there is very little information for so prominent an apostle as *Ya'akov*. *Ya'akov's* name when mentioned, was nearly always mentioned before *Yochanan* (John). This probably indicates his seniority and John MacArthur suggests that *Ya'akov* might have been the leader of this rather dynamic pair. *Ya'akov* and *Yochanan*, along with *Kefa*, constituted the Master's inner three—being permitted to see and hear things that others did not. Perhaps these three men were destined to be leaders of the early church that Y'shua showed them:

His greatness in raising the dead. (Mark 5:37)

His glory on the Mount of transfiguration. (Mark 9:2)

His grief in the garden of *GatSh'manim* (Gethsemane). (Mark 14:32)

10:5-6 Go not into the way of the Gentiles

"(5) These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: (6) But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel".

The Messiah and the Kingdom of YHWH were promised to the Jews (House of Judah – Southern Two Tribes and Levites) and the Israelites (Lost Sheep of the House of Israel – Northern Ten Tribes). He is their living Torah. Please view the in-details studies for the detail in the *Christian Foundational Teachings* series.

Who were the Essenes?

These twelve Y'shua sent out with the following instructions: "(5b) Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, (6) but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (7) As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near'. (8) Cure the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons. You received without payment; give without payment. (9) Take no gold, or silver, or copper in your belts, (10) no bag for your journey, or two tunics, or sandals, or a staff; for laborers deserve their food. (11) Whatever town or village you enter, find out who in it is worthy, and stay there until you leave. (12) As you enter the house, greet it. (13) If the house is worthy, let your peace come upon it; but if it is not worthy, let your peace return to you. (14) If anyone will not welcome you or listen to your words, shake off the dust from your feet as you leave that house or town". (Matt 10:5-14 NRSV (Mark 6:11, Luke 9:5))

"All who believed were together and had all things in common; they would sell their possessions and goods and distribute the proceeds to all, as any had need". (Acts 2:45) (NRSV)

War 2.7.4 119-127 (see also Ant.18.2.5 18-22): *"The Essenes...are despisers of riches, and so very communal as to earn our admiration. There is no one to be found among them who has more than another; for they have a law that those who come to join them must let whatever they have be common to the whole order, so that among them all there is no appearance of either poverty or excessive wealth. Everyone's possessions are intermingled with every other's possessions; as if they were all brothers with a single patrimony..."*

They have no one city, but in every city dwell many of them; and if any of the sect arrive from elsewhere, all is made available to them as if it were their own; and they go to those they have never seen before as if long acquaintances. Thus they carry nothing at all with them in their journeys, except weapons for defence against thieves. Accordingly, in every city there is one appointed specifically to take care of strangers and to provide them with garments and other necessities.

In their clothing and deportment they resemble children in fear of their teachers. They change neither their garments nor their shoes until they are torn to pieces or worn out by time. They neither buy nor sell anything to one another, but each gives what he has to whomever needs it, and receives in exchange what he needs himself; and even if there is nothing given any return, they are allowed to take anything they want from whomever they please".

The Essenes are not mentioned by name in the New Covenant. The similarities shown above between their organisation and that of the apostles - holding possessions in common, simplicity of clothing, travelling from town to town carrying almost nothing, and relying on finding welcome in a sympathetic house has led scholars to theorise that Y'shua had His origins possibly with the Essenes.

Bolstering this idea is Y'shua's relationship with Yochanan the Immerser. The descriptions of Yochanan's preaching in the desert and baptising in the Jordan River suggest to some scholars a connection to the Essene community near the Dead Sea. The Essenes are also thought to be the authors of many of the Dead Sea Scrolls, although not all scholars are convinced of this; in any case, the scrolls have shown many affinities to the messianic concerns of the New Covenant.

Who were the Samaritans?

975 B.C. The history of the Samaritans begins with the rebellion against King Rehoboam, the son of King Solomon and grandson of King David. Solomon had placed heavy taxation burdens upon them, but Rehoboam attempted to make it even worse, saying: *"My little finger shall be thicker than my fathers loins... I will add to your yoke: my father also chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions".* (1 Kings 12:10-14).

Many of the Israelites objected and followed a rebel leader called Jeroboam, who set up his kingdom in Shechem and built altars for idolatrous worship in Bethel and Dan. At first, only the tribe of Judah remained in Jerusalem; but then many of the fighting men of Benjamin joined them (1 Kings 12:20-21). Throughout the remainder of the two books of Kings, the ten rebel tribes are called "Israel" and those who remained with Rehoboam and his successors were called "Judah".

730 B.C. Hoshea began to reign as king of Israel; but Salmaneser, king of Assyria, invaded Samaria and subjugated him—allowing him to rule for a while as a puppet king. Then the king of Assyria (probably Sargon the son of Salmaneser) took Israel away into captivity. (2 Kings 17:1-6). It is likely that only a portion of them were taken away, because the policy of the Assyrians at that time was to subjugate nations by taking away the leaders and skilled workers from a number of different places and moving them around, creating unworkable ethnic mixtures.

The same chapter tells how the king of Assyria brought men from a number of different places to Samaria, but some of them were devoured by lions because they were worshipping their own gods. So they sent for an Israelite priest to be brought back from captivity to teach them how to worship YHWH. They practiced mixed worship by worshipping YHWH and also their own gods. (2 Kings 17:24-41).

The same policy of subjugation by ethnic mixture was practiced by the Babylonians and was inflicted on the Judeans some time later. (2 Kings 24:14 and 25:12).

623 B.C. (approx.) Although there was enmity between the Israelites and Judeans, there was a time of reconciliation during the days of Josiah, king of Judah. The Israelites who were left behind in Samaria were allowed to join together with the Judeans in the celebration of Passover. (2 Chron 35:17-19).

535 B.C. The people who lived in Samaria offered to help with the building of the Temple, claiming that they also worshipped the Lord. (Ezra 4:1-3). Although there was some credibility to this claim, they were considered to be an unreliable religious and political mixture and were identified as the "*adversaries of Judah and Benjamin*". The Jews refused to allow them to help build the Temple, saying they would build it themselves.

445 B.C. Sanballat opposed the building of the wall of Jerusalem in the days of Nehemiah, and asked for help from the army of Samaria (Neh 4:1-2).

Samarian belief

As in Biblical times, the Samaritans still exist today in the West Bank of Israel. Now only a few hundred in number, the Samaritans consider themselves to be the descendants of Aaron, the brother of Moses and original High Priest of the Tabernacle. Aaron's family was promised the "covenant of everlasting priesthood" by YHWH in Num 25:11-13.

The Samaritans, therefore, teach that, while Aaron's priesthood stood in covenant with YHWH, the later priesthood of Eli was an illegitimate one and the entire kingship of Israel was illegitimate with it. It is the Tabernacle, then, and not the Temple in Jerusalem which they believe was the single most holy place for the Jewish people.

In general:

Ten tribes rebelled during the days of Jehoshaphat and went to Samaria, separating themselves from the tribes of Judah and Benjamin. Judah was the dominant tribe, so that those who remained in Jerusalem and the surrounding area were called Judeans. They were subsequently known as Jews.

The ten separated tribes were subjugated by the Assyrians, assimilated, and most of them taken captive. The Judeans, because of their unfaithfulness years later, were also invaded and besieged; and many of them were taken captive into Babylon, but they stayed adhering to the *Torah* during their captivity and returned after 70 years.

At the time of Y'shua the Samaritans had their own place of worship on Mount Gerizim. They were excluded from the Temple worship in Jerusalem, except for small minorities from some of the tribes who renounced the Samaritan worship and joined themselves to the Judeans.

"(5) These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: (6) But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel". (Mat 10:5-6)

Ant. 20.6.1 118 (also War 2.12.3-4 232-235): "It was the custom of the Galileans, when they came to the Holy City at the festivals, to take their journeys through the country of the Samaritans. On their route lay a village called Ginea, which was situated on the border between Samaria and the Great Plain, and at this time certain persons fought with the Galileans, and killed a great many of them. When the leaders of the Galileans were informed of what had been done they came to Cumanus and desired him to avenge the murders; but he was bribed by the Samaritans to do nothing. The Galileans, indignant at this, urged the Jewish populace to resort to arms and to regain their liberty, saying that while slavery was a bitter thing but that, when it was joined with direct injuries it was completely intolerable...they entreated the assistance of Eleazar son of Dineus, a robber who had for many years made his home in the mountains, and with his assistance they set afire and plundered many villages of the Samaritans".

There was hostility between the Samaritans and Jews that sometimes became violent. The forced contact between the groups as Galileans journeyed to festivals appears both in Josephus and the New Covenant.

Some other points:

In both passages, there is a mention of Galileans setting fire to Samaritan villages (or wanting to) as revenge (Luke and Josephus). One of these, Eleazar – is a "robber," *lēistēs*, of the sort that recurs in Josephus, some of whom were anti-Roman guerrillas that followed the revolutionary philosophy of Judas the Galilean. Incidentally, this Eleazar is also mentioned in the *Mishnah*, the Rabbinic work compiled about 100 years after Josephus wrote the Antiquities; describing a time "when murderers became many", Mishnah Sotah 9.9 reads: "When Eleazar son of Dinael came (and he was also called Tehinah son of Parishah) they changed his name to 'son of the Murderer'".

The particular incident recorded by Josephus was extremely serious, resulting in mass crucifixions and beheadings and eventually in an embassy to the Emperor Claudius. As a result, Cumanus was deposed as procurator in favour of Felix, and the latter finally captured Eleazar son of Dineus and sent him in chains to Rome (Ant. 20.8.5 161).

Y'shua gave strict instructions not to go to the Samaritans or to the Gentiles, only to the Ten Tribes of the House of Israel.

10:7 The kingdom of heaven

"(7) And as ye go, preach, saying, *The kingdom of heaven is at hand*".

"Kingdom of Heaven" and "Kingdom of God" are interchangeable. It was and still is common practice among Jews to refer to YHWH in this fashion – out of deep respect for the name of YHWH. Even today the term "HaShem" which means "the Name", is often used in place of "God", both in Jewish writings and conversation.

The "Kingdom of Heaven" or "Kingdom of God" is the central theme of Y'shua's preaching. The Hebrews did not use the sacred name of YHWH. Many times they used the expression Kingdom of Heaven or Kingdom of God – just as today we say, "Heaven help me". We are not asking for heaven's help. We are asking for YHWH's help.

Look at the phrase, "*The Kingdom of God has come near you*" (Luke 10:9-11). The Kingdom of Heaven or God is described by most commentaries as YHWH's kingdom to come sometime in the future. Some teach it means the "Second Coming of Christ" (Y'shua called the Second Coming "*the coming of the Son of Man*" (Mat 10:22)).

The Greek word *engiken* means, "about to appear" or "is almost here". However, if it is translated back to Hebrew – the verb *karav* means "to come up to," "to be where something or someone is". In the Greek, the Kingdom is at a distance. In the Hebrew – it is here! Y'shua's Messiahship is present here and now.

The "Kingdom of Heaven" is not futuristic, but rather a present reality wherever YHWH is ruling...when one is able to put [Greek] passages back into Hebrew, it is immediately obvious that the Kingdom has already arrived and is in fact already here – almost the exact opposite of the Greek meaning (Bivin, Blizzard 1995).

Y'shua Himself proclaimed that the Kingdom was at hand. This proclamation involved an awakening cry of sensational and universal significance. He was referring to Himself as the King being at hand (being present). He was already present in his person –He is the King. For one to follow Him, he had to make Him his King and follow His rules. "*Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven*" (Matt 7:21) takes on a whole new meaning. It is not heaven that they won't be entering. It is His Kingdom now of peace, following His ways (Wilson 1989). "*Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*" also takes on a new meaning.

Reread the following verses with this new light. It may change your opinion of these teachings: Mark 4:30-32; Matt 13:33; 18:3; Luke 13:20-21, Matt 12:28; Luke 11:20; Luke 17:20-21. Y'shua did not come right out and say, "I am the Messiah". In Hebrew there are far more powerful ways of making that claim (Bivin, Blizzard 1995). Seeking first the Kingdom of YHWH is making Y'shua Lord of your life today!

10:8-13 Freely ye have received, freely give

"(8) Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: *freely ye have received, freely give*. (9) Provide neither gold, nor silver, nor brass in your purses, (10) Nor scrip for your journey, neither two coats, neither shoes, nor yet staves: for the workman is worthy of his meat. (11) And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, enquire who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence. (12) And when ye come into an house, salute it. (13) And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you".

The benefit the apostles received cannot be overstated. They had directly received the gift of the Kingdom from the Messiah Himself. The proof of their receiving and giving the Kingdom is seen in verse 14 & 15. These apostles receive special recognition at the return of Messiah as stated in the book of Revelation. Y'shua mentions their special place in His mystical prayer of John 17 where He elevates them before the Father, and also those who receive their teachings.

10:14-15 More tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha

"(14) And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet. (15) Verily I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrha in the day of judgment, than for that city".

Why is this so? Because Sodom and Gomorrha did not have the witness of the *Torah* and the prophets and the Messiah's own emissaries. By the time the apostles are witnessing to Israel, they have had the written *Torah* for some 1300 years. Y'shua's group of twelve are upholding the witness of the *Torah* and the prophets – both these witnesses (the entire Tanach – Old Covenant) warns of the coming of the Messiah. The apostles are the *third witness* to come to Israel to tell the people about the Messiah.

How did so many of them miss the fact that Y'shua was the Messiah?

"O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?" (Matt 16:3)

Paul addressed what the problem of many of his Jewish brethren was – they did not submit to YHWH's righteousness as taught in the *Torah*, and sought their own. When Y'shua arrived, who was/is the "goal" or "aim" of the *Torah* – they did not discern who He was.

Chapter 10 of Paul's letter to the Romans explains this. Unfortunately, key parts to this are mistranslated in all Christian texts; thus, the *Jewish New Testament* is supplied for a pivotal verse:

Rom 10:4: *"The goal at which the Torah aims is the Messiah...:"* (The Syriac Peshitta version of the New Testament follows along the same line, translating Rom 10:4 as, *"Messiah is the AIM of the Law."*) When the verse is read this way, it makes perfect sense.

10:16-20 Harmless as doves

"(16) Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves: be ye therefore wise as serpents, and harmless as doves. (17) But beware of men: for they will deliver you up to the councils, and they will scourge you in their synagogues; (18) And ye shall be brought before governors and kings for my sake, for a testimony against them and the Gentiles. (19) But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak. (20) For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you".

Humility and obedience (to the point of accepting death), regarding walking with YHWH and teaching the *Torah*, is the theme of the remainder of this chapter. The word for "*harmless*" in verse 16 means *unmixed, pure as with metal or wine, without a mixture of guile*. What is the "*unmixed*" message they are testifying to? YHWH's *Torah*.

The term "*harmless*" is the same one that Paul uses in his letter to the Philippians. It is interesting that we see several of the same themes in Paul's letters as we do in this chapter of Matthew. In Philippians chapter 2, Paul speaks of obeying YHWH's *Torah* as part of "*working out your salvation*". Note that the *Torah/Tanach* is all that they could be obeying, and that not remaining pure to *Torah* was the only thing they could rightfully be "*rebuked*" for.

This section (below) comes on the heels of the preceding verses (5-11) that describe Y'shua receiving His reward because He was faithful unto death. (See Matt 10:22 below for what the standards are.) Here too, this same term (*harmless*, meaning "*unmixed*") is associated with the *Torah*, called "*the word of life*".

(12) *"Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.*

(13) *For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure.*

(14) *Do all things without murmurings and disputings:*

(15) *That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world;*

(16) *Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Y'shua, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain". (Phil 2:12-16)*

10:21 Brother shall deliver up the brother to death

"(21) And the brother shall deliver up the brother to death, and the father the child: and the children shall rise up against their parents, and cause them to be put to death"

The prophet Micah spoke of this in His day: *"For the son dishonoureth the father, the daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter in law against her mother in law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house".* (Mic 7:6)

The Talmud also connects such family disloyalty to the time of Messiah:

Soncino Talmud 49b: *"In the footsteps of the messiah, insolence will increase and honour dwindle; the vine will yield its fruit [abundantly] but wine will be dear; the government will turn to heresy and there will be none [to offer them] reproof; the meeting-place [of scholars] will be used for immorality; Galilee will be destroyed, Gablan desolated, and the dwellers on the frontier will go about [begging] from place to place without anyone to take pity on them; the wisdom of the learned will degenerate, fearers of sin will be despised, and the truth will be lacking; youths will put old men to shame, the old will stand up in the presence of the young, a son will revile his father, a daughter will rise against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be the members of his household; the face of the generation will be like the face of a dog, a son will not feel ashamed before his father. So upon whom is it for us to rely? Upon our father who is in heaven".*

10:22-23 But he that endureth to the end shall be saved (The deceitful theory of once saved always saved)

*"(22) And ye shall be hated of all men for my name's sake: but he that endureth to the end shall be saved.
(23) But when they persecute you in this city, flee ye into another: for verily I say unto you, Ye shall not have gone over the cities of Israel, till the Son of man be come".*

There is no "one time fix" in the Jewish view of salvation – no teaching of, "believe these things in your heart and you're saved for life". You can willfully turn away and be lost. It should be noted that Paul does teach in several places that *nothing can take you away from YHWH*. However, he is not addressing free will choice of turning away in any of those verses.

This did not change with Y'shua or His disciples. Many attempts are made by certain groups (who do not understand the Hebrew interpretation of Scripture) to teach doctrines such as "once saved, always saved". This spiritually arrogant concept is alien to the Judaism of Y'shua which goes against YHWH's *Torah*, the teaching of Y'shua and His followers. The theory of *once saved always saved* is not Scriptural, period.

Great feats of theological gymnastics often occur when explaining away the simple message of *Torah*-based verses such as these:

"For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost, And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come, If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame". (Heb 6:4)

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converteth the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins". (Jam 5:19-20)

Paul did not take his salvation as a "sure thing". See comments to verse 10:39 below.

10:24-25 If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub

"(24) The disciple is not above his master, nor the servant above his lord. (25) It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more shall they call them of his household?"

Y'shua goes so far as to say that those persecuting the ones that follow Him (and therefore are correctly following the *Torah*) will think that they are the ones that are being true to YHWH. It is a tragic fact of the times we live in that those who are now coming to a *Torah*-based faith in Y'shua are being persecuted by others who claim to be "God's people". The latter even go as far as claiming that the modern day return to

Torah is actually of Satan and a sign of the end times. Web sites and articles are now appearing, warning people not to allow themselves to be placed under the bondage of "the Law".

10:26 For there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed

"(26) *Fear them not therefore: for there is nothing covered, that shall not be revealed; and hid, that shall not be known.* (27) *What I tell you in darkness, that speak ye in light: and what ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops*".

It is the *Torah*, the only "word of YHWH" that *Y'shua* and His followers ever knew or referred to that reveals every hidden thing:

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

What ye hear in the ear, that preach ye upon the housetops

One of the functionaries in the synagogue was the *zakin*, a word meaning "old", which is more in the sense of maturity than age. This person provided counsel to the people and was similar to a modern-day pastor or elder. In Judaism, those who had reached the age of forty were considered to have attained understanding; and those who were over fifty were considered worthy to counsel the younger people (Philip Blackman, ed., Mishnah, 1 Pet. 5:5; 1 Tim. 5:1; Avot 5:21 (New York: Judaica Press, 1983).) The *rabbi* was a prophet after the manner of the post-exilic prophets of Judaism. He carried the responsibility of reading and preaching the Word and exhorting and edifying the people (1 Cor 14:3). As we know, *Y'shua* carried this role out in the synagogue:

- (14) "And Jesus returned in the power of the Spirit into Galilee: and there went out a fame of him through all the region round about.
- (15) And he taught in their synagogues, being glorified of all.
- (16) And he came to Nazareth, where he had been brought up: and, as his custom was, he went into the synagogue on the sabbath day, and stood up for to read.
- (17) And there was delivered unto him the book of the prophet Esaias. And when he had opened the book, he found the place where it was written,
- (18) The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised,
- (19) To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.
- (20) And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him.
- (21) And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.
- (22) And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?" (Luke 4:14-22)

There was also the interpreter, known as the *meturganim*. This was a person skilled in languages who stood by the one reading the Law or teaching in a *Bet Midrash* (a house of study) to interpret into the *lingua franca* of that day the Hebrew that was being spoken. The use of an interpreter goes back to the time of Ezra, when the interpreter was said to have "added the meaning". The *Talmud* gives many details of the interpreter's duties in the synagogue. (Rabbi Isidore Epstein, ed., *Soncino Talmud*, Meg. 4; Maimon. *Tephillah*, 12; *Massecheth Soph.* 10 (London: Soncino Press, 1948)).

It is from this concept that we understand *Y'shua*'s words, "*What you hear in the ear, preach upon the housetops*". This phrase was easily understood by those who were familiar with the system of study in the *Bet Midrash*, where the teacher would literally speak the message in the interpreter's ear, who would then shout it out to others, both inside the classroom and out. *Y'shua* instructed his disciples to do exactly the same.

10:28 And fear not them which kill the body...

"(28) *And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell*".

This is a summation of this section - not fearing death as part of your faith.

10:29-31 Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing?

"(29) Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? and one of them shall not fall on the ground without your Father. (30) But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. (31) Fear ye not therefore, ye are of more value than many sparrows".

The context here is that YHWH's concern for you is primarily for your soul – not your physical body. You may in fact suffer in this life and die for your faith. In the book of Hebrews, we are told the following:

"...and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection". (Heb 11:35)

10:32-33 Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men

"(32) Whosoever therefore shall confess me before men, him will I confess also before my Father which is in heaven. (33) But whosoever shall deny me before men, him will I also deny before my Father which is in heaven".

The word "confess" is *homologeo* in the Greek (Strong's #3670). This is a compound word derived from *homou* (meaning "the same" or "akin to") and *logos*. The term, *logos*, in its simplest meaning denote "something said". We know, however, that it also has to do with Divine Expression; such as we see in chapter 1 of John's Gospel where Y'shua is called the *logos*.

Hence, to "confess" Y'shua is not simply a matter of *saying the words*, but of identifying with who He is (what He represents) which is the *Torah*, as He is the goal of the *Torah* (Rom 10:4). This further explains His words in Matt 7:21-29, where he condemns people who did things in His name. They did not build their house on the foundation He represents (His word), which is the Word of the Father (John 14:24)—His *Torah*!

10:34-37 Think not that I am come to send peace on earth

"(34) Think not that I am come to send peace on earth: I came not to send peace, but a sword. (35) For I am come to set a man at variance against his father, and the daughter against her mother, and the daughter in law against her mother in law. (36) And a man's foes shall be they of his own household. (37) He that loveth father or mother more than me is not worthy of me: and he that loveth son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me".

See note to 10:21 above.

This is one of the main reasons why most of the Jews rejected Y'shua as Messiah. They expected that the Messiah would release them from the Roman Empire, which He did not do. On top of that, He publicly said that that He did not come to bring peace; therefore, they totally misunderstood Him.

Must you hate your father and mother?

"If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple". (Luke 14:26)

Talmidim, 'students' of Jewish rabbis, were taught to place their affections for their teachers higher than that for their fathers, for: *"his teacher has priority, for his father brought him into this world, but his teacher, who has taught him wisdom, brings him into the world to come"*.

But 'hatred'? Surely that is taking loyalty to your teacher too far, even if your teacher is YHWH in human form. For another commandment is that of honouring one's parents – which itself cannot be contradicted. Indeed, this verse in Luke has caused much anguish and pain between zealous sons or daughters and their parents; who believing they were expressing their devotion to Y'shua, had no regard or worse still – hated for their parents.

But what we have here is another Hebrew idiom. Our English lacks the original Biblical Hebrew meaning to exactly define the comparative sense; i.e., 'more than' or 'less than'. Instead, it tends to express two things which may be comparatively of different degrees like 'first' and 'second' or extremes such as 'first' and 'last'. In this way, love and hate, while appearing as opposites, in fact be related but lesser terms such as 'love more' and 'love less'.

(15) "If a man have two wives, one beloved, and another hated, and they have born him children, both the beloved and the hated; and if the firstborn son be hers that was hated:

(16) Then it shall be, when he maketh his sons to inherit that which he hath, that he may not make the son of the beloved firstborn before the son of the hated, which is indeed the firstborn:

(17) But he shall acknowledge the son of the hated for the firstborn, by giving him a double portion of all that he hath: for he is the beginning of his strength; the right of the firstborn is his". (Deut 21:15-17)

A Jewish man was not allowed to abandon a 'hated' wife's son's rights of inheritance. But more than this, the Deuteronomy passage describes favouritism between two wives (not absolute love and hatred) for the man bears children by both. Hence, different Bible versions struggle with the word "hated" and some adopt "unloved" or "disliked" as softer expressions. However, the Hebrew word used in the second phrase is *sane'* (Strong's #8130) which in its more than 140 uses is always translated by 'hate' or by words indicating 'foe' or 'enemy'. Literal versions cannot soften the apparent invective: only an idiomatic understanding or paraphrase can explain the metaphor.

The Hebrew *sânê'* is the opposite of love, which could mean 'non-election'. This contrast is the same in Gen 29:31 between Leah ('hated' *s^enú'âh* from *sânê'*) and Rachel, who in the previous verse is described as "*loved more than Leah*" a contrast of degree – not of absolute love and hate. Compare also the passages in Deut 21:15-17 above; 1 Sam 1:5; Prov 30:23; 2 Sam 19:6; and even Exod 20:3 which speaks of preferring others gods as equivalent to hating YHWH (Matt 6:24 on serving God and mammon, loving one and hating the other).

The Jewish *Midrash* on Exodus describes YHWH as hating the angels, and not just the fallen ones. It does not mean he dislikes Michael and Gabriel! It means that he chooses to give man the *Torah*, rather than the angels:

"By three names is this mount known: The mountain of God, Mount Horeb and Mount Sinai... Why The mountain of God? (Exodus 18:5). Because it was there that God manifested His Godhead. And Sinai? Because [it was on that mount] that God showed that He hates the angels and loves mankind". (Exodus Rabbah 51.8, Soncino edition)

There is actually a Hebrew wordplay here, for Sinai sounds like the Hebrew for hate, although it begins with a different Hebrew letter and may mean 'thorny'. Similarly, Malachi speaks of YHWH's preference for Jacob over Esau: "...yet I loved Jacob, and I hated Esau..." (Mal 1:2-3)

But Esau, like Ishmael instead of Isaac, was not hated absolutely – only "rejected" as the Aramaic Targum (paraphrase) prefers to render it. In Aramaic, *sanah* can mean 'to hate' and 'to separate'; so the Gospels could be saying **separate yourselves from your parents if you want to follow me**. This is a possible interpretation, but still against Jewish and biblical culture which is very supportive of family. Apart from Y'shua's 'separating' and staying behind in the Temple when he was younger, he was a very dutiful son.

Matthew, in fact, gives the game away; and here a synopsis of the Gospels and a little Hebrew understanding could have answered our question from the first, for he translates as "love less" rather than "hate":

"He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me". (Mat 10:37)

While Y'shua does predict division as a result of following him, he does not prescribe hatred; for elsewhere he upholds the precept, "honour your father and your mother" (Matt 15:4-6, 19:17-19; Mark 7:10-13).

Y'shua expressed degrees in his love. He chose twelve disciples, but three he spent time with especially; and one of these, John, is called the one whom Y'shua loved (John 13:23; 20:2; 21:7, 20). Y'shua also had a special place in his heart for Martha, Lazarus and family (John 11:5).

Even if one were to take this 'hating' verse literally, a semantic twist would have you back where you started. Y'shua tells us that our enemies will be the members of our own family; yet we are also taught, "Love your enemies"! (Matt 5:44; Luke 6:27, 35)

10:38 And he that taketh not his cross

"And he that taketh not his cross, and followeth after me, is not worthy of me".

"Taking up your cross" in the context of this chapter, means not being afraid to be killed. The Greek word for "cross" found here is *stavros*, meaning a "persecution stake". The *Dutullet Hebrew Matthew* has the word *gallows* in place of "cross".

It was the custom of the person who was sentenced to death to carry his own stake upon which he will be crucified. We know that from our Saviour's crucifixion.

10:39-42 He that findeth his life shall lose it

"(39) He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it. (40) He that receiveth you receiveth me, and he that receiveth me receiveth him that sent me. (41) He that receiveth a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward; and he that receiveth a righteous man in the name of a righteous man shall receive a righteous man's reward. (42) And whosoever shall give to drink unto one of these little ones a cup of cold water only in the name of a disciple, verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward".

John's Gospel includes this analogy: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Except a corn of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abideth alone: but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit". (John 12:24)

Paul taught the same about himself. He "lost" his life of trying to gain salvation through his own merit. Again in this section, Paul makes clear that he does not take his salvation for granted: "(3) For we are the circumcision, which worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh. (4) Though I might also have confidence in the flesh. If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: (5) Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, an Hebrew of the Hebrews; as touching the law, a Pharisee; (6) Concerning zeal, persecuting the church; touching the righteousness which is in the law, blameless. (7) But what things were gain to me, those I counted loss for Christ. (8) Yea doubtless, and I count all things but loss for the excellency of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord: for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and do count them but dung, that I may win Christ, (9) And be found in him, not having mine own righteousness, which is of the law, but that which is through the faith of Christ, the righteousness which is of God by faith: (10) That I may know him, and the power of his resurrection, and the fellowship of his sufferings, being made conformable unto his death; (11) If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead. (12) Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Christ Jesus. (13) Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, (14) I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus". (Phil 3:3-14)

The preceding verse is often misapplied to teach that Paul taught against the *Torah* (the Law). Nothing is further from the truth. Here, Paul is stating that he no longer relies on his own prideful righteousness - following the *Torah* in the flesh to "earn" his salvation. He now humbly teaches *following Torah in faith* - as faith in Y'shua does not void the *Torah*:

Rom 3:31: "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law".

The *Talmud* teaches of the humility and seriousness involved in teaching the word:

Mishnah Avoth 1:11-13: "Be not like unto servants who serve the master in the expectation of receiving a gratuity, but be like unto servants who serve the master without the expectation of receiving a gratuity, and let the fear of heaven be upon you".

SECTION IV

MESSIAH'S TEACHINGS

MATTHEW 11:1-30

TEXT:

- (1) "And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.
- (2) Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,
- (3) And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?
- (4) Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see:
- (5) The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them.
- (6) And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me.
- (7) And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind?
- (8) But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.
- (9) But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? Yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet.
- (10) For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee.
- (11) Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he.
- (12) And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force.
- (13) For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John.
- (14) And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come.
- (15) He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.
- (16) But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows,
- (17) And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented.
- (18) For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil.
- (19) The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children.
- (20) Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:
- (21) Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.
- (22) But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.
- (23) And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.
- (24) But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee.
- (25) At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes.
- (26) Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight.
- (27) All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him.
- (28) Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest.
- (29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls.
- (30) *For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light".*

11:1-3 Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?

"(1) *And it came to pass, when Jesus had made an end of commanding his twelve disciples, he departed thence to teach and to preach in their cities.* (2) *Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples,* (3) *And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?"*

As *Yochanan* was well aware that *Y'shua* was Messiah (John 1:29, Luke 3:22), one may ask, "Why would he ask such a question at this point?" Note that *Yochanan* is not asking if *Y'shua* is Messiah, but if there may be "another one".

Among the various opinions in First Century Judaism concerning the Messiah, was the idea of there being two Messiahs. One of these was considered to be the suffering Messiah (Messiah ben-Joseph) and another, the victorious or king Messiah that would bring Israel to glory (Messiah ben David).

Messianic Expectations: Prepare the Way of YHWH

"(3) *The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness,*
Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God.
(4) *Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low:*
and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain:
(5) *And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together:*
for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it".
(Isaiah 40:3-5)

A Scripture passage that is often puzzling to people occurs at the point in time when the imprisoned *Yochanan* the Immerser sent two of his disciples to *Y'shua* to ask the following question:

"(2) *Now when John had heard in the prison the works of Christ, he sent two of his disciples, (3) And said unto him, Art thou he that should come, or do we look for another?*" (Matt 11:2-3)

The first question that must be asked about this passage is: why would *Yochanan* even question whether or not *Y'shua* was the Messiah? After all, *Yochanan* had already testified to that fact when *Y'shua* came to be immersed. Did *Yochanan* suddenly have doubts about *Y'shua*? Was there something that *Y'shua* was doing or teaching that made him wonder if he should look for a different Messiah?

In order to answer this question and for you to understand it fully, we need to go all the way back to the conception, birth, and teachings of *Yochanan* the Immerser to see if we can determine why he had this sudden need to question *Y'shua* in this manner.

The Parents of *Yochanan*

"*There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth.*
And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless." (Luke 1:5-6 NKJV)

Here we find a priest named Zacharias, whose wife is also a descendant of Aaron. The *Torah* does not require that the wife of an ordinary priest also be from the lineage of Aaron, or even from the tribe of Levi. However, it was considered a good deed (*mitzvah*) for a priest to marry within the tribe of Levi, and especially within the family of Aaron.

"*And the LORD said to Moses, 'Speak to the priests, the sons of Aaron, and say to them...'" They shall not take a wife who is a harlot or a defiled woman, nor shall they take a woman divorced from her husband; for the priest is holy to his God*"". (Lev 21:1, 7 NKJV)

However, the marriage qualifications for the High Priest were much stricter:

"*And he who is the high priest among his brethren... shall take a wife in her virginity. A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot – these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife*"". (Lev 21:10, 13-14 NKJV)

Not only was Zacharias a legal Temple priest, the Scriptures tell us that both he and his wife, Elizabeth, were 'righteous' and 'blameless' before YHWH. They were strict observers of the *Torah* instructions concerning their manner of living and their obligations as a priestly family. Luke tells us they walked "...in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord..."

This is a significant fact, since the priesthood at this time was known to be corrupt – especially at the highest level. The office of High Priest, which was supposed to be inherited (passing through the eldest son) was at that time purchased each year from the Romans, having been sold to the highest bidder. The Romans had seized the garments of the High Priest and they only allowed him to wear them on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement). By this means, the Romans controlled both the High Priest, and through him, to some degree, the Temple itself. Because the High Priest could not wear the garments on a daily basis, the Apostle Paul did not know that he was standing before the High Priest when Paul took issue with him for having him (Paul) struck on the mouth (see Acts 23:1-5).

The High Priest during the year of Y'shua's crucifixion was Caiaphas. However, another High Priest, Annas, is also mentioned in the Gospel accounts and in Jewish history. Who, then, was the functioning High Priest at that time? Indeed it was Caiaphas, who was the son-in-law of Annas. However, Annas had also served as High Priest at an earlier time. Just as past American presidents are still called "Mr. President" after they leave office, so Annas was still referred to as High Priest even though he was no longer in that position. Not only had Annas and his son-in-law Caiaphas both held the office, Five of Annas' own sons also held the office of High Priest at one time or another. In other words, their family had a lock on the office of High Priest for which they were required to pay the Roman Procurator. However, they made far more money from the Temple treasury than they ever paid to Pilate.

According to tradition, once the High Priest was in office, he was supposed to remain in that position until death. As you can see from the practice of the time, this rule was no longer being followed. They often had a different High Priest each year, depending on who had sufficient money and/or political pull with the Romans to purchase the office. Despite the corruption at the highest level, there were many ordinary priests like Zacharias who were still obedient to YHWH. They were conscientious about their calling and not in the priesthood for the money.

"But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years". (Luke 1:7)

How old were Zacharias and Elizabeth? Alfred Edersheim, in his classic nineteenth century work entitled; *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, makes the observation that according to the Talmud (*Aboth v. 21*) a person was not considered to be 'aged' until attaining the age of sixty years. If this is true, then both Zacharias and Elizabeth could be expected to be above the age of sixty.

According to the *Torah*, the Priests were allowed to minister as long as they were physically fit to do so. They were not limited by age, as were the Levites (Num 4:2-3)

- (16) *"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying,*
 - (17) *'Speak to Aaron, saying: "No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his God.*
 - (18) *For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long,*
 - (19) *a man who has a broken foot or broken hand,*
 - (20) *or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or is a eunuch".*
- (Lev 21:16-20 NKJV)

Priests suffering from these various afflictions were still allowed to partake of the food that was set aside for use by the priesthood, but they were not allowed to serve in the Temple rituals: "...lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I the LORD sanctify them" (Lev 21:23b)

The Incense Ritual

The burning of incense during the Temple service was a very special event in the life of a Temple Priest. This honour was decided by lot each day. Once a priest had served in this capacity, his name was taken out of the lottery so that he could never burn incense a second time unless all of the officiating priests on any given day had already served in that capacity. This being the case, the burning of incense probably was the pinnacle of a Priest's entire career.

- (8) *"So it was, that while he (Zacharias) was serving as priest before God in the order of his division,*
- (9) *according to the custom of the priesthood, his lot fell to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord.*

(10) *And the whole multitude of the people was praying outside at the hour of incense".* (Luke 1:8-10 NKJV)

There were always many worshippers present at the Temple during the hours of sacrifice. However, there was said to have been a "multitude" present the day the incense lot fell on Zacharias. The reason for the presence of so many worshippers may lie in the fact that many pilgrims were in Jerusalem for the Festival of *Shavu'ot* (Pentecost) and the days afterwards, till such time that the multitude of people returned to their own towns.

According to E.W. Bullinger, in Appendix 179 of *The Companion Bible*, the course of Abijah (which was the eighth of twenty-four courses of priests) to which Zacharias belonged would have been on duty during the week following the festival of *Shavu'ot*. Since all of the priests were required to be in attendance at the Temple for the three Pilgrimage Festivals, Zacharias would also have been on duty during the week of *Shavu'ot*. Thus, there is a possibility as some scholars say, that Zacharias was actually burning incense in the Temple on the very day of *Shavu'ot* – though this can only be speculation. (For a detailed study, see "The visitations" section under Matt 1:23 "... a virgin shall be with child...")

The burning of incense on the altar, constructed especially for that purpose, was the apex of the daily morning and afternoon sacrificial services. The sweet odour of smoke from the incense was considered to be, in both Jewish thought and New Covenant Scripture, symbolic of the prayers of YHWH's people.

- (1) *"When He opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven for about half an hour.*
- (2) *And I saw the seven angels who stand before God, and to them were given seven trumpets. Then another angel, having a golden censer, came and stood at the altar.*
- (3) *And he was given much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all the saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne.*
- (4) *And the smoke of the incense, with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God from the angel's hand. Then the angel took the censer, filled it with fire from the altar, and threw it to the earth.*
- (5) *And there were noises, thunderings, lightning's, and an earthquake".* (Rev 8:1-5 NKJV)

The parallels between the offering of incense in the earthly Temple and this depiction of what takes place in the Heavenly Temple are quite profound; not the least of which is the silence that prevails when the smoke of the incense along with the prayers of the people are offered up.

We should all have a deep sense of gratitude to Jewish Sages who preserved the knowledge of how the Incense Ritual was conducted. First came the casting of lots, which took place in the room known as the "Chamber of Hewn Stone". After the lot-casting ceremony at which Zacharias was chosen for the honour, he had to choose two other priests as assistants to help him perform the ritual.

Edersheim gives us a detailed account of this ritual:

"First, he had to choose two of his special friends or relatives, to assist in his sacred service. Their duties were comparatively simple. One reverently removed what had been left on the altar from the previous evening's service; then, worshipping, retired backwards. The second assistant now advanced, and, having spread to the utmost verge of the golden altar the live coals taken from that of burnt-offering, worshipped and retired. Meanwhile the sound of the 'organ' (the Megrephah), heard to the most distant parts of the Temple, and, according to tradition, far beyond its precincts, had summoned priests, Levites, and people to prepare for whatever service or duty was before them. For, this was the innermost part of the worship of the day. But the celebrant Priest, bearing the golden censer, stood alone within the Holy Place, lit by the sheen of the seven-branched candlestick. Before him – somewhat farther away, towards the heavy Veil that hung before the Holy of Holies, was the golden altar of incense, on which the red coals glowed. To his right (the left of the altar - that is, on the north side) was the table of shewbread; to his left, on the right or south side of the altar, was the golden candlestick. And still he waited, as instructed to do, till a special signal indicated, that the moment had come to spread the incense on the altar, as near as possible to the Holy of Holies. Priests and people had reverently withdrawn from the neighbourhood of the altar, and were prostrate before the Lord, offering unspoken worship, in which record of past deliverance, longing for mercies promised in the future, and entreaty for present blessing and peace seemed the ingredients of the incense, that rose in a fragrant cloud of praise and prayer. Deep silence had fallen on the worshippers, as if they watched to heaven the prayers of Israel, ascending in the cloud of 'odours' that rose from the golden altar in the Holy Place. Zacharias waited, until he saw the incense kindling. Then he also would have 'bowed down in worship', and reverently withdrawn, had not a wondrous sight arrested his steps".* (Pp.137-138).

[* There is much disagreement, even among the ancient Jewish rabbis about the nature, or even the existence, of the *Megrephah*. Some said it was a type of organ with pipes which could produce one hundred

different tones. Others thought it was like a gong which, when struck or thrown on the floor, could be heard at a great distance. The supposed purpose of the *Megrephah* was so that everyone in the area would know when certain portions of the Temple service were about to occur, especially the burning of the incense. It is interesting to note that neither Josephus or Philo, both contemporaries of the late Second Temple times, mention such an instrument in any of their writings.]

Just what were the prayers that were being offered during the time of incense burning? The Jewish Sages have preserved this information as well, and once again Edersheim gives us a detailed account. This time from his book; *The Temple; Its Ministry' and Services*:

'The prayers offered by priests and people at this part of the service are recorded by tradition as follows: "True it is that Thou art Jehovah our God, and the God of our fathers; our King and the King of our fathers; our Saviour and the Saviour of our fathers; our Maker and the Rock of our salvation; our Help and our Deliverer. Thy name is from everlasting and there is no God beside Thee. A new song did they that were delivered sing to thy name by the sea-shore, together did all praise and own Thee as King, and say, Jehovah shall reign who saveth Israel". (p. 168).

At this point, three more prayers were said, both by the officiating Priest and by the Priests, Levites and people assembled outside. Today, these are known as the last three prayers of the *Amidah* or Eighteen Benedictions. Along with the *Shema*, these prayers are a part of the most intimate part of the modern Synagogue service. (Many of the prayers used in the synagogue today were taken from the Temple service so they might be preserved until the day comes when the Temple is rebuilt.)

* The Last Three Prayers *

"Be graciously pleased, YHWH our God, with Thy people Israel, and with their prayer. Restore the service to the oracle of Thy house: and the burnt-offerings of Israel and their prayer accept graciously and in love; and let the service of Thy people Israel be ever well-pleasing unto Thee".

"We praise Thee, who art YHWH our God, and the God of our fathers, the God of all flesh, our Creator, and the Creator from the beginning! Blessing and praise be to Thy great and holy name, that Thou hast preserved us in life and kept us. So preserve us, keep us, and gather the scattered ones into Thy holy courts, to keep Thy statutes, and to do Thy good pleasure, and to serve Thee with our whole heart, as this day we confess unto Thee. Blessed be the Lord, unto whom belongeth praise".

"Appoint peace, goodness, and blessing; grace, mercy, and compassion for us, and for all Israel Thy people. Bless us, O our Father, all of us as one, with the light of Thy countenance. For in the fight of Thy countenance hast Thou, YHWH, our God, given us the law of life, and loving mercy, and righteousness, and blessing, and compassion, and life, and peace. And may it please Thee to bless Thy people Israel at all times, and at every hour with Thy peace. [May we and all Thy people Israel be remembered and written before Thee in the book of life, with blessing and peace and support.] Blessed be Thou, YHWH, who blessest Thy people Israel with peace" (pp. 168-169).

The Vision

It must have been at this very point when the angel of YHWH appeared between the Altar of Incense and the seven-branched *Menorah* in the first room of the Temple called The Holy Place. One can only imagine how startled and afraid Zacharias must have been at that moment. Here he was at the apex of his life, burning incense before the YHWH of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob – when a most unexpected event took place:

- (11) "Then the angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense.
- (12) And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him.
- (13) But the angel said to him, 'Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard...'" (Luke 1:11-13 NKJV)

The prayer of Zacharias that YHWH had heard was not a private prayer of his own making. Rather, it was the prescribed prayers (just mentioned) which were normally offered during this ritual. The initial prayer (which the angel said had been heard) extolled YHWH as being; 'our God', 'our King', 'our Saviour', 'our Maker', 'the Rock of our salvation', 'our Help and our Deliverer'. In addition to this prayer, the last of the three 'benedictions' call for the people of Israel to experience "the light of Thy countenance..." Taken together, these prayers were an appeal for the Messiah to appear.

Thus it was, that YHWH withheld from Zacharias the most honoured of Temple rituals until that time when He was ready to reveal the coming of the Messiah through a son born to this precious priestly family.

"...and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John". (Luke 1:13b NKJV)

The Angel of YHWH continued his discourse to Zacharias:

- (14) "And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.
 - (15) For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb.
 - (16) And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God.
 - (17) He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, "to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children," and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord".
- (Luke 1:14-17 NKJV)

This prophecy, which the angel of YHWH gave to Zacharias concerning the conception, birth and life of Yochanan the Immerser, has a number of key elements:

He would be great in YHWH's sight.

He was not to drink wine or strong drink. This implies that he, like Samson, was under a Nazarite vow from birth. (Numbers 6 and Judges 13:5).

He was to be filled with the Holy Spirit from conception.

He would turn many Israelites to YHWH.

He, like the prophesied Elijah to come, would reconcile the fathers with the children (Mal 4:5-6).

He would turn the disobedient to the wisdom of the just.

He would make the people ready to receive YHWH.

At the conclusion of these most beautiful and profound prayers, the daily sacrificial offering was placed on the great outdoor altar to be burned. Then, all of the officiating priests (a total of four had been chosen by lot that morning to perform various functions) stood on the steps, which led down to the Court of the Priests, for the Aaronic Benediction. This benediction consisted of the priests holding up their hands and spreading their fingers in a special manner, while the priest who had officiated at the burning of the incense recited this scriptural blessing:

- (24) "The LORD bless you and keep you;
- (25) The LORD make His face shine upon you, And be gracious to you;
- (26) The LORD lift up His countenance upon you, And give you peace". (Num 6:24-26)

However, Zacharias was unable to speak and could not recite the blessing.

"And the people waited for Zacharias, and marveled that he lingered so long in the temple. But when he came out, he could not speak to them; and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple, for he beckoned to them and remained speechless". (Luke 1:21-22 NKJV)

Undoubtedly, one of the other priests who were specially selected for service on that day stepped in and gave the required benediction so that the ceremony could be brought to its proper conclusion.

The Circumcision Prophecy

As said in the previous sections of this exegesis, it was the custom to name a male child on the eighth day of his life when his circumcision took place. So it was on this very occasion that YHWH chose to loose the tongue of Zacharias. Inspired by the *Ruach HaKodesh* (Holy Spirit), Zacharias gave utterance of a prophecy about his newborn son.

*"Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied saying:
Blessed is the Lord God of Israel,
For He has visited and redeemed His people,
And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of His servant David...
'And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest;
For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways,
To give knowledge of salvation to His people
By the remission of their sins,
Through the tender mercy of our God,
With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us;
To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death,
To guide our feet into the way of peace'".*

(Luke 1:67-70, 76-79 NKJV)

The "horn of salvation" mentioned by Zacharias does not refer to *Yochanan*, but rather to *Y'shua*. For *Yochanan* was not of the lineage of King David, but rather descended from Aaron of the tribe of Levi.

We have a considerable amount of testimony from these Scriptures that *Yochanan* the Immerser's birth was both miraculous and for a specific purpose – to precede and announce the coming of the Son of YHWH, *Yeshua* the Messiah.

The Ministry of *Yochanan*

It was in the fifteenth year of the reign of Tiberias Caesar that *Yochanan* appeared on the scene in his prophesied role. During the intervening years, he had been residing in the deserts.

"So the child grew and became strong in spirit, and was in the deserts till the day of his manifestation to Israel". (Luke 1:80 NKJV)

At about thirty years of age, the "word of YHWH" came to *Yochanan*, and he began to preach in the area north of Jericho along the east side of the Jordan River.

*"...the word of God came to John the son of Zacharias in the wilderness.
And he went into all the region around the Jordan,
preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins,
as it is written in the book of the words of Isaiah the prophet, saying:*

*"The voice of one crying in the wilderness:
Prepare the way of the LORD, Make His paths straight.
Every valley shall be filled And every mountain and hill brought low;
And the crooked places shall be made straight And the rough ways made smooth;
And all flesh shall see the salvation of God".*
(Luke 3:2b-6 NKJV)

Yochanan's message to the people was one of complete repentance and the turning away from sin toward a true *Torah*-centered lifestyle (Luke 3:7-14). His teaching was so profound and so powerful that the people began to speculate among themselves whether or not he was the expected Messiah; for after all, the timing was right.

- (15) *"Now as the people were in expectation, and all reasoned in their hearts about John, whether he was the Christ (Messiah) or not,*
- (16) *John answered, saying to them all, 'I indeed baptize you with water; but One mightier than I is coming, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.*
- (17) *His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather the wheat into His barn; but the chaff He will burn with unquenchable fire.*
- (18) *And with many other exhortations he preached to the people".* (Luke 3:15-18 NKJV)

It was at this point in *Yochanan's* ministry that a delegation of priests and Levites was sent forth from the Jewish leadership in Jerusalem to question him about his immersion activities. It must be remembered that the members of this delegation knew they were talking to a fellow priest when they asked *Yochanan* directly:

"...Who are you? He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, 'I am not the Christ (Messiah)'. And they asked him, 'What then? Are you Elijah?' He said, 'I am not', 'Are you the Prophet?' And he answered, 'No'. Then they said to him, 'Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?' He said: 'I am The voice of one crying in the wilderness: Make straight the way of the LORD, as the prophet Isaiah said'". (John 1:19b-23 NKJV)

Following this exchange, the delegation begins to question *Yochanan* about his immersing activities. Since he had already told them he was not the Messiah, Elijah, or 'The Prophet', they now wanted to know by what authority he was performing immersions. *Yochanan's* answer must have given them much food for thought, since they already were inquiring as to whether He was the expected Messiah.

Please notice, the delegation did not ask *Yochanan* what he is doing. They knew all about immersion since that was a central ritual within Judaism with its origins going back to the time of Moses. Baptism did not originate with John the Baptist. He was merely performing a ritual with which everyone was already familiar.

“John answered them, saying, ‘I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after me, is preferred before me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose’”. (John 1:26-28 NKJV)

There is an implication in this verse that the members of the delegation already knew Yochanan since he was a member of the Priesthood. However, they did not know Y'shua as He was not of the Priesthood.

The Immersion of Y'shua

Apparently, Yochanan's teaching and immersing activities became widely known throughout Judea and Galilee. People had been flocking to him for the immersion of repentance, vowing to turn away from the evil of their past lives and begin again to follow the clear commands of the *Torah*. In this manner, Yochanan was fulfilling a portion of the prophecy given by his father Zacharias at his circumcision.

Into the midst of all this activity appears a relative of Yochanan's, the son of Miriam (the “cousin” of Elizabeth); none other than Y'shua Ben Yoseif (Y'shua, son of Joseph) from Nazareth.

“Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, ‘I have need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?’ But Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness’. Then he allowed Him, Then Jesus, when He had been baptized, came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, ‘This is My beloved son, in whom I am well pleased’”. (Matt 3:13-17 NKJV)

The Apostle John fills in a few more details in his account of this event.

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world! This is He of whom I said, ‘After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me’. I did not know Him; but that He should be revealed to Israel, therefore I came baptizing with water. And John bore witness, saying, ‘I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and He remained upon Him. I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, ‘Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit’. And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God”. (John 1:29-34 NKJV)

Twice Yochanan makes the statement; *“I did not know Him...”* Does this mean that the relatives, Yochanan and Y'shua, had never seen each other before this time? Since it was common practice for observant Jews to attend the Pilgrimage Festivals in Jerusalem three times a year, it seems probable that Yochanan and Y'shua must have met there as children on at least a few occasions.

What Yochanan is communicating by this expression, is that he would never have known Y'shua except for the fact that Y'shua had been specially sent to take away the sins of the world. After all, neither of these men would ever have been born if it had not been for the direct intervention of El Shaddai, who knew them both from the wombs of their mothers. Both Yochanan and Y'shua were born into the world to fulfill a very special mission of bringing repentance and salvation to the world.

Yochanan's Testimonies

The teachings of Yochanan the Immerser were strong and they produced much good fruit among the people. Like Y'shua who was to follow him, Yochanan did not mince words with those whom he saw as being sinners or hypocrites.

“But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, ‘Brood of vipers! Who has warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance. and do not think to say to yourselves, ‘We have Abraham as our father’. For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. ‘I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but he who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire. His winnowing fan is in His hand, and He will thoroughly purge His threshing floor, and gather His wheat into the barn; but He will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire’”. (Matt 3:7-12 NKJV)

Did Yochanan misunderstand?

It is very difficult to understand how *Yochanan* could suddenly have questioned whether or not *Y'shua* was the Messiah after all this testimony. Yet this seems to be the case as quoted previously in Matt 11:2-3, where *Yochanan* sends two of his own disciples to question *Y'shua* about His credentials for being the promised "Coming One".

Bible teachers have put forth any number of conjectures concerning this seeming inconsistency in *Yochanan's* behaviour. Perhaps he was just suffering a temporary loss of faith due to his imprisonment; perhaps he had expected to continue being the lead man for *Y'shua* throughout His entire ministry; perhaps he really doubted his calling, etc. But it can all be explained very simply when one understands the kind and number of 'Messiahs' that were expected at that time.

The Two Messiahs

There is a very simple explanation to this seeming dichotomy. During the First Century, there was a great deal of speculation (but little agreement) concerning just how the Messiah would manifest Himself. A careful examination of the Scriptures by the rabbis of that time seemed to indicate the possibility that more than one Messiah would need to be forthcoming in order to fulfill all of the widely divergent roles that He was prophesied to accomplish.

For example, the primary Messianic figure spoken of in the Scriptures (and in the Apocalyptic Literature) was 'King Messiah', who was to come in the power of a King to conquer His enemies, resurrect the dead and establish the Kingdom of YHWH on earth with a restored Israel as the chief nation. This Messiah was expected to be a direct descendant of King David, and therefore from the tribe of Judah. However, other Scriptures point to the Messiah being a Priest; hence, the idea found in some quarters that a second Messiah would come forth from the tribe of Levi.

In addition, there were the various figures mentioned in the previous article, such as the "*Son of Man*" and "*The Prophet*" who was to come in the spirit and power of Moses, only greater. Further allusions existed concerning someone very great who was to be called the "*Son of the Most High*".

But there was yet one other figure that was expected to come prior to all the others. He was known as:

Messiah Ben Joseph

All of the rabbis of the First Century clearly understood there was to be a Messiah (Anointed One) to come, who was to suffer for the sins of Israel. He was commonly called the "Suffering Servant". While today, the rabbis claim this figure represents the people of Israel (through the suffering of the Jewish people over the last two thousand plus years). In the First Century AD, the 'Suffering Servant' was clearly expected to be a Messiah (or 'Anointed One').

In order to reconcile the Scriptures that depicted the Messiah as one whom must 'suffer' with those who portrayed Him as the conquering King Messiah descended from King David, the Sages developed a teaching that two Messiahs were to be expected. They taught that the first to appear would be *Messiah Ben Joseph* who would come and suffer for the sins of his people and would actually die for them. The suffering Messiah would fulfill the duties of priest and would be killed. Then, following rather quickly (anywhere from forty days to seventy days) there would come a second Messiah – a conquering King, *Messiah Ben David*. The first act that *Messiah Ben David* would perform upon His arrival would be the resurrection of *Messiah Ben Joseph*. The triumphant Messiah would fulfill the role of king and live forever.

The Sages came up with the name 'Joseph' (*Yoseif*) for the 'Suffering Messiah', based on Ya'akov's (Jacob) prophecy about the end-time fate of the descendants of each of his twelve sons.

"Joseph is a fruitful bough, A fruitful bough by a well; His branches run over the wall. The archers have bitterly grieved him, Shot at him and hated him. But his bow remained in strength, And the arms of his hands were made strong By the hands of the Mighty God of Jacob (From there is the Shepherd, the Stone of Israel), By the God of your father who will help you, And by the Almighty who will bless you With blessings of heaven above, Blessings of the deep that lies beneath, Blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father Have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, Up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, And on the crown of the head of him who was separate from his brothers". (Gen 49:22-26)

Because this passage speaks about Joseph being "bitterly grieved" and "hated", the Sages applied the name of Joseph to the 'Suffering Servant Messiah'.

All of these various legends and myths concerning the two Messiahs are found in a book by Raphael Patai, entitled *The Messiah Texts*, published by Wayne State University Press, Detroit, 1979. Let us examine some passages from this most interesting book.

"This great poet-prophet [Deutero-Isaiah] spoke repeatedly about the 'Servant of the Lord', describing the call, mission, sufferings, death, and resurrection of this mysterious individual (Isa 42:1-4; 49:1-6; 50:4-9; 52:13-53:12). As to the identification of this 'Servant', there is no scholarly consensus to this day. However, the Aggada, the Talmudic legend, unhesitatingly identifies him with the Messiah, and understands especially the descriptions of his sufferings as referring to Messiah ben Joseph".* (p. xxiii, brackets are mine.)

[* Like most 'scholars', Patai does not believe that a single individual wrote the entire book of Isaiah. Hence, a different person supposedly wrote the later portion of this book. This portion is known in scholarly circles as *Deutero-Isaiah*. The 'Suffering Servant' passages all fall into this later portion of the book.]

Patai makes it clear in the above quote that during the time just prior to the ministry of Y'shua, there was great expectation among the people that a "Messiah, Son of Joseph" would soon appear on the scene.

"From the first century BCE, the Messiah was the central figure in the Jewish myth of the future". (*Ibid.*, p. xxvii)

Many First Century rabbis also saw a close connection between the historical figure of Moshe (Moses) and this future Messiah. Patai writes:

"The great task both the Messiah and Moses are destined to fulfill is the redemption of their people from bondage - ...Both lead their people back to the Promised Land... Both Moses and the Messiah spend an inordinately long time waiting for the divinely ordained moment when they can embark on their mission of salvation". (*Ibid.*, p. xxx).

However, according to Patai, the ancient expectations of the Messiah held that once He appeared, the people would still have to wait a period of time for the promised redemption to take place.

"Nor does the Redemption follow immediately upon the appearance of the Redeemer. After he is revealed, he is hidden, and only upon his second appearance does the great global process of Redemption begin". (*Ibid.*, p. xxxi).

In the ancient understanding, the waiting or hiding period mentioned above would be relatively short – some said forty days, some forty-five, and others seventy days. The important thing to remember is that full redemption does not take place immediately upon the appearance of *Messiah Ben Joseph*.

Another analogy that was used in the First Century is taken from the life of *Moshe*. In this scenario, the *Messiah*, like Moses, would not be allowed to live to see the completion of the redemption of the children of Israel.

"The Messiah, too, must die before his mission is completed, but he also must live in order to sit on the throne of David in Jerusalem. Therefore, two Messiahs must appear, one after the other. The first, Messiah son of Joseph, dies in the global wars of Gog and Magog in which he leads the modest forces of Israel against the Juggernaut of Armilus. ...Messiah ben Joseph himself is killed by Armilus, and his body remains unburied in the streets of Jerusalem for forty days".* (*Ibid.*, p. xxxiii). [* Satan the Devil.]

It is interesting to note that Y'shua, after His resurrection, dwelt another forty days in Judea and the Galilee before being taken up into heaven to be with His Father.

What, then, was supposed to happen to this dead *Messiah Ben Joseph*? Patai goes on:

"But then he comes to life. The legend tells us that Messiah ben David appears, and as one of the first of his Messianic acts, he resuscitates him. Since nothing more is said about him after his revival, one suspects that what one must understand is that the request which was denied to Moses will be granted to the Messiah: he, as the Son of Joseph, will die on the threshold of the End of Days, but then will come back to life as the Son of David and complete the mission he began in his earlier incarnation". (*Ibid.*, p. xxxiii).

There is one other passage that is significant to quote at this time. It is from the Apocryphal** book, *4 Ezra* 7:27-30; and it deals with the death of the Messiah, who is identified as the 'Son of God'. [** A writing that is considered to be religious, but did not make it into the Scriptural canon.]

"And whosoever is delivered from the predicted evil shall see My wonders. For My son, the Messiah, shall be revealed, together with those who are with him, and shall gladden the survivors four hundred years. And it shall be, after those years, that My son, the Messiah, shall die, and all in whom there is human breath. Then shall the world be turned into the primeval silence seven days, as it was at the first beginnings". (Ibid., p. 167).

While this quote does not fit the Scriptural pattern of a one thousand year reign of Messiah on the earth, it is interesting to note how the writer of this book confirms that the Messiah will be known as "My son" to El Shaddai. It must be remembered that none of the quotes given above are from the Scriptures. The purpose in quoting them is to point out the popular understanding of the Messiah in the days prior and during the time of Y'shua.

The purpose of Yochanan's question

Without a doubt, *Yochanan* knew that he was announcing and preparing the way for *Messiah Ben Joseph*. This fact had been clear to him at least since the day of Y'shua's baptism. At first he would not think of Y'shua as the conquering Messiah, the Lion of Judah; as he knows that Y'shua is the Lamb and comes to be slain for the sin of the world (John 1:29).

Yochanan's background was probably Qumran/Essene, though it would seem that he broke away to form his own following. By the time of Y'shua, the Essenes (as shown in the Dead Sea Scrolls) were developing a very accurate picture of Messiah as king and priest, united in one person.

The figure of Melchizedek plays an important role in many of the Qumran writings with his name being substituted for YHWH's in certain scrolls:

11Q13 – *"For this is the time decreed for the year of Melchizedek's favor and by his might he will judge God's holy ones and so establish a righteous kingdom, as it is written about him in the songs of David, "A godlike being has taken his place in the council of God; in the midst of the divine beings he holds judgment. Scripture also says about him, Over [it] take your seat in the highest heaven; A divine being will judge his people".*

(See the section, "The "tallit" penetrates the New Testament" under Matt 3:4 to fully understand the significance of Y'shua's priesthood.)

However, because of the Messianic understandings of the day, *Yochanan* was undoubtedly looking for a second Messiah (*Messiah Ben David*) to appear. *Yochanan* must have begun to wonder about all of this when he heard reports coming back to him about the miracles which Y'shua was performing. *"And when John had heard in prison about the works of Christ...."* (Matt 11:2 NKJV)

It was because of these reports that *Yochanan* sent his disciples to ask: "...Are you the Coming One, or do we look for another?" (Matt 11:3 and Luke 7:19)

Messiah Ben David

Just what were these "works of Christ" about which *Yochanan* was hearing? They were the large number of miraculous events which Y'shua had been performing. These miracles led *Yochanan* to question, not if Y'shua was *Messiah Ben Joseph* (*Yochanan* already knew that), but whether He might also be *Messiah Ben David*. Note the following examples: Y'shua healed the servant of the Roman centurion, without even going to the house where the man lay ill. (Matt 8:5-13 and Luke 7:1-10).

Peter's mother-in-law was healed. (Matt 8:14-15)

Demons were cast out of people. (Matt 8:16 and 8:28-34)

The paralyzed man was forgiven his sins and thereby healed. (Matt 8:9:1-8)

The sight of a blind man was restored. (Matt 9:27-31)

The speech of a demon possessed dumb man was restored. (Matt 9:32-34)

A widow's son was raised from the dead. (Luke 7:11-16).

These were not acts that were expected to be performed by *Messiah Ben Joseph*. He was supposed to come and suffer for the sins of His people. It was *Messiah Ben David* who was supposed to heal people,

casts out demons and raise the dead – not *Messiah Ben Joseph*. Certainly, *Yochanan* knew all of the beliefs and prophecies about two Messiahs far better than we do today. Slowly, he was beginning to get the picture that *Y'shua* was much more than just the promised *Messiah Ben Joseph*; he must also be the "Coming One" as well.

What a marvelous discovery this must have been for *Yochanan*. However, since he was imprisoned and could not question his cousin *Y'shua* Himself, he had to do the next best thing and send a delegation to confirm what he already believed to be true. And here is how *Y'shua* answered *Yochanan*'s inquiry:

"Jesus answered and said to them, 'Go and tell John the things which you hear and see: 'The blind receive their sight and the lepers are cleansed and the deaf hear; the dead are raised up and the poor have the gospel preached to them'". (Matt 11:4-5 NKJV)

All of these activities were expected to be the realm in which *Messiah Ben David* would operate. So by receiving this report, *Yochanan* was able to go to his grave knowing that *Y'shua* was not only *Messiah Ben Joseph*, but that He was indeed *Messiah Ben David* as well. What comfort that must have been to *Yochanan* when he was forced to face the executioner's ax.

Be Not Offended

Yeshua made one final comment to the disciples of *Yochanan* concerning their question about whom He professed to be. *"And blessed is he who is not offended because of Me"*. (Matt 11:6 NKJV)

Why would anyone be offended by learning that *Y'shua* was both *Messiah Ben Joseph* and *Messiah Ben David*? The answer is complicated, but down deep it has to do with the giving up of long cherished beliefs—even if those beliefs are somewhat confused. The Gospel accounts tell us that many believed *Y'shua* was the Messiah because He healed the sick and raised the dead, even though these miracles were supposed to be in the realm of the 'second' Messiah (*Ben David*). Yet others like *Yochanan*, who were more astute in their understanding of the Scriptures and traditions, saw that fact as confusing. They were expecting only a "Suffering" Messiah called *Messiah Ben Joseph* to come at that time. It is evident that many could not accept the idea that both Messiahs could be embodied in one individual.

Later on other misunderstandings grew, because some had accepted the idea that *Y'shua* was also *Messiah Ben David*. Those people expected Him to bring the Kingdom into effect immediately. When *Y'shua* finally suffered an ignominious human death, it was a crushing blow and faith-buster for many. For example, the disciple Judas attempted to force *Y'shua* into revealing Himself as *Messiah Ben David* so that He would raise an army in Israel and call down legions of angels to fight. When this did not happen and *Y'shua* went to the grave instead, Judas found the blow so severe that he committed suicide.

Many of the Jewish people rejected Him as their long awaited and promised Messiah because *Y'shua* did not fulfill all their expectations as the Messiah.

Then, as now, it had to be strictly a matter of faith. As Believers in *Y'shua*, we must never forget that fact. For those who do not have that faith (i.e., trust or confidence that He is both *Messiah Ben Joseph* and *Messiah Ben David*), *Y'shua* can become a stumbling stone. Many people have combed the Scriptures diligently in an effort to prove that *Y'shua* is not the Messiah by finding those prophecies about Him that have not yet been fulfilled. The only answer that can be given to those who make such searches is to agree that they are correct. But by FAITH we know beyond a shadow of a doubt that the prophecies that remain unfulfilled will be fulfilled when *Y'shua* returns to us as King of kings and Lord of lords.

The Conquering King

Finally, let us take a moment and view some of the expected exploits of the all-powerful *Messiah Ben David*, the conquering King Messiah. Once again, the quotes are taken from *The Messiah Texts*, by Raphael Patai. First comes the war victories.

"The final confrontation takes place on two planes: in heaven, where God chastises and subdues the celestial princes of the nations of the world, thereby weakening the earthly armies under their protection; and down on earth where God intimidates and devastates those armies with fearsome portents. Thus the small nation of Israel, led by Messiah ben David, can overcome its enemies despite their vast superiority in numbers". (p. 171).

One of the passages which Patai quotes in this chapter of his book is from the works of Philo of Alexandria. Philo was a noted Jewish philosopher who lived from about 20 B.C. to A.D. 50, the very time when Y'shua was alive. In the passage quoted, *De confusione linguarum* 4:45, Philo takes the Messianic term 'Branch' and defines it as being the very 'Son of God'.

"I have heard also an oracle from the lips of one of the disciples of Moses which runs thus: Behold a man whose name is the rising (Zech. 6:12), strangest of titles, surely, if you suppose that a being composed of soul and body is here described. But if you suppose that it is that Incorporeal One, who differs not a whit from the divine image, you will agree that the name 'rising' assigned to him quite truly describes him. For that man is the eldest son,** whom the Father of all raised up, and elsewhere calls him his first-born, and indeed the Son thus begotten followed the ways of his Father, and shaped the different kinds, looking to the archetypal patterns which that Father supplied".* (Ibid., p. 172).

[* Patai here translates Philo's translation of Zech. 6:12 as "rising". In the original Hebrew, the word is *tzemach*; which today is usually translated as "Branch" or "Shoot".]

[** For a Jewish sage of the First Century to equate this term with the Father's firstborn Son is quite remarkable to say the least.]

Along with *Messiah Ben David's* war and victory theme comes another, which speaks about the gathering of all the exiles of Israel. The Lost Ten Tribes are expected to be gathered into the land of Israel by *Messiah Ben David* along with the exiles of Judah – the Jewish people.

Not only is all of Israel to be gathered and 'saved', they will once again have YHWH Elohim dwelling with them through the presence of the *Shekhina* ("dwelling" or "presence"). The Sages also identified the *Shekhina* as being the Holy Spirit. They taught that when the children of Israel went into exile and the Temple was destroyed, the *Shekhina* also went into exile with them. Therefore, she (the *Shekhina* is always spoken of in the feminine form, thus the syllable "na" at the end of the word) will return to Jerusalem when the exiles are allowed to return because of the victories effected by *Messiah Ben David*.

After all of this occurs, what remains is the complete triumph of YHWH. Once again, let us turn to the writings of Raphael Patai:

"With the victory over Armilus and the defeat of Gog and Magog, followed by the ingathering of the exiles of Israel led by the divine Shekhina, the Messiah will have accomplished the greater part of the tasks for which he was created in the six days of the Beginning. Then comes the time of triumph, in which all the nations of the world recognise him as their spiritual leader and ruler, and he becomes a veritable pantocrator, world ruler-always, of course, in his capacity as the faithful servant of God."

"Thus the victorious conclusion of the Messianic wars is a triumph, not so much of the Messiah who acts merely as an agent of the Lord, but of God Himself". (Ibid., p. 189).

At this point, the final triumph of *Messiah Ben David* is complete. There is now only cleanup work that remains before the one thousand-year Kingdom of YHWH on earth can come into full bloom.

Summary

We have quoted at length from Raphael Patai's book in order to show that many of the understandings of modern Messianic Believers about the person of Y'shua (who He was, what He did, when He was here, and what He will do in the future). They are also found to be similar, if not identical, with the understandings of the ancient Jewish Sages. Without a doubt, when the many writings from the period extending from the

second century B.C. through the Talmudic age (c. A.D. 600) are examined, it is clear their understandings about who the Messiah would be and what He would do are very consistent. They conform to a very high degree with the understandings that Messianic Believers have concerning these same matters today.

11:4-6 Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see

"(4) Jesus answered and said unto them, Go and shew John again those things which ye do hear and see: (5) The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them. (6) And blessed is he, whosoever shall not be offended in me".

Y'shua does not give a straightforward reply. His answer consists of presenting Yochanan with certain "evidences" – His miracles. These acts are directly associated with the "Jubilee Release", a concept related to Messiah returning the world to the way it once was.

There is something very curious in Y'shua's reply when compared to Isaiah's prophecy:

"The blind receive their sight, and the lame walk, the lepers are cleansed, and the deaf hear, the dead are raised up, and the poor have the gospel preached to them" (Matt 11:5)

"Then the eyes of the blind shall be opened, and the ears of the deaf shall be unstopped. Then shall the lame man leap as an hart, and the tongue of the dumb sing: for in the wilderness shall waters break out, and streams in the desert". (Isaiah 35:5-6)

The key difference between these two Scriptures is the issue of "*the dead being raised up*". Isaiah does not mention this. Yet, in the scrolls found at Qumran, is one that relates the raising of the dead to the Messiah.

The Qumran *Redemption and Resurrection* scroll says of the Messiah:

4Q521: *"For He will honor the pious upon the throne of His eternal kingdom, setting prisoners free, opening the eyes of the blind, raising up those who are bowed down..."*

...and the Lord shall do glorious things which have not been done, just as He said. For He shall heal the critically wounded, He shall revive the dead, He shall send good news to the afflicted..."

This may suggest that Y'shua and Yochanan were communicating using a mutually-recognised teaching not found in the *Tenach*, but known to those who spent time "in the wilderness" (as both Y'shua and Yochanan did).

Y'shua's Commission

There is a big difference between a teacher and a preacher. Y'shua was both; but his main occupation during his stay on earth was preaching. Notice how He introduced Himself and listed His 'terms of reference' at the start of his ministry. Especially note his threefold reference to preaching.

*"The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed me to:
Preach the Gospel to the poor. He hath sent me to:
Preach deliverance to the captives and the recovery of sight to the blind
To set at liberty them that are bruised and to
Preach the acceptable year of the Lord".* (Luke 4:18)

Preaching the Gospel by Word

The Gospel of the Kingdom of YHWH that Y'shua preached was Good News. In the Sermon on the Mount, the Saviour introduces the various aspects of this Good News. I will briefly list them.

Matt 5:1-12	A list of blessings...	This is Good News.
Matt 5:13-16	The value and work of a believer...	This is Good News.
Matt 5:17-32	The eternal nature of YHWH's law...	This is Good News.
Matt 5:33-48	The greatness of YHWH's mercy...	This is Good News.
Matt 6:1-18	The rewards for humility and prayer...	This is Good News.
Matt 6:19-34	The providence of the Almighty...	This is Good News.
Matt 7:1-5	The final victory of true judgment...	This is Good News.
Matt 7:6-11	The value of truth and prayer... This is Good News.	
Matt 7:12-20	Invaluable warnings about deception... This is Good News.	
Matt 7:21-29	The final overthrow of hypocrisy... This is Good News.	

Preaching by Deed

"Christ is the only teacher this world has ever known whose life exactly accorded with his instructions. No object is so edifying with this accordance. The perfect holiness of the Redeemer would have been less clearly seen and less deeply felt, if we could not have compared his actions with the perfect rules of life, uttered by his mouth". (Dwight's Theology Vol. 1. page 365)

Understandably, His friends would praise him. But consider these testimonies of the Roman rulers after they had examined him by every method they could imagine - beatings, insults and humiliation:

"Pilate saith unto him, What is truth? And when he had said this, he went out again unto the Jews, and saith unto them, I find in him no fault at all". (John 18:38)

"Now when the centurion saw what was done, he glorified God, saying, Certainly this was a righteous man". (Luke 23:47)

Now consider Messiah's evaluation of himself:

"...I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love". (John 15:10)

"Which of you convinceth me of sin?" (John 8:46)

"I have glorified thee on the earth: I have finished the work which thou gavest me to do" (John 17:4)

No man in all history could honestly say that of himself except Y'shua HaMashiach.

Preaching by Effect

Though the Saviour never (to our knowledge) wrote a book or travelled to foreign countries to preach, who will doubt these facts?

At His birth, he changed the course of history and men all over the world began to number the years from his arrival.

More books, magazines, tracts and papers have been written about Y'shua than any person who has ever walked this earth.

His words have been translated into every major language and into hundreds of dialects.

Every day, millions of people from all nations pray to him in their morning and evening devotions.

More institutions, schools, colleges, hospitals and clinics have been built to further his cause than the sum total of all others which honour spiritual leaders.

11:7-10 What did you go out into the desert to see?

"(7) And as they departed, Jesus began to say unto the multitudes concerning John, What went ye out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken with the wind? (8) But what went ye out for to see? A man clothed in soft raiment? behold, they that wear soft clothing are in kings' houses. (9) But what went ye out for to see? A prophet? yea, I say unto you, and more than a prophet. (10) For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee".

The subject of the Messiah first appearing in the wilderness was discussed earlier in the notes on Matt 3:3.

11:11 He that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he

"Verily I say unto you, Among them that are born of women there hath not risen a greater than John the Baptist: notwithstanding he that is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he".

The topic is the offer of the kingdom. Is there a better way to extend an invitation than to say that the least in YHWH's kingdom is greater than the greatest in the present world?

11:12 The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force

"And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and the violent take it by force".

Kingdom Violence

I don't think that I'm the only one who has frowned upon reading this verse where Y'shua speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven suffering violence. What did Y'shua mean? This is a verse where knowledge of Greek does nothing to help us understand what Y'shua said, let alone meant. Resorting to the commentaries didn't seem to help, either; as it was hard for me to understand that Y'shua who tells us to turn the other cheek and love our enemy, saying that 'violent men' would take the Kingdom. How could this be reconciled with Matt 5:3; "*Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven*"? While some of what the commentators wrote didn't seem unreasonable, none struck the Chord of Truth within.

Only when we translate this Greek text back into what Y'shua would have said in Hebrew are we given a translation that allows us to see the meaning Y'shua had in mind. The following are a few translations of the Greek text that do not go back to the Hebrew:

KJV Interlinear: "*But from the days of John the Baptist until now, the kingdom of the heavens is taken by violence, and (the) violent seize it*". (George Ricker Berry, Editor, Interlinear Greek-English New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House, 2000), pp. 27-28)

Nestle-Aland Interlinear: "*And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of the Heavens is forcibly entered and violent men seize it*" (Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, Translators, J. D.

Douglas, Editor, The New Greek-English Interlinear New Testament (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), pp. 38-39) (As a side note, notice that both Interlinears translate the Kingdom as the Kingdom of the Heavens, and not 'Heaven'. In Hebrew, it is never Heaven, but the plural, Heavens.)

NRSV: "*From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven has suffered violence, and the violent take it by force*" (Ibid). The NRSV also has an alternate reading in the margin: "*the kingdom of heaven has been coming violently...*" (Ibid. p. 39)

NKJV: "*And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force*".

NAS: "*From the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and violent men take it by force*".

Kenneth Wuest: "*Indeed, from the days of John the Baptizer until this moment, the kingdom of heaven is being taken by storm, and the strong and forceful ones claim it for themselves eagerly*". (Kenneth S. Wuest, Translator, The New Testament, An Expanded Translation (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1961, reprinted, 1998), p. 27)

David Stern: "*From the time of Yohanan the Immerser until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been suffering violence; yes, violent ones are trying to snatch it away*". (Dr. David H. Stern, Jewish New Covenant (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Covenant Publications, 1991), p. 15)

From all these translations, one primarily gets the idea that the Kingdom of the Heavens is under attack by the very ones who want to get into it. In relation to the last clause of the verse, the ones who wish to enter are said to be violent men ('violent men take it by force', 'violent men seize it', etc.). Is this really what Y'shua said? And if so, what could He have meant? Many try to persuade us that the violence had to do with either the Zealots who wanted to make Y'shua King in order to defeat Rome; or with the antagonists of Y'shua like Herod and the legalistic Pharisees who wanted to snuff out the Kingdom.

R.T. France states that the '*violence began with the time of John's preaching, because that was when the kingdom of heaven began to be proclaimed*'. (T. France, M.A., B.D., Ph.D., The Rev. Leon Morris, M.Sc., M.Th., Ph.D., General Editor, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries: Matthew (Leicester, England: Inter-Varsity Press, 2000), p. 195.) He goes on to state that there are two understandings of what this violence might be:

'P.W. Barnett argues that Jesus refers to the political activists among his (and John's) followers who tried to divert his mission into one of national liberation, a movement which reached its climax after the feeding of the 5,000'. France goes on to discount this theory by stating, 'It is not clear however, why this issue should be introduced here, unless (and this must be speculation), John's followers had moved increasingly in a political direction, causing Jesus, while endorsing John's message, to dissociate himself from his 'violent' followers'. (Ibid)

'More commonly Jesus is understood to refer to the violent opposition encountered by 'the kingdom of heaven', already seen in the arrest and imprisonment of its herald, and more ominously foreshadowed in the growing official opposition to Jesus himself. In the context of John's question from prison this seems the more relevant sense. So while John was the last of the old order, his fate was the foretaste of the conflicts which are already beginning to affect the new order'. (Ibid. pp. 195-196)

Seems to make sense, doesn't it? There was a time when a mob in Y'shua's home town tried to throw Him off the cliff (Luke 4:16-30). Rationale and reason go a long way in 'explaining' passages that commentators

really don't understand. This is one of them. The 'violence' that he mentions of *Yochanan* being imprisoned is not 'on point'. *Yochanan* wasn't imprisoned for preaching the coming Kingdom but for rebuking Herod for his adultery (Matt 14:3-4; Mark 6:17-18; Luke 3:19-20). That there was 'violence' or tension between *Y'shua* and the Pharisees, etc., who prevented Jews from following the Messiah is evident to anyone who reads the Accounts of His Life here in Israel two thousand years ago (Matt 23:13). But how this fits into understanding what *Y'shua* is saying about the Kingdom leaves much to be desired.

France goes on to state that the term 'men of violence' *'is an unusual word, which always conveys a bad sense. This makes RSV mg. very unlikely, as it assumes a good sense for the cognate verb (the similar saying of Luke 16:16 has the same verb in the sense of 'coming violently' but with 'men', not 'the kingdom of heaven, as subject). Here the verb is probably to be read as passive, not middle: it refers to violence inflicted on the kingdom of heaven, which Jesus condemns (take by force, harpazo, normally means 'plunder or 'seize')'*. (Ibid. p. 195. Hah-pad-zoo-sin is the word that is translated 'seize' in the NA Interlinear; *harpazo* is the verb it comes from).

As we'll see here and later on, the term doesn't always convey 'a bad sense'. Luke 16:16 speaks of people 'forcing' their way into the Kingdom without presenting the word for 'force' in a negative light: *"The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John; since that time the gospel of the kingdom of God has been preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it"*. (NAS) As some will say, the use of 'force' would be more 'inner resolve' or 'determination' to enter the Kingdom. Again, not a negative concept, but is it what *Y'shua* is speaking of?

Robert H. Mounce offers some more insight into the Greek and tells us that, *'The interpretation of verse 12 has been discussed at length. One's approach turns on whether biazetai is passive ('has suffered violence') or middle ('has been coming violently'). Because the noun biastai (forceful men)' by-aides-zeh-tie, 'that occurs in the parallel clause is used in a negative sense (the cognate verb biao means 'to defraud, cheat, or overpower'), it is better to take biazetai as passive and translate 'has been enduring violent assault'* (Weymouth). *Jesus is saying that ever since the days of John the Baptist the kingdom of heaven has been under assault by violent men who are trying to overcome it by force. These men are sometimes identified as Zealots who want to force the kingdom's arrival. More likely they are like Herod, who imprisoned John, and the Jewish antagonists of the gospel'*. (Robert H. Mounce, W. Ward Gasque, New Testament Editor, New International Biblical Commentary: Matthew (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995), p. 104.)

One might begin to agree with these assessments out of a lack of a viable alternative. But even within the scholarly community, there are critics of this understanding. The Theological Dictionary well states, *'In view of Mk. 10:17 ff.; Mt. 5:3 ff.; 7:21, and also the present chapter (27-29), it is hardly conceivable that He should have spoken of men deliberately and successfully seeking to wrest the kingdom to themselves'*. (Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich, Editors, Geoffrey W. Bromiley, Translator and Editor, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), p. 610.)

It goes on to state concerning the Zealot theory that, *'The difficulty here is that Mt. is concerned with the prophets, the Law, the Baptist, Jesus and the bah-sil-lee-ah (Kingdom). It is thus hard to see the point of a special reference to an irrelevant subject when we naturally expect an important insight on the situation depicted. In any case the Zealot movement had already been started before the appearance of John'*. (Ibid. p. 611.)

It's good to know that there were others that frown at what the commentators presented. There is a 'special reference' and 'important insight' here, once the Greek is translated into Hebrew. It will be seen that both interpretations or meanings given to the sentence fall far short of what *Y'shua* speaks of.

Mounce basically parallels the theme of France with a slight variation. The problem with their interpretations is that they just don't seem to fit the context that *Y'shua* is using it in. In other words, the topic shifts from *Yochanan* and the Kingdom to what is happening to the Kingdom; and from either some men who 'want it their way' (the Zealots), or wicked men who don't want it at all (Herod, etc.).

David Stern adds to this natural understanding by stating that not only was it a physical assault but a spiritual one (demons), as well. But this only supersaturates an already bloated teaching. Stern writes, *"The Greek is difficult. As rendered, it means that violent ones (demons and their human vehicles) are trying to keep God from carrying out his plan through Yeshua, e.g., through Herod's having put Yochanan in prison (v. 2). An alternative understanding, '...the Kingdom of Heaven has been advancing forcefully; and forceful people are seizing hold of it', seems inconsistent with v. 25-30"*. (Dr. David H. Stern, Jewish New Covenant Commentary (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Covenant Publications, 1992), p. 43.)

The Wycliffe Bible Commentary joins in the chorus and states, '*The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence. The verb may be regarded either as middle - violently forces its way (cf. Luk 16:16), or as passive - is violently treated. The latter is more consistent with the next clause. From John's initial announcement of the coming of the Kingdom, the response had been a violent one, whether by vicious opponents (cf. vv. 18, 19; 14:3, 4) or by enthusiastic supporters. The violent take it by force (or, seize it). Compare Luk 16:16. Among the most prominent of Christ's adherents were the publicans, harlots, and other open sinners, who flocked to our Lord in great numbers*'. (Charles F. Pfeiffer, Old Testament, Everett F. Harrison, New Testament, The Wycliffe Bible Commentary (Chicago: Moody Press, 1977), p. 948.)

As Solomon once said, "*there is nothing new under the sun*" (Eccl 1:9). Are we now to understand that the harlots and the sinners are looked upon by Y'shua as taking the Kingdom by violence? This hardly fits with the account of the 'sinner' (harlot) who washed Y'shua's feet with her tears and dried them with her hair (Luke 7:36-50). Where are accounts that these people acted violently toward the Kingdom?

Alfred Edersheim speaks in the same vein but also registers an objection to the common understanding. First he writes, '*When we remember, that in 'the Sermon on the Mount' the call was only to 'enter in', we feel that we have now reached a period, when the access to 'the narrow door' was obstructed by the enmity of so many, and when it needed 'violence' to break through, and 'take the Kingdom' 'by force (Matt. 11:12). This personal breaking through the opposing multitude, in order to enter in through the narrow door, was in opposition to the many - the Pharisees and Jews generally - who were seeking to enter in, in their own way, never doubting success, but who would discover their terrible mistake*'. (Alfred Edersheim, The Life and Times of Jesus The Messiah (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2000), p. 682.)

'*From the time that John began to preach the Kingdom, hindrances of every kind had been raised. To overcome them and enter the Kingdom, it required, as it were, violence like that to enter a city which was surrounded by a hostile army*'. (Ibid. p. 460.)

Of importance to us is his unconscious use of the term, '*breaking through*'. More on this in a moment. He goes on to say in another place, '*The common interpretations of this verse have seemed to me singularly unsatisfactory*' (this is where he registers the objection to the scholarly insights) (Ibid. Footnote 31). I am inclined to agree with him, although his writing that there are 'hindrances of every kind' to all those that would seek to enter the Kingdom is certainly a truth. But it really doesn't help in explaining what Y'shua meant.

In the Nestle-Aland Interlinear, we read: '*And from the days of John the Baptist until now, the Kingdom of the Heavens is forcibly entered (by-aides-zeh-tie), and violent men (by-ace-tie), seize it (hah-pahdz-zu-sin)*' (The Greek for both words in Nestle-Aland is identical to the Textus Receptus).

The word for 'forcibly entered' is by-aides-zeh-tie and means, '*to urge, constrain, overpower by force; to press earnestly forward, to rush, Luke 16:16*'. (Wesley J. Perschbacher, Editor, The New Analytical Greek Lexicon (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publications, 1990), p. 70.) Another account states that the word occurs, '*always with a component of force...in a good sense press (in), try hard to (enter)*'. (Timothy Friberg and Barbara Friberg, Editors, with Neva Miller, Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Books, 2000), p. 91.) Still yet another reveals that, inherent within the Greek word is the meaning of '*apply force...use force, enter forcibly into something*'. (Walter Bauer, augmented by William F. Arndt, F. W. Gingrich and Frederick Danker, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature (London: The University of Chicago Press, 1979), p. 140.) As we will see, the use of force will be in the Hebrew word; but its application will be toward a specific '*breaking through*' as Edersheim unintentionally mentioned.

The word for "violent men" is by-ace-tie and means, '*one who uses violence, or is impetuous, one who is forceful in eager pursuit*'. (Perschbacher, The New Analytical Greek Lexicon, p. 70.) And here is the place where it doesn't mean it in a negative sense but '*in a good sense (forceful people) lay hold of (it)*' (Friberg, Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament, p. 91). Another source tells us that it can mean '*the sense of 'strong', 'bold' or 'brave'*' (Kittel, Theological Dictionary of the New Testament, vol. 1, p. 613). This demonstrates that the word doesn't always have to have a negative connotation to it as R. T. France suggested above. A further meaning is, '*the stormy waves of the passions beating against the ship of the soul*' (Ibid. p. 614). This meaning of 'force' will be present in the Hebrew, but in a pictorial sense of sheep breaking through a fence in order to get to the other side.

The word for 'seize it' (hah-pahdz-zu-sin) means, '*to seize, as wild beast, John 10:12; take away by force, snatch away...to seize on with avidity, eagerly, appropriate, Matt. 11:12*' (Perschbacher, The New Analytical Greek Lexicon, p. 53). This parallels another account that states, '*as forcibly taking someone or something, snatch, seize, take away...as the action of thieves and wild beasts steal, carry off, drag away*' (Friberg,

Analytical Lexicon of the Greek New Testament, p. 75). It is this action that will be the focus of the word, not the negative shade of meaning for it.

When we translate the Greek text back to what Y'shua would have said in Hebrew, we realise at once what Y'shua was alluding to. The Hebrew word for 'is forcibly entered' (the Greek by-aides-zeh-tie), is *poretz* (The Torah, Prophets, Writings and The New Covenant (Jerusalem: The Bible Society of Israel, 1991), p. 14 in the New Covenant) and comes from the Hebrew verb *paratz* (Benjamin Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 634). The primary meaning of the verb *paratz* is, '*to break or tear down; e.g., a wall...to break asunder, to break forth, as a child from the womb, Gen. 38:29; of water, to burst forth...a torrent bursts forth...also to break out, act with violence, Hos 4:2*'. (*Ibid.*)

You may be familiar with one of its nouns. The son that was given to Judah and Tamar, of whom the Messiah would come through, (Gen 38:29; Ruth 4:18-22; Matt 1:3; Luke 3:33) is *Perez* (Peretz in Hebrew). The name means, 'one who breaks out'. One of the titles of Messiah is 'Son of Peretz', the One who would break out, or 'The Breaker'. The noun *peretz* also conveys the meaning of '*a breach of a wall...a breaking forth, Gen. 38:29; of water, a bursting forth...overthrow, calamity*' (Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. 634). Here we see the concept of 'violence' naturally following a wall that is breached (e.g., in a war).

The Hebrew verb and noun carry the connotation of violence, but primarily of 'force' or 'action' in the sense of tearing down or breaking out or of rushing water. Once we place the primary meaning into the sentence, we will understand what Y'shua was presenting to His hearers that day. But first, the Hebrew noun used for 'violent men' is *port-zeem* and is just the plural of the one who tears down. These, too, would be breakers or breachers (of the wall or fence).

The Hebrew word for 'seize it' is *oh-hah-zeem* and means, '*to seize...to take, catch, in hunting, to take or have possession*' (*Ibid.* p. 17). The verb also means, '*to take possession (of the land)*' (i.e. Israel, Josh. 22:9), and it also speaks of an 'eternal possession' (Gen. 17:8; 48:4; Lev. 25:34) (Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann, Authors, Mark E. Biddle, Translator, Theological Lexicon of the Old Testament, vol. 1 (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1997), p. 82). This parallels the possessing of the Kingdom of the Heavens in terms of inheritance instead of 'seizing it'. With these three words, we can translate Matt 11:12 like this: '*And from the days of Yochanan the Immerser until now, the Kingdom of the Heavens is being breached and the breachers are possessing it*'.

Y'shua was alluding to the prophetic passage in Micah about the Messiah being the Shepherd that would breach or tear open a section of the fence or wall of the Sheepfold (the earthly existence) for the Remnant of Israel. The Sheep (believers; breachers) would then continue to break down and break through the fence of the sheep-pen into greener pastures (the Heavenly Kingdom) as they followed their Shepherd. In Micah 2:12-13 we read: "*I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob. I will surely gather the Remnant of Israel. I will put them together like sheep in the fold*" (Bozrah); '*like a flock in the midst of its pasture. They shall make great noise by reason of the multitude of men*' The Breaker (Poretz from the same verb 'to tear down', to breach), goes up before them. *They break out, pass through the gate and go out by it. So their King goes on before them and YHWH is at their head*".

This is what Y'shua was pointing to that day in Matt 11:12. The Kingdom of the Heavens was presenting Itself, first with Yochanan's proclamation and then with Y'shua Himself. Not to disparage the Law and the Prophets (Luke 16:17); but on the contrary, to hold up what they spoke of as future was now unfolding as a present Reality. Y'shua was declaring that He was the Shepherd (the Breaker; the Breacher) who would break down the Fence so that His Sheep (the breakers) could follow Him into their inheritance, the Heavenly realm. A more literal translation of Micah 2:13 reads,

"And the One breaking open will go up before them and they will break open and they will go through the Gate and they will go out through Him and their King will pass through before them, (with) YHWH at their head". (John Kohlenberger the 3rd, Editor, The NIV Interlinear Hebrew-English Old Testament, vol. 4 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Corporation, 1979), p. 533.)

It's not that the Kingdom is suffering violence, but that the Shepherd is tearing open and making a hole in the Heavenly Fence that separates Man from YHWH. He does this with His Death and Resurrection. The ones that are His, follow Him. They hear His Voice calling to them and escape from the Fold by running through the opening in the Fence that He made for them. It becomes widened much the same way that cattle, stampeding through a break in a fence, will trample it down and tear out more and more of it as they go through it.

Such is the 'violence' that *Y'shua* was presenting that day. Unfortunately, when Matthew was translated into Greek 'there was something lost in the translation'. The translators tell us that the Kingdom of Heaven 'suffers violence'. As we have seen, the idea of force is inherent in the Hebrew word. But the Greek lacks the Hebraic Scriptural link to Micah that begins to explain what *Y'shua* said that day and what he meant. Micah then opens up a Scriptural chain for us that will reveal both the Salvation of YHWH and the Resurrection of *Y'shua*.

In ancient Israel, the shepherd would take his sheep and box them into a place for the night that would be safe from bear, wolf and lion. If possible, a little box canyon would be ideal. The canyon walls would afford protection on three sides with its high cliffs, and the shepherd would build a fence of rocks and branches across the opening so no wild animal could come in and no sheep could wander off.

The sheepfold or fold was '*a wall or hedge made of stones which might be used for a defense of a fold'* (Geoffrey W. Bromiley, General Editor, Everett F. Harrison, Roland K. Harrison and William Sanford LaSor, Associate Editors, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. Two (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1979), p. 326).

'*Sheepfolds were of various types. At times they were located in or near a cave (e.g., 1st Sam. 24:3). Some were permanent enclosures with a roof and stone walls, while others were temporary, consisting simply of an open pen with thornbush sides*' (Ibid. p. 464).

When daybreak came, the shepherd would make a small opening in the fence for himself. This passageway would be known as a 'door' or a 'gate' (William Wilson, Wilson's Old Testament Word Studies (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, no publishing date is given), p. 182. The word for 'gate' has as one of its synonyms, the word 'door'. The Hebrew word *petach* is also used (opening). Notice the 'Gate' in Micah where the sheep go through. Once on the other side, he would call to his sheep by name and they would begin to break through to the other side (Edersheim and Micah), enlarging the hole as more and more sheep followed the others and, moving 'shoulder to shoulder', they would naturally take out more and more of the fence so that the hole or breach would be further enlarged.

The Breaker or the 'One breaking open' in the passage is Messiah *Y'shua*, the Good Shepherd (John 10). His Sheep hear His Voice: "*the sheep hear His Voice: and He calls His own sheep by name, and leads them out. When He puts forth all His own, He goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow Him because they know His Voice*". (John 10:3-4 NKJV)

Y'shua is saying that He will lead us out of this world of darkness into His Kingdom. This parallels Micah's Shepherd as 'He goes ahead of them'. The sheep will follow when they hear His Voice. The shepherd spent much of his day '*talking to his sheep until they all recognized his voice*' (Bromiley, The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Vol. Four, p. 464).

'*So close is the connection between shepherd and sheep that to this day Middle Eastern shepherds can divide flocks that have mingled at a well or during the night simply by calling their sheep, who follow their shepherd's voice*' (Leland Ryken, James Wilhoit and Tremper Longman the 3rd, General Editors, Dictionary of Biblical Imagery (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1998), p. 782).

In Hebrew, the word for 'gate' or 'door' and 'opening' are conceptually interchangeable. The concept is an opening or hole in something (a wall, a fence, etc.). The Hebrew word for gate is *shah-are* and means, 'to cleave, divide...an aperture, and then a gate' (Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon, p. 733). It also means 'break, break off, through...gap, opening...tear in two, dissolve...split, divide, tear down...gate'. (Dr. Francis Brown, Dr. S. R. Driver, Dr. Charles A. Briggs, based on the lexicon of Professor Wilhelm Gesenius; Edward Robinson, Translator and E. Rodiger, Editor, The New Brown, Driver, Briggs, Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon (Lafayette, IN: Associated Publishers and Authors, 1978, p. 1044). The root idea is 'to split open' and 'to break through' (Harris, Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament, vol. 2, p. 945).

Y'shua is both the Breaker and the Gate or Door through which the Sheep pass (John 10:7, 9). The Sheep (breakers) go through the Gate (the Heavenly Fence or Wall). Ryken states that, '*Jesus used the imagery of a gate for entrance either into life or into destruction (Mt. 7:13-14)*' (Ryken, Dictionary of Biblical Imagery, p. 322). He further writes that, '*Jesus elaborates the image of the gate ('door' in some older translations) in his Good Shepherd Discourse (John 10:1-17). The good shepherd 'enters by the gate' and leads his sheep out through the gate of the sheepfold, an image of safety. In an extension of the metaphor, Jesus calls himself the gate: 'I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved' (John 10:9 NRSV)*'. (Ibid.) He further

states that, '*In the context this certainly refers to being a door for the sheep and hence the gate or entry-way to salvation*' (Ibid. p. 216).

Keil & Delitzsch tell us that the passage in Micah 2:12-13 spoke of God's future Redemption-Salvation through Messiah, the Second Moses: '*And the Lord will gather together all Jacob, not merely a portion, and yet only the remnant of Israel...the further description rests upon the fact of the leading of Israel out of Egypt, which is to be renewed in all that is essential at a future time. The following clauses also predict the miraculous multiplication of the remnant of Israel* (see Hos. 2:1, 2; Jer 31:10), as experienced by the people in the olden time under the oppression of Egypt (Ex. 1:12). *The comparison to the flock of Bozrah presupposes that Bozrah's wealth in flocks was well known...The comparison which follows, 'like a flock in the midst of its pasture', belongs to the last verse, and refers to the multiplication, and to the noise made by a densely packed and numerous flock. The same tumult will be made by the assembled Israelites on account of the multitude of men'* (Bozrah is taken by Keil to be a proper noun, the name of a place that boasted of many sheep. It can also be taken to be a common noun meaning a sheep-pen) (Keil, Commentary On The Old Testament, vol. 10, Minor Prophets, p. 303).

'In v. 13 the redemption of Israel out of exile is depicted under the figure of liberation from captivity. Was Egypt a slave-house (ch. 6:4; cf. Ex. 20:2); so is exile a prison with walls and gates, which must be broken through. Ha-Poretz, the breaker through, who goes before them, is not Jehovah, but, as the counterpart of Moses the leader of Israel out of Egypt, the captain appointed by God for His people, answering to the head which they are said to choose for themselves in Hos. 2:2, a second Moses, viz., Zerubbabel, and in the highest sense, Christ, who opens the prison-doors and redeems the captives of Zion...Led by him, they break through the walls, and march through the gate, and go out through it out of that prison...Their King Jehovah goes before them at their head...Just as Jehovah went before Israel as the angel of the Lord in the pillar of cloud and fire at the exodus from Egypt (Ex. 13:21), so at the future redemption of the people of God will Jehovah go before them as King, and lead the procession (see Isaiah 52:12)' (Ibid. p. 304).

Even though Keil and Delitzsch fail to understand the connection of Micah 2:13 to Matt 11:12, they do see the imagery of the gate or walls being broken through by the 'Breaker' (Messiah). This leads us to understand that the Breaker is breaking down walls that, like Moses, would bring Israel to final redemption. The passage in Micah relates to the End of Time ('I will surely assemble all of you, Jacob'.) That is exactly what Y'shua was talking about that day in Matt 11:12 – the Kingdom of the Heavens being broken open (by Him the Breaker) and those who would inherit it as pressing in or breaking in. This would be all believers (the breakers or the breach makers) who would follow Him. In this they would be like Y'shua, making the breach wider for others after them.

As the Breaker makes a hole in the Heavenly Fence, the Sheep of YHWH follow the Good Shepherd. This leads us to another Scripture link in the chain that parallels what Y'shua is speaking of in Matthew, according to Micah: His Death and Resurrection is the Power that breaches the Heavens: "*Lift up your heads, Oh Gates and be lifted up, Oh ancient Doors that the King of Glory may come in! Who is the King of Glory? YHWH strong and mighty. YHWH mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, Oh Gates and lift them up, Oh ancient Doors that the King of Glory may come in! Who is this King of glory? YHWH, King of the Heavenly Armies; He is the King of Glory. Selah*". (Psalm 24:7-10)

Some say that the gates and doors were those of the Temple. There are two things wrong with this assessment. One, it speaks of ancient Doors. At the time of the writing of Psalm 24, if the Temple was in existence, the doors could hardly be called ancient. Which leads us into the next problem – that of assuming that the gates and doors of the Temple were in existence when the Psalm was written. If King David wrote this (and it's most likely he did as the beginning of the Psalm records), the Temple hadn't been built yet. Therefore, it would be impossible for the ancient doors and gates of the Psalm to be referring to a Temple that didn't exist. (The Temple wouldn't be built until after David's death. His son, King Solomon would build it.)

The ancient Gates or Doors in this Psalm were what separated YHWH from Man – the firmament of the Heavens. David is speaking about the Ancient Doors opening for Messiah upon His Resurrection and return to the Heavens. On the other side of this firmament is the Heavenly Temple, where first we see the Altar for Sacrifice of the Lamb of YHWH. All who desire to pass through the breach that the Breaker makes, must first apply the Blood of the Sacrifice of the Lamb while they are upon the Earth.

Keil, while stating that the doors are those of the (Earthly) Temple, also declares that these are the Doors of Eternity (Ibid. p. 213). That is because that's what the Hebrew states (v. 7, *pit-hay olam*). In Keil's understanding, YHWH was entering the Temple in Jerusalem. In fact, the Psalm depicts Y'shua coming to the firmament that separated Man from YHWH – a firmament that no man could penetrate or go through. But

Y'shua, because of His Blood, is now 'seen' rising and the ancient Doors must give way to Him. The Eternal Doors must let Him into the Heavenly abode, for He is the King of Glory – His Death proves it and His Resurrection confirms it. These Doors wouldn't open for anyone else.

Y'shua makes a Way for us to follow Him into the Heavenly realm where not only the Heavenly Temple of YHWH is, but also the Heavenly Jerusalem (Rev 3:12; 7:15; 11:1, 19; 14:15; 15:5, 8; 21:2, 10, 22). As for those who want to follow us who are not covered by His Blood, the same fate awaits them that awaited Pharaoh's Army that followed Moses and the Sons of Israel into the Red Sea. For the Red Sea was also 'breached' by the Power behind the Staff of Moses. This is a picture of the Heavenly 'cleaving asunder'.

Y'shua came from above (John 8:23); and when He died and rose again, made a Breach in the Heavenly Fence, Gate or Door. In making this Breach (*Peretz*) in the Heavens, He stands on the other side and calls to His lambs and sheep on the Earth. We hear His Voice and seek to follow Him into our inheritance. Of course at this point, the Greek translations and commentaries are not able to present this because they have failed to understand the Hebraic connection between the Matthew 11, Micah 2 and Psalm 24. They are deeply engrossed in trying to figure out if the Greek word for violence is passive or middle, and just who the violent people were that either came against or into the Kingdom.

In the beginning of Psalm 24, it speaks of the Earth being established upon the Waters. This will help us to further link the 'Heavenly Breach' to the Creation firmament. The preceding six verses of the Psalm read:

"The Earth is YHWH's and all it contains, The world and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers. Who may ascend into the Mountain of YHWH? And who may stand in His holy place? He who has clean hands and a pure heart, who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from YHWH and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of those who seek Him who seek Your Face, even Jacob. Selah". (Psalm 24:1-6)

At first glance, the Earth being established upon the seas and rivers seems to make sense physically. But immediately we see that it must mean more than just the physical with its reference to ascending to the Mountain of YHWH (being in Heaven; although one can also interpret it to mean Mt. Zion or Mt. Moriah). Those who ascend it will receive Salvation – the Salvation that YHWH has promised to the Sons of Jacob.

The seas and the rivers are a direct reference back to the first chapter of Genesis, where the physical Heavens and the Earth were made to exist in the lower Waters. YHWH dwelt in the upper Waters. A firmament (or expanse, as some Bibles call it) separated them.

The Hebrew for seas in the Psalm above is *yam* and should be translated as waters. (Benjamin Davidson, The Analytical Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1979), p. 483.) The word for rivers is *nih-hah-rote* and is translated properly. It can mean, '*current, stream...river*' (Ibid. p. 538). The sentence is saying basically the same thing over again but in a different way, substituting rivers for waters. Saying the same thing but in a different way is very common in Hebrew. It's called parallelism. 'Waters' and 'rivers' parallel one another. That the verse in question refers to Creation is evident from vv. 1-2 where YHWH is said to own the Heavens and the Earth, establishing it upon the Waters (Keil, Commentary On The Old Testament, vol. 5, Psalms, p. 211).

How can we be in the Presence of El Shaddai when there is nothing that we can do to actually get there, humanly speaking? *Y'shua* is speaking about this in Matt 11:12. He is not talking about Zealots and Herod's henchmen. He is speaking of Eternal matters and how YHWH is going to make a way for us to get into the Kingdom of the Heaven.

Y'shua is the Shepherd who dislodges the rocks and branches for the sheep (Micah 2:12-13) (the rocks and branches being the Heavenly Door or Gate keeping all Mankind out); and He Himself goes before His Flock, having broken through – and on the other side He calls to those that are His. His Sheep hear His Voice and proceed (as sheep do) through the opening made by the Shepherd to be on the side where He is. This Breach that is made is seen now to be made in the very expanse (KJV: firmament) that separates YHWH from Man in Creation – even before the Fall. For in Creation, Adam and Eve did not live where YHWH lived: "*Then God said, 'Let there be an expanse in the midst of the Waters and let it separate the waters from the Waters. God made the expanse, and separated the waters which were below the expanse from the Waters which were above the expanse; and it was so. God called the expanse Heaven. And there was evening and there was morning, a second day. Then God said, 'Let the waters below the Heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear'; and it was so. God called the dry land Earth and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good".* (Gen 1:6-10)

All the words for 'waters' and 'seas' are *my-yim* the same word found for 'seas' in the Creation account of Psalm 24:2. The firmament separated Man from YHWH. The only One who could do it has breached it. Words can only begin to express the depth of awe, thanksgiving and gratitude that I have for the Death and Resurrection of the Son of Man, the Son of YHWH. He has made a way for us to live eternally with YHWH. May we all follow Him through the Breach into the Kingdom of the Heaven.

Micah 2:12-13 is the background for properly understanding what *Y'shua* was teaching that day when He spoke of the Kingdom. Only by knowing the entire Bible and Hebrew can one hope to understand passages in the New Covenant like Matt 11:12. Once the enigma is unlocked, the Scriptures open to a beautifully linked chain of understanding.

In summary

Y'shua was the Breaker or *Poretz*, and he came through the opening that he made. Verse 13 is a Hebraic parallelism – stating the same thing twice, but in different ways. The first part of verse 13 has the 'Breach-maker' going out of the sheepfold before the sheep. The second part has the King (*Y'shua*) passing before them, saying that it is the Lord (*Y'shua*). We know, too, that '*Poretz*' or Breach-maker is an ancient biblical name for King Messiah. Also, no one entered the Kingdom of *Y'shua* till after His Death and Resurrection. *Y'shua* Himself says that the *Torah* and the Prophets were proclaimed till *Yochanan*; but that with *Yochanan*, the Kingdom was now being proclaimed and many were seeking to find out more about it or to be part of it. *Yochanan*'s role was not to make the opening in the Heavenly Fence but to point the Jewish people to the One who would. As such, *Yochanan* came in the Spirit of Elijah to prepare the way for the King of Israel, not to make the breach in the Heavenly Barrier. *Yochanan* was the Messenger sent to prepare the Way for *Y'shua* (Isaiah 40:3, Mal 4:5-6); but *Yochanan* was not the *Poretz*, the Breaker. *Y'shua* Himself says that the least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than *Yochanan*, so *Yochanan* cannot be seen as being included in this conceptual picture. *Yochanan* dies, but no one enters the Kingdom until *Y'shua*'s Death and Resurrection. The Shepherd (*Poretz*-Breaker) has made the way for His Flock.

I am indebted to Avram Yehoshua for his presentation and for David Bivin of the link between Micah 2:13 and Matt 11:12.

Other violence in the heavenlies

The concept of violence surrounding YHWH's attempts to set up His kingdom on earth is found in the mystical writings of a Hebrew commentary called the *Zohar*. The *Zohar* section below also makes a connection between this turbulence of the Kingdom and the feast of *Rosh Hashana* (Feast of Trumpets) with atonement following on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).

This parallels Revelation's period of great tribulation that befalls the earth (where *Rosh Hashana* is YHWH's pattern for the rapture of the Body of Believers in *Y'shua*) which activates the violence in the heavenlies. This is when the Believers travel through satan's domain (the Prince of the power of the air – Eph 2:2) to reach YHWH's heaven. This war possibly starts in the beginning of the seven years of tribulation during the rapture and reaches its climax at the midpoint (Revelation chapter 12). During this period, YHWH executes judgment on the earth.

Yom Kippur follows, and this is when YHWH's people will appear before His throne for their rewards and atonement is made; while "blood" (judgments in Revelation 8) is poured out onto the earth – in the same sense as the blood of the atonement sacrifices are poured out at the base of the brazen altar against the earth. (For a comprehensive study on "YHWH's plan for the ages in the 7 feasts of Leviticus," please see the product list at the end of the exegesis). Let's now look at the Hebrew commentary called the *Zohar*.

Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 174a: "*With Benjamin, the Shekinah was equipped with the full twelve tribes, and with him the kingdom of heaven began to be made manifest on earth. Now the beginning of any manifestation is brought about with strain, and involves a doom of death before it can become established. Here, when the Shekinah was about to assume her rightful place and to take over the house, the doom fell upon Rachel. Similarly, when the kingdom was about to be made manifest on earth, it commenced with a judgement, and the kingdom was not established in its place until a doom had fallen upon Saul, in accordance with his deserts; and only then was it established. It is a general rule that beginnings are rough, whereas the subsequent course is smooth. Thus, on New Year's day (Rosh-Hashana) the year opens with severity, as the whole world passes under judgement, each individual according to his deeds, but soon after comes relief and forgiveness and atonement*".

11:13 For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John

"For all the prophets and the law prophesied until John".

The Greek text has the word "until" (John). However, the *Shem Tobe Hebrew book of Matthew* has the term "concerning" (John). The Hebrew spelling of "concerning" is AYIN LAMED. The term "until" would be spelled AYIN-DALET.

Since Y'shua has just quoted from the prophets about *Yochanan*, it is clear that the prophets prophesied CONCERNING John. It would therefore appear that a translator misread the text. This is quite possible, as the two letters are very similar. If the top of a LAMED was not clear (i.e., flaked off of the manuscript), it could easily be mistaken for a DALET.

11:14-18 And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come

"(14) And if ye will receive it, this is Elias, which was for to come. (15) He that hath ears to hear, let him hear. (16) But whereunto shall I liken this generation? It is like unto children sitting in the markets, and calling unto their fellows, (17) And saying, We have piped unto you, and ye have not danced; we have mourned unto you, and ye have not lamented. (18) For John came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, He hath a devil".

The key part to these verses are the first words. *If ye will receive it...* What is the "it" in this statement? The topic has not changed - "it" is the Kingdom. What Y'shua is saying here is that IF they, as His people, accepted Him and the Kingdom offer then John would play the role foretold of Elijah.

This remains a difficult text, however. John clearly says that he is not Elijah (John 1:21), yet Y'shua says that he is. On the surface – a contradiction.

The first hint for the answer is found in Luke's account, where we are told John comes in the "spirit and power" of Elijah: "*And he shall go before him in the spirit and power of Elias, to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord*". (Luke 1:17)

The idea of someone coming "*in the spirit*" of another is not foreign to Judaism. The prophet Elias asked for a "double helping" of Elijah's spirit. Neither is the idea of Elijah playing dual roles alien to Jewish writings. In the following citations (*The Messiah Texts*. Raphael Patai, 1979, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, p. 134), we see Elijah mysteriously hiding himself in order to fulfill an early and later role:

Midrash Zuta, shir haShirim 2:8: "*The voice of my beloved, behold it cometh (Songs 2:8). These are the voices which will come in the future before the Messiah... For the door (of Redemption) will not be opened completely at once, but Elijah will come to one city and remain hidden to another, and will speak to one man and remain hidden to his neighbor...*"

Seder 'Olam Rabba, ch. 17: "*In the second year of (King) Ahazia, Elijah was hidden, and he will not be seen again until King Messiah comes. And then he will be seen but will be hidden a second time, and seen again only when Gog and Magog come*".

This second section (above) is especially interesting, as Elijah comes with Messiah the first time and returns a second time at "Gog and Magog". Yet we know that "Gog and Magog" is directly associated with Messiah's second coming; hence, He must come twice as well:

Talmud, Mas. Avodah Zarah 3b: "...but when the battle of Gog-Magog will come about they will be asked, 'For what purpose have you come?' and they will reply: 'Against God and His Messiah'"

Soncino Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2,Page 57b: ""Thy right hand, O Lord, glorified in power", refers to this time, to this world; the words "Thy right hand will dash the enemy" to the time of the Messiah; "In the fullness of thy majesty thou wilt overthrow thine opponents" to the time of Gog and Magog;"

(See also: Talmud; Berachoth 10a, Shabbat 118a; Sanhedrin 94a; Leviticus Rabbah 30:5, Song of Songs Rabbah 4:20)

11:19 But wisdom is justified of her children

"*The Son of man came eating and drinking, and they say, Behold a man gluttonous, and a winebibber, a friend of publicans and sinners. But wisdom is justified of her children*".

This peculiar verse, "wedged in" if it were in the midst of Y'shua's argument, is very mystical in its meaning. It suggests that Y'shua is equating Himself with "wisdom" and his deeds as "her children".

11:20-24 Then began he to upbraid the cities

"(20) *Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:* (21) *Woe unto thee, Chorazin! woe unto thee, Bethsaida! for if the mighty works, which were done in you, had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes.* (22) *But I say unto you, It shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the day of judgment, than for you.* (23) *And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted unto heaven, shalt be brought down to hell: for if the mighty works, which have been done in thee, had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day.* (24) *But I say unto you, That it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the day of judgment, than for thee".*

Y'shua's miracles are the Father's testimony that Y'shua is the Messiah. The people are not condemning Y'shua's works. Rather, they reject the authority by which He did them and the witness that His miracles attest to. The result of all this is that they are guilty of blasphemy against Elohim's Holy Spirit as He later tells them (in the next chapter.)

The Evangelical Triangle

Y'shua spent most of his ministry in what has been called "The Evangelical Triangle". (*With Jesus Through The Galilee According to the Fifth Gospel*, Bargil Pixner, Corazin Publishers, Israel, 1992.) This is a small geographical area containing the area between the biblical cities of Capernaum, Korazin and Bethsaida.

We know from Scripture that Y'shua chose to make his home in Capernaum, on the northwest shores of the Sea of Galilee. He seems to have made this major change in ministry location in order to fulfill Isaiah 9:1, which says: "*Nevertheless, there will be no more gloom for those who were in distress. In the past he humbled the land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, but in the future he will honor Galilee of the Gentiles, by the way of the sea, along the Jordan – The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned".*

It is amazing how accurately Y'shua fulfilled this prophecy, although it was written over seven hundred years before his coming. Of course, Y'shua was and is that "great light" that Isaiah speaks of. Also, the roadway Isaiah mentions called the "Way of the Sea" actually ran through Capernaum. It was an international highway in Y'shua's time. In fact, a Roman mile marker designating this route can still be seen today in Capernaum's ruins.

The prophet also mentions two Jewish tribal lands, Zebulun and Naphtali. It is of note that, while Nazareth was located in the tribal area of Zebulun, the area of Capernaum fell within the ancient tribal boundaries of Naphtali. Y'shua exactly fulfilled the prophet's words by spending his boyhood in Zebulun and much of his ministry in Naphtali. It is also clear in Scripture that Y'shua ministered along the Jordan River, which the prophet also mentions. He traveled back and forth across the river, often going into the area of Gaulinitis – the domain of King Herod Philip.

Focus of Y'shua's activity

Y'shua spent a very large percentage of his time in the Galilee, mostly around the Sea. In Matt 11:20, we read: "*Then began he to upbraid the cities wherein most of his mighty works were done, because they repented not:*" In the verses immediately following this reference, we learn that the three cities where Y'shua did most of his miracle-working were Korazin, Bethsaida, and Capernaum.

It was in these three cities that Y'shua apparently concentrated his ministry. *The Nelson's Illustrated Bible Dictionary* estimates that eighteen of the thirty-three recorded miracles of Y'shua were performed in the small area around the Sea. It also estimates that twenty-five of thirty-three were performed in the general Galilee area.

It is also an important fact that most of his disciples were from the area. Nelson states that all of the twelve (with the exception of Judas) came from the area. However, one ancient document alluded to by early writers as the *Gospel of the Ebionites*, even states that Judas was from the Galilee. This seems to verify what the New Covenant says in Acts 1:11 and 2:7, where the disciples were addressed as "men of Galilee" and "Galileans".

Was something happening in Galilee?

We must ask why Y'shua chose all his disciples from the Galilee. There is evidence that something of a spiritual nature was happening there. For instance, *Yochanan* the Immerser seems to have had a great influence upon certain of the disciples. There are traditions that place *Yochanan* at the southern end of the Sea. He may have even ministered at the northern end, where the Jordan empties into the sea.

The Bible does say in Luke 3:3 that John, "...*went into all the region around the Jordan, preaching...*" Certainly, *Yochanan* must have been close enough for Andrew (Peter's brother) to become his disciple (John 1:40). We know from this same passage that yet another disciple of *Yochanan* also became Y'shua's disciple. It is likely that the other disciple was *Yochanan* the Beloved. If it was *Yochanan* the Immerser's ministry to prepare the way of the Lord, how could he have better accomplished this than by working with Y'shua's future disciples.

In John's Gospel, we get a certain feeling of excitement; as though these future disciples were seriously looking for the Messiah. In John 1:41, Andrew exclaims, "*We have found the Messiah...*" Hardly does anyone get this excited unless that person is on a search!

Perhaps many of the future disciples had heard *Yochanan* the Immerser speak. *Yochanan* had spoken with great enthusiasm about a Messiah who was soon to make his appearance. Let us use our imaginations a bit at this point. Let us assume that one day while *Yochanan* was preaching, he might have said something like this: "One is coming whose shoelaces I am unworthy to unloose...and...and...there he is! It...it is Y'shua from Nazareth!" We can imagine how electrifying that news would have been, and how rapidly it would have traveled around the tiny Sea of Galilee. This, if it were the case, may help us understand how men could later leave their nets and successful family businesses simply at the beckoning of a stranger.

Should this scenario be true, it would not be at all surprising. In Jer 29:13 we read: "*You will seek me and find me when you seek me with all your heart*". We notice in the Bible that YHWH normally reveals himself to those who are in some way seeking him or longing for him. That is YHWH's way. Why should it be any different with Y'shua's revelation to the twelve disciples?

Now to the matter of Y'shua choosing a small area for his ministry. We know in the natural world that sunlight is a wonderful thing. It cheers our hearts and warms us. We also know that it will not start a fire unless it is focused with a magnifying glass. Perhaps this was the plan of Y'shua in focusing his ministry in such a tiny area and on such a small and related band.

The Sea of Galilee area offered some other benefits. It was a relaxed, beautiful and fruitful area. The historian, Josephus, in describing it some years later says: "...*their soil is universally rich and fruitful, and full of the plantations of trees of all sorts...accordingly, it is all cultivated by its inhabitants, and no part of it lies idle*" (Wars, III, 3,2). While Jerusalem was a place of confrontation, the Galilee was more suited for relaxation, teaching and disciple-making. It was also a fairly safe area for Y'shua to establish himself. As far as we can tell, Y'shua never willingly spent a night within the city of Jerusalem. It was simply too dangerous.

Ministry to the Jews

There were many Gentiles in the area of the Sea of Galilee. We even see the area referred to as "*Galilee of the Gentiles*" in Isaiah 9:1. Virtually the whole Eastern shore of the Sea was part of the Gentile area known as the Decapolis. Y'shua seldom ventured there, although crowds from that area did follow after him. Directly across the sea from Decapolis was situated the new city of Tiberias on the western shore. It was named after Caesar and it was a Gentile city.

Tiberias was also thoughtlessly built over a cemetery, making it unclean for devout Jews. Although it was one of the two leading cities of the Galilee in New Covenant times, we have no record in Scripture that Y'shua or his disciples ever visited there.

The area of Jewish settlement around the lake was on the northern and northwestern shores - precisely the cities of Capernaum, Korazin and Bethsaida. We do know that Bethsaida was a fishing village and that it was quite close to the mouth of the Jordan. It is noteworthy that Capernaum, Bethsaida and Korazin have ancient Jewish archaeological remains. Capernaum and Korazin have ancient synagogues; and at Korazin, a pool for Jewish ritual washing (*mikveh*) can still be seen.

The simple truth is that Y'shua focused his ministry on the Jewish people. This is in full accordance with Matt 10:5-6: "*These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: 'Do not go among the Gentiles or enter any town of the Samaritans. Go rather to the lost sheep of Israel'*". We see this principle borne out

much later in the ministry of Paul. Wherever he went to preach, he first sought out the Jewish synagogue. His rule is expressed for us in Rom 1:16: "*I am not ashamed of the gospel, because it is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile*".

Post-resurrection in the Galilee

It is interesting that Y'shua's first instructions to his disciples after his resurrection were that they should meet Him in the Galilee (Matt 28:7,10). It was certainly in the Galilee where Y'shua reinstated Peter. It was also there that Y'shua gave the Great Commission of Matt 28:16. We might even surmise that there were more post-resurrection activities in Galilee than around Jerusalem; and that many of the forty days between his resurrection and ascension were spent in the Galilee. It is likely that Y'shua took his disciples back to that tiny triangle in the Galilee to strengthen them, to draw them closer, and to finish the spiritual side of their training.

Today the beautiful Sea of Galilee area has retained its pristine beauty and must still appear much as it did in Y'shua's time. It is a placid area still displaying many of the teaching tools that Y'shua used; such as the farmers, fishermen, flowers, and cities positioned attractively upon their hills. Of all the places in Israel, including holy Jerusalem, the Sea of Galilee seems to exert the strongest pull upon believing hearts today.

It is not unusual for Y'shua to speak and reveal himself in some way to modern pilgrims who visit the area. It is almost as if Y'shua is still making disciples around the lake and saying, "*Follow me...Do you love me more than these...I have many things to tell you...*"

11:25-28 Thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent

"(25) At that time Jesus answered and said, I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou hast hid these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes. (26) Even so, Father: for so it seemed good in thy sight. (27) All things are delivered unto me of my Father: and no man knoweth the Son, but the Father; neither knoweth any man the Father, save the Son, and he to whomsoever the Son will reveal him. (28) Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest". Talmud, Baba Batra 12a: "Prophecy has been taken from the wise and given to the babes".

11:29-30 Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me

"(29) Take my yoke upon you, and learn of me; for I am meek and lowly in heart: and ye shall find rest unto your souls. (30) For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light".

As mentioned already – Y'shua's "yoke" and the Father's "yoke" are not different. Nor is Y'shua telling them to "learn of Him" in any place they didn't know where to look. The yoke and the place to learn of Him are the same – the *Torah*. Unfortunately, many people today view the idea of the "yoke of the Law" (yoke of the *Torah*) as some kind of "bondage". This is unfortunate, and is the result of almost two thousand years of non-Jewish understanding of the Bible, YHWH, Messiah and what "faith" is.

SECTION IV MESSIAH'S TEACHINGS

MATTHEW 12:1-50

TEXT:

- (1) *"At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat.*
- (2) *But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day.*
- (3) *But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him;*
- (4) *How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests?*
- (5) *Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?*
- (6) *But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple.*

- (7) But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless.
- (8) For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day.
- (9) And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue:
- (10) And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him.
- (11) And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out?
- (12) How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days.
- (13) Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other.
- (14) Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him.
- (15) But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all;
- (16) And charged them that they should not make him known:
- (17) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,
- (18) Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles.
- (19) He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets.
- (20) A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory.
- (21) And in his name shall the Gentiles trust".
- (22) Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw.
- (23) And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David?
- (24) But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils.
- (25) And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand:
- (26) And if Satan cast out Satan, he is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand?
- (27) And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges.
- (28) But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you.
- (29) Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house.
- (30) He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.
- (31) Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men.
- (32) And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come.
- (33) Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit.
- (34) O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.
- (35) A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things.
- (36) But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment.
- (37) For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned.
- (38) Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.
- (39) But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:
- (40) For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.
- (41) The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.
- (42) The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here.
- (43) When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.

- (44) Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.
- (45) Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first. Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation.
- (46) While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.
- (47) Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.
- (48) But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren,
- (49) And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!
- (50) For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother".

12:1-2 Thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath...

"(1) At that time Jesus went on the sabbath day through the corn; and his disciples were an hungred, and began to pluck the ears of corn, and to eat. (2) But when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto him, Behold, thy disciples do that which is not lawful to do upon the sabbath day"

One of the concepts lost upon the modern reader of the Bible (unfamiliar with the Jewishness of the Scriptures), is that Y'shua and the Pharisees were not arguing from vastly different backgrounds. Y'shua himself taught as a Pharisee and His dialogue with these religious leaders can very well be considered a "family argument". Had Y'shua been coming from some new non-Pharisaical viewpoint, the Pharisees would have had little concern for what He was saying. However, He was arguing within the family and beginning to convince people that many of the Pharisees were both hypocritical and wrong in their opinion about him. (See Matt 12:23 in the next section.)

The section from 12:1-12:8 has to do with an accusation made by certain legalistic Pharisees regarding some of Y'shua's disciples, picking and eating grain in a field during the Sabbath. The verses shown above are the key ones in this passage. The *Torah* does prohibit "work" on *Shabbat*, and the oral Law of the time would support the Pharisees claim. (Positive Law 154: Exod 23:12 On resting on the Shabbat.)

"Six days thou shalt do thy work, and on the seventh day thou shalt rest: that thine ox and thine ass may rest, and the son of thy handmaid, and the stranger, may be refreshed". (Exod 23:12)

Y'shua responds to this in a fourfold manner:
 He makes comparison to two accounts from Scripture
 He tells them that He is greater than the Temple
 He reminds about what He told them to learn earlier (Matt 9:13)
 He says that He is Lord of the sabbath day

12:3-5 Have ye not read what David did... have ye not read in the Law

"(3) But he said unto them, Have ye not read what David did, when he was an hungred, and they that were with him; (4) How he entered into the house of God, and did eat the shewbread, which was not lawful for him to eat, neither for them which were with him, but only for the priests? (5) Or have ye not read in the law, how that on the sabbath days the priests in the temple profane the sabbath, and are blameless?"

The first Scripture Y'shua quotes is of David eating of the "show bread" (1 Sam 21:6), also known as the "Bread of the Presence" or the "Bread of the Face" – something that was reserved for the priests to eat, followed by how the *Torah* allows for priests to do certain type of work on the Sabbath as part of their Temple service (Lev 24:5-9). His point in quoting these is to establish the principle that within the framework of the Torah is a hierarchy of principles.

"So the priest gave him hallowed bread: for there was no bread there but the shewbread, that was taken from before the LORD, to put hot bread in the day when it was taken away". (1Sam 21:6)
 (5) "And thou shalt take fine flour, and bake twelve cakes thereof: two tenth deals shall be in one cake.
 (6) And thou shalt set them in two rows, six on a row, upon the pure table before the LORD.
 (7) And thou shalt put pure frankincense upon each row, that it may be on the bread for a memorial, even an offering made by fire unto the LORD.
 (8) Every sabbath he shall set it in order before the LORD continually, being taken from the children of Israel by an everlasting covenant.

(9) *And it shall be Aaron's and his sons'; and they shall eat it in the holy place: for it is most holy unto him of the offerings of the LORD made by fire by a perpetual statute".* (Lev 24:5-9)

The Pharisees recognised this fact, as in the *Talmud* makes it clear that both the commands of circumcision and Temple sacrificial service take precedence over the command not to do work on the Sabbath:

Talmud - Mas. Shabbath 132b: "*whilst the sacrificial service supersedes the Sabbath, yet circumcision supersedes it: then the Sabbath, which is superseded by the sacrificial service, surely circumcision supersedes it*".

12:6 In this place is one greater than the temple

"*But I say unto you, That in this place is one greater than the temple*".

Having reminded these legalistic Pharisees of the recognised oral *Torah*, He now announced that He is greater than the Temple (therefore the same hierarchy of principles should apply to Him and His disciples). Y'shua was the Temple of Elohim while on earth.

Once again, John's Gospel makes the connection for us:

"*Jesus answered and said unto them, Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up. Then said the Jews, Forty and six years was this temple in building, and wilt thou rear it up in three days? But he spake of the temple of his body*". (John 2:19-21)

Y'shua is alluding to what the prophet Isaiah spoke about the relationship between YHWH and His Temple:

"*Thus saith the LORD, The heaven is my throne, and the earth is my footstool: where is the house that ye build unto me? and where is the place of my rest?*" (Isaiah 66:1)

The same passage in Isaiah also says that YHWH is looking for in man. These words mirror those of Hos 6:6, which Y'shua quotes in verse 7 below:

"*For all those things hath mine hand made, and all those things have been, saith the LORD: but to this man will I look, even to him that is poor and of a contrite spirit, and trembleth at my word*". (Isaiah 66:2)

12:7 But if ye had known what this meaneth...

"*But if ye had known what this meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, ye would not have condemned the guiltless*".

Y'shua repeats his quote from Hosea 6:5 what He said earlier in Matt 9:13. If these legalistic Pharisees had truly been seeking YHWH's righteousness and not their own, they would have recognised Him as the Messiah. They made themselves "blind" through their legalistic observance of the commands of YHWH, seeking their own righteousness over His (i.e., Rom 10:3).

(5) "*Therefore have I hewed them by the prophets; I have slain them by the words of my mouth: and thy judgments are as the light that goeth forth*.

(6) "*For I desired mercy, and not sacrifice; and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings*". (Hos 6:5-6)

"*But go ye and learn what that meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance*". (Mat 9:13)

If they had recognised Him as Messiah, then by both the written and oral *Torah* they would have no cause to be critical of any work being done by those serving the One who is greater than the Temple.

12:8 For the Son of man is Lord even of the Sabbath day

"*For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day*".

Just as the priority was not to fast during Y'shua's presence on earth (Matt 9:14-17); so, too, does this affect other priorities of the *Torah* (as mentioned above). The Messiah's presence on earth was not to invalidate any of *Torah* (Matt 5:17-21). Any "messiah" that declared an end to *Torah* would be a false one.

Rather, according to the correct Hebrew understanding of the Scriptures (at that time and now), Messiah is to come and explain the deeper meanings of the *Torah*. Because of this better understanding He gives, when we study and perform the commands of the *Torah* (Rom 2:13, James 1:22), we can grow in our relationship with YHWH and enjoy life more abundantly (John 10:10).

The *Torah* was given to man for a variety of reasons, all of which have to do with the principle of *tikkun*, ("spiritual repair"). *Torah* does this by showing us what the meaning of life is, namely:

To be conformed to the image of YHWH

To grow in intimacy in our relationship with Him

Messiah fulfills the same role, as He is the goal of the *Torah* (Rom 10:4, when properly translated). Isaiah writes that by His suffering and death, Messiah brings spiritual healing (*tikkun*) between us and YHWH:

(5) "But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed.

(6) All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the LORD hath laid on him the iniquity of us all". (Isaiah 53:5-6)

The above verse has been misused to by some as having something to do with physical healing. It does not in Isaiah's context, nor when Peter cites the verse and reiterates that this healing has to do with our being made righteous:

(24) "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live unto righteousness: by whose stripes ye were healed.

(25) For ye were as sheep going astray; but are now returned unto the Shepherd and Bishop of your souls". (1 Pet 2: 24-25)

12:9-17 And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days?

"(9) And when he was departed thence, he went into their synagogue: (10) And, behold, there was a man which had his hand withered. And they asked him, saying, Is it lawful to heal on the sabbath days? that they might accuse him. (11) And he said unto them, What man shall there be among you, that shall have one sheep, and if it fall into a pit on the sabbath day, will he not lay hold on it, and lift it out? (12) How much then is a man better than a sheep? Wherefore it is lawful to do well on the sabbath days. (13) Then saith he to the man, Stretch forth thine hand. And he stretched it forth; and it was restored whole, like as the other. (14) Then the Pharisees went out, and held a council against him, how they might destroy him. (15) But when Jesus knew it, he withdrew himself from thence: and great multitudes followed him, and he healed them all; (16) And charged them that they should not make him known: (17) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias the prophet, saying,"

Here is an example of where the true meaning of Sabbath had been lost and the prioritisation of YHWH's commandments placed out of order. The legalistic Pharisees had developed a teaching that healing on the Sabbath was "work" and therefore not allowed. Y'shua continues to teach that the purpose of the Sabbath is that of *tikkun*. Refusing to do good (to heal someone in this case) would not be doing anything to advance the Kingdom of YHWH. For instance, circumcision is an important part of *tikkun* and is commanded to be done on the eighth day; whether or not this falls on a Sabbath.

The Law makes it clear that the Sabbath Day is to be kept holy and that on it no work is to be done. That is a great principle. But these Jewish legalists had a passion for definition. So they asked: What is work? All kinds of things were classified as work. For instance, to carry a burden on the Sabbath Day is to work. But next a burden has to be defined. So the Scribal Law states that a burden is 'food equal in weight to a dried fig, enough wine for mixing in a goblet, milk enough for one swallow, honey enough to put upon a wound, oil enough to anoint a small member, water enough to moisten an eye-salve, paper enough to write a customs house notice upon, ink enough to write two letters of the alphabet, reed enough to make a pen'—and so on, endlessly.

So they spent endless hours arguing whether a man could or could not lift a lamp from one place to another on the Sabbath, whether a tailor committed a sin if he went out with a needle in his robe, whether a woman might wear a brooch or false hair, even if a man might go out on the Sabbath with artificial teeth or an artificial limb or if a man might lift his child on the Sabbath Day. These things to them were the essence of religion. Their religion has eventually become a legalistic system of petty rules and regulations.

Y'shua persistently and publicly chose to violate these legalistic traditions and to preach against them (Mark 7:1-13). As a result of His refusal to comply with scribal regulations and traditions, Y'shua earned the reputation by the legalistic Pharisees of one who had no regard for the Law. In fact, He was accused of setting aside the Law in deference to His own (new) teachings. The scribes and Pharisees, who were regarded (at least among their own ranks) as the guardians of the Law, were condemned by Y'shua as hypocrites (Matt 6:1-2, 5, 16; 15:1-9; and chapter 23). It was necessary for Y'shua to put the Law in the right perspective...

(See questions and answers at the end of chapter 12)

12:18-19 Behold My Servant...

"(18) Behold my servant, whom I have chosen; my beloved, in whom my soul is well pleased: I will put my spirit upon him, and he shall shew judgment to the Gentiles. (19) He shall not strive, nor cry; neither shall any man hear his voice in the streets".

The verses from 18 to 21 are a quotation from Isaiah. Matthew mentions this in relation to Y'shua's request for the people He healed (in verse 15) not to broadcast to everyone what He was doing. As the people of the day were expecting a powerful, vengeful Messiah that would lead Israel to glory (*i.e., Messiah ben David*), He did not want some violent insurrection to take place with everyone thinking He would be the leader. The quote from Isaiah clearly alludes to a *Messiah ben Joseph* type – one that would suffer and die for his people.

12:20-21 Till He send forth judgment into victory

"(20) A bruised reed shall he not break, and smoking flax shall he not quench, till he send forth judgment unto victory. (21) And in his name shall the Gentiles trust".

At that time, he will play the role of *Messiah ben David*, the *Lion of Judah*; and the *High Priest anointed unto war*.

The High Priest anointed for war

A subject not mentioned in most Bible studies is that of the "second High Priest", who was called the *(High) Priest Anointed for War*. Scripture only gives a brief, non-specific mention to this person and his role:

- (1) *When thou goest out to battle against thine enemies, and seest horses, and chariots, and a people more than thou, be not afraid of them: for the LORD thy God is with thee, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.*
- (2) *And it shall be, when ye are come nigh unto the battle, that the priest shall approach and speak unto the people,*
- (3) *And shall say unto them, Hear, O Israel, ye approach this day unto battle against your enemies: let not your hearts faint, fear not, and do not tremble, neither be ye terrified because of them.* (Deut 20:1-3)

This High Priest did not serve in the Tabernacle/Temple, as did the High Priest we read much more about in the *Tenach*. Rather, his assignment centered on the caring and preparedness of the men going to battle – to assure they were prepared physically and spiritually; even sending home those he deemed unfit to fight.

The first Priest anointed for war that we find mention of was Phineas, the grandson of Aaron:

Midrash Rabbah - Leviticus 20:2: "*Elisheba the daughter of Amminadab did not enjoy happiness in the world. True, she witnessed five crowns [attained by her relatives] in one day: her brother-in-law was a king, her brother was a prince, her husband was High Priest, her two sons were both Deputy High Priests, Phinehas her grandson was a Priest anointed for war*".

Talmud - Mas. Sotah 43a: "*Thus it states: And Moses sent them, a thousand of every tribe, to the war, them and Phinehas* – 'them' refers to the Sanhedrin; '*Phinehas' was the [priest] Anointed for Battle;*' "And Moses sent them to the war, a thousand of every tribe, them and Phinehas the son of Eleazar the priest, to the war, with the holy instruments, and the trumpets to blow in his hand". (Num 31: 6)

Elsewhere in Midrash Rabbah (below), we find reference to the same person; this time called "*the War Messiah*". What is interesting here is the footnote which links the Priest Anointed for War to the coming

Messiah. This is especially significant regarding *Y'shua*, as the first time He came as the Temple High Priest (in order to be the final Yom Kippur sacrifice for sin); whereas, He will return the second time as the "War Messiah" to smite His enemies (i.e., Isaiah 59:17 where He wears the "garments of vengeance").:

Midrash Rabbah - The Song of Songs 11:33: "*MY BELOVED SPOKE AND SAID UNTO ME. He spoke through Elijah and said through the Messiah. What did he say to me? RISE UP, MY LOVE, MY FAIR ONE, AND COME AWAY.* R. Azariah said: *FOR LO, THE WINTER (HA-SETHAW) IS PAST: this refers to the kingdom of the Cutheans which seduces (mesithah) the world and leads it astray by its falsehoods, as we read, If thy brother, the son of thy mother, entice thee--yesitheka (Deut. XIII, 7). THE RAIN IS OVER AND GONE: this refers to the subjection of Israel. THE FLOWERS APPEAR ON THE EARTH: the conquerors have appeared on the earth. Who are they? R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Isaac: As it is written, And the Lord showed me four craftsmen (Zech 11:3), namely, Elijah, the Messiah, Melchizedek, and the War Messiah.* THE TIME OF THE ZAMIR IS COME: the time has come for Israel to be delivered; the time has come for uncircumcision to be cut off; the time has come for the kingdom of the Cutheans to expire; the time has come for the kingdom of heaven to be revealed, as it says, And the Lord shall be king over all the earth (ib. XIV, 9). AND THE VOICE OF THE TURTLE IS HEARD IN OUR LAND: Who is this? This is the voice of the Messiah".*

* Literally, 'the priest anointed for war' is an expression originally applied to the priest who accompanied the troops. Cf. Suk. 52a, where instead of 'War Messiah' we have 'Messiah son of Joseph'. The two are probably identical – Messiah the son of Joseph being regarded as the forerunner of the Messiah during the wars that will precede his advent.

The grouping of Elijah, the Messiah, Melchizedek, and the War Messiah together (in the above section) is also interesting; as the last three are linked to *Y'shua*, who was and again will be preceded by Elijah the prophet.

There are distinctions made in *Talmud* between the two High Priests. As might be expected, the Temple High Priest is given a higher "rank" than his counterpart. However, the following section of the *Talmud* shows distinctions drawn between the Deputy Temple High Priest and the High Priest Anointed for War; with the former taking precedent regarding issues of defilement, but the latter's life being considered more important (if one had to choose between the two of them) as he has a responsibility to many people:

Talmud - Mas. Nazir 47b; "*The question was propounded: As between [the High Priest] anointed for a war, and the deputy [High Priest], which is of superior sanctity? Does the [High Priest] anointed for war take precedence, because he is qualified to go to war, or does the deputy take precedence, because he is qualified to perform the Temple service?* — Come and hear: For it has been taught: The only difference between a [High Priest] anointed for war and a deputy is that if they were both walking by the way and encountered a meth mizwah, the [High Priest] anointed for war is to defile himself, but not the deputy. But has it not been taught: A [High Priest] anointed for war takes precedence of a deputy? — Mar Zutra replied: As far as saving his life is concerned, the [High Priest] anointed for war has a superior claim for many [people] depend upon him, but as regards defilement, the deputy is of superior sanctity, as has been taught: R. Hanina b. Antigonus said that the reason the office of deputy to the High Priest was created, was that should any disqualification happen to him [the High Priest], he can enter and minister in his stead".*

* But once a priest had been anointed for war, he could no longer take part in the Temple service.

12:22-24 Is not this the son of David?

"(22) Then was brought unto him one possessed with a devil, blind, and dumb: and he healed him, insomuch that the blind and dumb both spake and saw. (23) And all the people were amazed, and said, Is not this the son of David? (24) But when the Pharisees heard it, they said, This fellow doth not cast out devils, but by Beelzebub the prince of the devils".

The miracles *Y'shua* had been performing in YHWH's name were beginning to have an effect on the minds of the people. Many of them were now considering that He was the Messiah. (The term, "son of David" was a euphemism for the Messiah.)

12:25-27 And Jesus knew their thoughts...

"(25) And Jesus knew their thoughts, and said unto them, Every kingdom divided against itself is brought to desolation; and every city or house divided against itself shall not stand: (26) And if Satan cast out Satan, he

is divided against himself; how shall then his kingdom stand? (27) And if I by Beelzebub cast out devils, by whom do your children cast them out? therefore they shall be your judges".

Whose thoughts? When closely examined, the text indicates He is considering the thoughts of the people (in verse 23), not the Pharisees. His ensuing comments are directed toward them more than their leaders.

12:28 But if I cast out devils...

"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you".

Again, the direct connection is made between the miracles He is doing and their specific purpose, to declare to them that the Kingdom of YHWH is being offered. There is no argument as to the validity of these being "real miracles". The discussion at hand is, by whose authority were these miracles being done? If by YHWH, then this was their opportunity to usher in His Kingdom on earth. It is interesting that Scripture tells us that many of the physical problems people were experiencing at the time were directly attributed to the work of Satan or a demon.

The Hebrew Zohar shows that the clash between YHWH's Kingdom being established over Satan's is what spiritual warfare is all about. This section also testifies to what Paul wrote about Satan, being the god of this world; and also to the Gospel account of Satan being able to tempt Y'shua with the kingdoms of this world.

Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 204b: "*God thus admonished Israel to sanctify themselves, in the words: "Ye shall be holy, for I the Lord your God am holy" (Lev. XIX, 2). The term Ani (I) here signifies the kingdom of heaven. Confronting this is the kingdom of idolatry, which is termed "another" (aher), regarding which it is written: "For thou shalt bow down to no other god, for the Lord whose name is Jealous, is a jealous God" (Ex. XXXIV, 14). Ani (I) is sovereign over this world and of the world to come, all being dependent on it, whereas the other one (aher), the side of impurity, the other side, has rule only in this world and none at all in the other world; and hence, whoever cleaves to that Ani (I) has a portion in this world and in the world to come; but he who cleaves to that aher (the other one) perishes from this world and has no portion in the world to come. He has, however, a portion in the world of impurity, as that other kingdom, the kingdom of idolatry, possesses innumerable emissaries through whom it exercises dominion over this world".*

The Zohar makes it clear that the Kingdom of YHWH is in a struggle to be established:

Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 210b: "*Now, seeing that the holy kingdom, the kingdom of heaven, has been overthrown and the wicked kingdom has prevailed, it behoves man to mourn with it and to abase himself with it, so that when it will be raised again and joy will be restored to the world, he may rejoice with it. Scripture thus says: "Rejoice for joy with her, all ye that mourn for her" (Is. LXVI, 10)".*

The time period of the Kingdom offer extended for a brief while after Y'shua's death. Peter reiterated the offer to his kinsmen. Peter let them know that if they were to accept the message of Y'shua, He would eventually return and usher in the Kingdom:

(18) *"But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Y'shua should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.*

(19) *Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord.*

(20) *And he shall send Messiah Y'shua, which before was preached unto you:*

(21) *Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began". (Acts 3:18-21)*

NOTE: One of the criticisms of the "New Testament" until recent times has been the popular belief of demonic activity within its pages, in light of the fact that there was little other historical evidence that witnessed to such things in the Second Temple period. This changed with the Dead Sea Scrolls. Among the parchments (dated about 100 years prior to Y'shua) are found detailed instructions on casting away demons, using either chants or the placing of an amulet upon the body. Many of these demons were directly connected to physical ailments (Scrolls 4Q560 and 11Q11).

12:29 Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house?

"Or else how can one enter into a strong man's house, and spoil his goods, except he first bind the strong man? and then he will spoil his house".

The idea of binding a spiritual enemy being before accomplishing an earthly deed is found both in Scripture as well as in Midrash:

Midrash Rabbah - Deut I:22: "*BEHOLD, I HAVE BEGUN*. etc. This bears out what Scripture says, *To bind their kings with chains* (Ps. CXLIX, 8). And what is meant by 'their kings'? R. Tanhuma said: Literally their kings. And their nobles with fetters of iron (*ib.*): these are their guardian angels [in heaven] above; for God does not exact punishment of any nation before he first exacts punishment of its guardian angel. How? Before God drowned Pharaoh and all the Egyptians in the sea he first drowned their guardian angel. How is this to be inferred from the Scripture? The Rabbis say: It is not written, 'horses and their riders', but *The horse and his rider hath He thrown into the sea* (Ex. XV, 1); this refers to their guardian angel. And when the Egyptians came out in pursuit of the Israelites the Israelites lifted up their eyes and saw the guardian angel of the Egyptians hovering in the air. Whence this? R. Isaac said: Because it is written, *Behold, Egypt was marching after them* (Ex. XIV, 10); that is, their guardian angel. This is the force of the words, 'To bind their kings with chains, etc.'

Midrash Rabbah - The Song of Songs VIII:19; "*The Holy One, blessed be He, does not punish a nation on earth till He has cast down its guardian angel from heaven*. This is borne out by five Scriptural verses. One, the verse, *And it shall come to pass in that day, that the Lord will punish the host of the high heaven on high*-that first, and then-and the kings of the earth upon the earth (Isa XXIV, 21). The second is: *How art thou fallen from heaven, O day-star, son of the morning!* after which we read, *How art thou cut down to the ground* (*ib.* XIV, 12). The third is: *For My sword hath drunk its fill in heaven; and then, Behold, it shall come down upon Edom* (*ib.* XXXIV, 5). The fourth: *To bind their kings with chains, and then, and their nobles with fetters of iron* (Ps. CXLIX, 8), explaining which R. Tanhuma said: '*To bind their kings with chains*: this refers to the heavenly princes. '*And their nobles with fetters of iron*': this refers to the earthly rulers".

12:30-31 He that is not with me is against me

"(30) *He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathereth not with me scattereth abroad.* (31) *Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men*".

On the surface, this would seem to contradict the following words from Y'shua:

- (49) "And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbade him, because he followeth not with us.
(50) And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not: for he that is not against us is for us". (Luke 9:49-50)

It is important to consider here that Y'shua is not telling John, "it's OK, as long as they are using my name". Y'shua had already said that this is no guarantee of anything:

"(22) *Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works?* (23) *And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity*". (Matt 7:22-23)

The context of Luke 9:49-50 is again that of miracles being performed as a sign that the Kingdom of YHWH was being offered. Y'shua evidently knew that the men John was referring to were also performing these miracles for this same purpose; otherwise, they would have fallen under the condemnation of His words of Matt 7:22-23. Therefore, even though they weren't directly "in the camp", they were "on the same team" – as the miracles they were performing were properly grounded in the Torah's Kingdom message and YHWH's authority.

This situation is remarkably similar to an occurrence in Moses' time:

- (26) "But there remained two of the men in the camp, the name of the one was Eldad, and the name of the other Medad: and the spirit rested upon them; and they were of them that were written, but went not out unto the tabernacle: and they prophesied in the camp.
(27) And there ran a young man, and told Moses, and said, Eldad and Medad do prophesy in the camp.
(28) And Joshua the son of Nun, the servant of Moses, one of his young men, answered and said, My lord Moses, forbid them.
(29) And Moses said unto him, Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD'S people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!" (Num 11:26-29)

In Matt 12:30, Y'shua is speaking in the context of His message of the Kingdom offer being rejected. The legalistic Pharisees made a conscious decision to discard His claim that the authority behind the miracles was YHWH's and not Satan's; even though they were being given a taste of what was one day to come in full. Thus, they were willfully rejecting the work of the Holy Spirit (the *Ruach haKodesh* - through whom Y'shua's works were performed). They were therefore aligning themselves against Y'shua and with the kingdom of Satan in this grand spiritual battle.

All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven

"Wherefore I say unto you, All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven unto men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men". (Matt 12:31)

Part of receiving the Spirit of YHWH (*Ruach HaKodesh*) into your life comes with repentance, acknowledging our sins, changing our ways, and beginning to walk in the ways of righteousness.

In the Encyclopedia Judaica listed under sin, we find over seventy word references; but only three major categories for sin: the words "Het", "Pesha", and "Awon" (Avon).

"In the Tanach the word "Het" (Hata) is found 59 times. "Hata" means to fail. The word "Pesha" is found 136 times. "Psh" means breach. This refers to breaking a covenant, a criminal law, to break peaceful relations between two parties or as sinful behavior between man towards God. Then there is "Awah" which is found 17 times, or the root "Awon" - "To wrong", found 229 times, which infers "crookedness"; not upright in conduct, dishonest, as swindler, a deceiver.

So, sin is an act or deed against YHWH and His *Torah*: (1) by failure, (2) the breaking of a covenant with YHWH or fellow man, or (3) being crooked by cheating, swindling, dishonesty or being a deceiver in general.

We must repent for these transgressions. The same Encyclopedia Judaica describes repentance as such:

"Repentance is a prerequisite for divine forgiveness: God will not pardon man unconditionally but waits for him to repent. In repentance, man must experience genuine remorse for the wrong he has committed and then convert his penitential energy into concrete acts. Two sub-stages are discernable in the latter process: first the negative one of ceasing to do evil and then the second, the positive step of doing good. It is a call to return to God, or "t'shuva" (to return). The motion of turning (or returning) implies that sin is not an ineradicable stain but a straying from the path, and that by the effort of turning, (a power God has given to all men) the sinner can redirect his (or her) destiny".

The Great King of Israel, David, cried to YHWH Elohim for mercy and said,

- (2) "Wash me completely from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.
- (3) For I know my transgressions; and my sin is ever before me.
- (4) Against You, You only, I have sinned, and done evil in Your eyes; that You might be justified in Your speaking and be clear when You judge.
- (5) Behold, I was brought forth in iniquity, and in sin my mother conceived me.
- (6) Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts; and in the hidden parts You teach me wisdom. (7)
Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow.
- (8) Cause me to hear joy and gladness; the bones You have crushed will rejoice.
- (9) Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities.
- (10) Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a steadfast spirit within me.
- (11) Do not cast me out from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me.
- (12) Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, and uphold me with a willing spirit". (Psalm 51:2-12)

This is all a part of being born again. Changing our sinful ways and turning or returning to a righteous Elohim with righteous deeds. First, we must acknowledge our sins; and second, repent and turn from our evil ways and deeds. After that, going through the *mikveh* or water separates us from our past. Only then is new birth or rebirth evident by our deeds and actions. Y'shua related to Nicodemus the same pattern:

- (1) "There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews:
- (2) The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him.
- (3) Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.

(4) Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born?

(5) Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

(6) That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.

(7) Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.

(8) The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit". (John 3:1-8)

Any person not adhering to the call of the Holy Spirit for repentance is sinning against the Holy Spirit. If that person continues with the hardening of his/her heart, he/she will eventually open his/her eyes in "Hell".

For a comprehensive study on Y'shua's teaching to Nicodemus, please see the study in the section, "Still in Jerusalem - during the Passover Feast Y'shua teaches Nakdimon (Nicodemus)" under Matt 4:24 "...all Syria"

12:32-33 Blasphemy against the Holy Ghost shall not be forgiven unto men

"(32) And whosoever speaketh a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but whosoever speaketh against the Holy Ghost, it shall not be forgiven him, neither in this world, neither in the world to come. (33) Either make the tree good, and his fruit good; or else make the tree corrupt, and his fruit corrupt: for the tree is known by his fruit".

The proof that Y'shua was doing what was of YHWH was not that He said so, nor was it the miracles themselves. (Satan and his demons can claim to be doing things of YHWH and perform wonderful deeds.) Rather, Y'shua's "litmus test" for the Pharisees was *Torah*.

He had previously told them to go properly understand what was meant in the verse, "*I will have mercy, and not sacrifice*". Why did He tell them to do this? Had they done so, they would have learned that they were seeking their own righteousness and not submitting to YHWH's. (This is a purpose and function of *Torah*.) They would have then known Y'shua for who He was and His works as being of YHWH. Rather than doing this, however, these legalistic Pharisees chose to view themselves as righteous, to walk away from the Kingdom offer, and attribute the work of the *Ruach haKodesh* (Holy Spirit) to Satan.

The warning of the "unforgivable sin" is given in the book of Hebrews, only in a different setting. (Y'shua had died and was resurrected by this time, which holds additional significance.) Again, this has to do with experiencing the work of the *Ruach* and rejecting it, when you have enough understanding to know better:

(4) "For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted of the heavenly gift, and were made partakers of the Holy Ghost,

(5) And have tasted the good word of God, and the powers of the world to come,

(6) If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance; seeing they crucify to themselves the Son of God afresh, and put him to an open shame". (Heb 6:4-6)

There is a bit of a paradox here that needs to be addressed. Although Y'shua says that this generation is condemned, later in Acts chapter 3 (see above) Peter tells these people that they still have yet one more chance. Anyone cognisant of the Hebrew Scriptures knows that this is common. The prophets, on more than one occasion, told the people they were doomed as they would not listen while still preaching repentance to them.

12:34-37 O generation of vipers

"(34) O generation of vipers, how can ye, being evil, speak good things? for out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh.(35) A good man out of the good treasure of the heart bringeth forth good things: and an evil man out of the evil treasure bringeth forth evil things. (36) But I say unto you, That every idle word that men shall speak, they shall give account thereof in the day of judgment. (37) For by thy words thou shalt be justified, and by thy words thou shalt be condemned".

Y'shua was referring here to the legalistic Pharisees who would not, and refused to see him as the Messiah. He was not speaking of all the Pharisees, as there were many Pharisees who were good and truly righteous people. A Pharisee called Nicodemus himself said so: "(1) There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: (2) The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be

with him". (John 3:1-2.) Also see section, "James the Brother of Y'shua" under "Matt 13:53-54 And when he was come into his own country".

What exactly did Y'shua mean when he said not to use "idle" words?

Let me begin by giving you the Biblical definition of the word "idle" according to the Greek: "*Shunning the labour which one ought to perform; or words spoken leisurely*". Therefore, what Y'shua was warning of in this particular passage of Scripture, was how often man can be careless with what he says – which could very well be offensive to others.

Also notice that man will give an account of these words on the Day of Judgment, signifying that YHWH keeps careful records of all of our words. Look at what Psalms 139:4 says: "*For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether*". YHWH keeps accurate records!

Look at verse 35 above that speaks about the relation between our words and our heart. We speak what we have in our heart. Even though man may try to cover up his heart, it will eventually be exposed by his verbal communication. Just watch, sometime, a person who hits their thumb with the hammer; and notice what is said. If they are using profanity, then their language indicates that their heart is not right with YHWH. There are many verses in the New Covenant alone that deal with "corrupt communication". Eph 4:29 and Col 3:8 are just two examples.

In conclusion, a right relationship with YHWH will produce right and careful words. Have you ever wondered why YHWH gave us two ears and one mouth? Perhaps it's because He wanted us to listen twice as much as we speak.

12:38-39 An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign

"(38) *Then certain of the scribes and of the Pharisees answered, saying, Master, we would see a sign from thee.* (39) *But he answered and said unto them, An evil and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given to it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas:*"

It is a fact of Scripture that some generations end up cursed, while others are especially blessed. Those in the position to receive the greatest blessings from YHWH and who fail Him, end up in the former category.

The other generation in Scripture that was cursed in such a fashion came out of Egypt. They received the offer of the Kingdom and the written *Torah*. Those in Matthew's narrative receive the Kingdom offer and the walking, talking, *Torah* – Y'shua.

12:40-42 As Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly

"(40) *For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth.* (41) *The men of Nineveh shall rise in judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: because they repented at the preaching of Jonas; and, behold, a greater than Jonas is here.* (42) *The queen of the south shall rise up in the judgment with this generation, and shall condemn it: for she came from the uttermost parts of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, behold, a greater than Solomon is here".*

Y'shua was actually referring to the time that he would spend in the underworld till his resurrection. This will be discussed in detail in Matthew chapter 28.

12:43-49 When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none... Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation

"(43) *When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none.* (44) *Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth it empty, swept, and garnished.* (45) *Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last state of that man is worse than the first.* Even so shall it be also unto this wicked generation. (46) *While he yet talked to the people, behold, his mother and his brethren stood without, desiring to speak with him.* (47) *Then one said unto him, Behold, thy mother and thy brethren stand without, desiring to speak with thee.* (48) *But he answered and said unto him that told him, Who is my mother? and who are my brethren?* (49) *And he stretched forth his hand toward his disciples, and said, Behold my mother and my brethren!"*

This generation had the greatest preacher of the Kingdom in their midst. Y'shua's miracles were not only physical cures, they were spiritual gains; each contributing to the binding of Satan and his own legions of fallen angels and demons. The Great Physician was making them well by bringing YHWH's light into the world, forcing out the darkness of the enemy and ushering in the Kingdom of YHWH. Here was their chance! Their rejection of this opportunity is worse for them than if He had never come and preached to them at all. For now they will be beyond repentance (i.e., Heb 6:4).

12:50 For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven

"For whosoever shall do the will of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother".

What is the "Will of the Father" that each of us, without exception, is to do?

Learn of the "Image of YHWH Elohim" as presented in the *Torah*, and become conformed to it

Grow in intimacy with Him by following the commandments of His *Torah* and going beyond the "letter of Torah" by performing acts of kindness in our day-to-day activities

I've heard it said that the law of YHWH Elohim has been abolished at the cross and it is now obsolete. Is this true?

No it isn't. The Saviour did not come to abolish his Father's Torah (teaching), but to fulfil it. (Matt 5:17-20) The word 'fulfil' means to 'carry out', to 'do', to 'perform' and 'obey'. Had the Messiah abolished the Torah, he would have contradicted his own words when he said that the "*law would outlast the universe*"; and it is evident that the heavens and the earth are still here, so the Torah must still exist. The Bible classifies all men as sinners. "*All have sinned and come short of the glory of God*". (Rom 3:23). This means that YHWH's Torah must still exist, for to be a 'sinner' one must have transgressed an existing law. We could hardly be called 'sinners' if there were no law to transgress; for "sin" by the Bible's definition is "*the transgression of the law*." (1 John 3:4) and as the Apostle Paul so clearly put it "*where there is no law there is no transgression*". (Rom 4:15) In short, the presence of sin and sinners in the world is proof positive that the Almighty's Torah still exists.

The Bible tells us that at the end of this present age and in the ages to come, true believers will be keeping the commandments of YHWH Elohim. How could this be possible if the commandments were abolished at Golgotha?

"And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which keep the commandments of God, and have the testimony of Jesus Christ". (Rev 12:17)

(13) *"I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*

(14) *Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.*

(15) *For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie". (Rev 22:13-15)*

Incidentally, obedience or disobedience does not abolish laws. Consult any solicitor or Member of Parliament if you have any doubts about this legal principle. Christians who speak and write against the Torah of the Most High are unwittingly furthering the cause of Satan, the Lawless One. They are adding to the enormous catalogue of sin, of which the world and the church is already guilty: for when they teach that YHWH's Torah is done away with, they encourage the spiritually blind to persist in their sins.

Where does faith and grace come into this matter of keeping the Feast Days?

To begin with, let us make it perfectly clear that we know that every sinner who accepts salvation is saved by the GRACE OF THE ALMIGHTY: and that salvation is a FREE GIFT made available to us by YHWH through His only begotten Son Y'shua the Messiah. We also know that the main reason for our salvation is not only that we live forever, but:

"That in the ages to come He (the Almighty) will shew the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness towards us through Jesus Christ". (Eph 2:7)

Furthermore we know that YHWH's grace towards mankind was evident in past ages:

"Noah found grace in the eyes of the LORD". (Gen 6:8)

"Moses found grace in the LORD's sight". (Exod 33:13-16)

"Israel found grace in the wilderness". (Jer 31:2)

Indeed "He (YHWH) giveth grace unto the lowly" no matter what age they may happen to live in (Prov 3:34.) The Almighty's grace, we conclude, is not just a new covenant feature. It is also the age-old outcome of a personal trait of the Most High which immediately manifested itself when man sinned and salvation became necessary. Did you know that the word grace appears 39 times in the Old Covenant alone! YHWH's grace, in other words, has been extended to all His followers since Adam sinned in the Garden of Eden. Indeed, every time an Old Covenant believer offered an animal sacrifice for sin, he was pardoned by the grace of YHWH Elohim.

What, then, is the relationship between grace and Torah? And what does it mean to be under grace? Briefly, here are the facts concerning this misunderstood matter:

All mankind has sinned, and all have come short of the glory of YHWH. What is sin? Sin, as stated above, is the transgression of YHWH's Torah. Sin is doing what the Almighty tells us not to do. Sin is breaking YHWH's commandments. Sin is disobedience, and all of us have sinned. (1 John 3:4, Isaiah 53:6)

The punishment for sin according to another section of YHWH's Torah is death - eternal death. This means that all mankind are under a death sentence, for all have sinned (Rom 6:23). Being under the death sentence of the law is referred to in the Scriptures as being "*under the law*".

But YHWH in His infinite mercy provided a way of escape from that death sentence, the sentence we all came under because we all sinned. That way of escape is Y'shua HaMashiach, who died on our behalf. And because of this provision – because Messiah has paid the price, the death penalty that YHWH offers pardon and life through His Son to all who are willing to repent, to forsake sin and accept salvation by faith.

All repentant sinners who accept YHWH's wonderful offer of mercy and who place their faith in the Messiah (YHWH's Son) are pardoned of their sins and they find 'grace in His sight'. In other words, in His manifold mercies, YHWH forgives the repentant sinner his transgressions and cancels the terrible death sentence hanging over him and places him '*under grace*'. Please note that the Almighty did not cancel the Torah. Had He done that at Golgotha, we would not be sinners; for we could hardly transgress a non-existing law. No, what He did cancel was the "sentence of death" we were under before we repented. To be "*under grace*" means to be a recipient of YHWH's mercy, grace and favour; to have one's sins forgiven and to be no longer under the death sentence of the law. That is what being "*under grace*" means.

Now then, while we are in *Y'shua* - "*under grace*" - on the Highway of Life so to speak, the question is: Are we now permitted to break YHWH's Torah? Are we at liberty to do those things which constitute sin? Are we now free to *worship idols, blaspheme, break the Sabbath day, dishonour our parents, murder, commit adultery, steal, lie and covet another's goods*, etc.? The answer is very obvious: we must not do these things. Indeed, it was for doing these very things that we came to be under the death sentence of the Torah in the first place. Being "*under grace*", if anything, should prompt a person to be more obedient, more righteous and more holy than he ever was. Being "*under grace*" does not mean that you are at liberty to break the law of the Most High. For if you continue to do so, you are being disobedient; and disobedience is sin. That is exactly the point the Apostle Paul makes when he asks:

"What then? shall we sin, because we are not under the law, but under grace?" (Rom 6:15)

Paul's answer is:

"God forbid! Know ye not that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom 6:16)

What does all this mean? It means that all believers who have accepted YHWH's offer of life are no longer under the death sentence of the law, but under His grace. It also means that in that environment of grace they are to live lives of obedience - unto righteousness. Not that our obedience will save us. Oh no; for we are saved by grace, by placing our faith in *Y'shua HaMashiach* and by personally accepting YHWH's measureless mercy and free gift of life. That's how we are saved. But obedience thereafter, is nevertheless vital. It exhibits a believer's *living faith*. It testifies to men and angels more effectively than a million words that a believer is no longer a blatant sinner but a person who is actually doing what the Almighty commands (James 2:17-26.) How very true is Paul's statement when he says:

"His servants ye are whom ye obey". (Rom 6:16)

If Believers are required to keep the Sabbath days mentioned in Leviticus 23, then what do texts like Rom 14:5-6, Col 2:16-17, Gal 4:9-10 and Eph 2:15-16 mean?

These four passages, sad to say, are amongst the most misunderstood in all of Scripture. And because they are critical, which means that any misinterpretation of them will result in many believers sinning, it is vital that they are understood. To aid in understanding, we will quote each text in turn and then briefly explain its meaning.

(5) *"One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind."*

(6) *"He that regardeth the day, regardeth it unto the Lord: and he that regardeth not the day, to the Lord he doth no regard it..."* (Rom 14:5-6)

"...for we shall all stand before the judgement seat of Christ". (Rom 14:10)

In this passage Paul is not saying that the Sabbath commandment is done away with. Nor for that matter is he saying that Sunday is the Sabbath; or even that Saturday is the Sabbath. The identity of the Sabbath day is not being established in this text.

The points being made in this passage are:

That a difference of opinion concerning the Sabbath does exist, with one person honouring one day above the next, and a second believer treating all days alike.

And we should not judge one another on the matter, but make up our own minds with a view to the coming Judgment.

In other words, believers ought to investigate and examine this vital issue of which, if any, is the Sabbath day to decide the matter for themselves and not judge others. Why is self-determination so important here? The answer is because "...for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ". and give our own reasons for our actions. Pleading ignorance or blaming someone else for your own actions will not help you on the Day of Judgment. You must decide these matters for yourself and be fully persuaded in your own mind as to what is right and what is wrong. That is what Paul is saying:

(16) *"Let no man therefore judge you in meat and drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days;*

(17) *which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ".* (Col 2:16-17)

The message of these verses is similar to that in Rom 14:5-6. In Romans 14, Paul admonishes believers not to judge one another, but let each decide for themselves. In this passage, he is telling us to not allow ourselves to be judged.

And why does Paul mention "meat", "drink", "Sabbath days" and "new moons" in the same verse? The answer is because "meat, drink, new moons, and Sabbath days" are "shadows", "tokens", or "emblem types" of great spiritual realities still to come. And though they are extremely beneficial when properly understood and applied, they are of little practical value to the Christian who spends his energies and time criticising others.

Having said this, however, it would be very unwise for a believer to conclude that since these things are "shadows" or "spiritual tokens" they are therefore of little account and that Paul is here giving all Christians a free pass to ignore YHWH's Sabbath Law.

That is most certainly not what Paul is saying. Indeed, when we examine the Apostle's other writings (and take a close look at his own actions), we notice that he went to great lengths to honour the Almighty's Sabbaths. He also proved to the brethren in Jerusalem that the reports about him teaching believers to forsake the Torah and old customs were simply not true. The fact was that he walked in an "*orderly way and kept the law*" (Acts 21:20-24, Acts 20:16).

Then what does this passage mean? It means exactly what it is saying. Just like that passage in Romans, it concerns a believer's mental attitude towards himself and others. In Romans 14, Paul says "*do not judge others, but allow them to make up their own minds as regards to their diet and the days they honour*". In Colossians 2 he says, "*Do not allow others to judge you*". In neither passage is the identity of the true Sabbath day discussed.

(9) *"But now, after that ye have known God, or rather are known of God, how turn ye again to the weak and beggarly elements, whereunto ye desire again to be in bondage?*

(10) *Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years".* (Gal 4:9-10)

The key words in this passage are "*how turn ye again*". They mean: How can you want to turn back to your former practices? Bear in mind that Paul was writing, not to Jews – but to the Galatian believers, to *converted pagans!*

What were they wanting to turn back to? The answer is they wanted to "turn back" to the weak and beggarly elements of the days, months, times and years which they had kept before they became followers of Y'shua. In other words, they wanted to turn back to the pagan festivals they had previously observed; festivals which centered on the beggarly elements of sun, moon, wind, river and fire worship (the very names that the western weekday names originate from.) These are the beggarly elements which the converted Galatians used to worship. And this fact understandably amazed Paul.

Had he been writing to converted Jews, who had kept the Almighty's Feasts since childhood, then we could allow that the "days, months, seasons and years" of verse 10 may well have meant Jehovah's Feasts and that these pagan converts wanted to go back to celebrate them. Rather, Paul is not writing to Jewish believers here but is writing to converts from Paganism; and the only celebrations to which they could possibly return were the heathen festivals they had previously known – festivals which were directly linked to the beggarly elements mentioned above.

Also bear in mind that Paul honoured YHWH's Feasts (Acts 18:21, Acts 20:16, 1 Cor 16:8). It is therefore unthinkable that he would refer to the Almighty's Feasts as "*weak and beggarly elements*" in one instance and then desperately strive to keep them in the next. Paul's verdict in Rom 7:12 concerning the commandments of God were, "*Wherefore the law is holy and the commandment holy, and just, and good*".

There is nothing "beggarly" about the worship of El Shaddai of Abraham. That much is certain.

- (15) "Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances for to make himself of twain one new man, so making peace.
(16) And that he may reconcile both unto God in the one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereof". (Eph 2:15-16)

There lies hidden within the human heart a deadly element known as sin. At the epicentre of sin (which is disobedience to YHWH's Torah) is a spiritual ingredient called enmity. Enmity is hostility. In every carnal mind this sinful element called enmity or hostility towards the Almighty exists, and it finds expression in acts of disobedience (sin). Elsewhere, Paul says:

“The carnal (non-spiritual) mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be”, (Rom 8:7)

If you read Eph 2:15-16 again, you will see that it was this inherent enmity in the carnal mind that the Saviour came to abolish. He didn't come to abolish His Father's Torah (Matt 5:17-18) but man's enmity against YHWH which immediately manifests itself when the Almighty's Torah is presented. The Torah, incidentally, is incapable of subduing the sinful nature of man. The Torah can only point the way to righteousness. It can only tell us what is right and what is wrong. Perfect and eternal though it is, the Torah is unable to subdue the hostility the carnal mind has for YHWH.

- (3) "For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh:
(4) That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit". (Rom 8:3-4)

Did you get that? YHWH was fully aware that His Torah was totally incapable of overcoming man's sinful nature and sent His Son to subdue, overcome and deprive sin of its power over the human mind. In other words, the Almighty sent His Son to slay the root cause of sin; which is enmity towards YHWH and towards each other. This enmity goes beyond man's hatred for YHWH and His Torah. It is expressed in hatred between Jew and Gentile, black and white, rich and poor, educated and ignorant, the haves and the have-nots in nation after nation. The Saviour alone has the power to overcome this enmity between the races and to make of different nations one people - one man.

And why did the Saviour come to slay our inherent enmity against YHWH and our fellow men? The answer is:

"That the righteousness of YHWH's Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh but after the Spirit". (Rom 8:4)

If the reader is an honest seeker after the truth, he/she will immediately recognise that the Apostle Paul is not introducing strange and contradictory teachings in these passages; but is in complete harmony with all other inspired writers from Genesis to Revelation. What he is doing in these passages is highlighting some extremely important but little-understood truths:

That we should not judge others or even allow ourselves to be judged in this matter of Sabbath observance. (Rom 14:5-6, Col 2:16-17)

That we should not hanker after or turn back to the festivals of paganism as those converted pagans, the ancient Galatian believers were doing. (Gal 4:9-10) Festivals which celebrated the "*beggarly elements: the sun, moon, stars, wind, water and fire*", etc. Of course, the pagan festivals we can apply to our lives today are Christmas, New Year's Day, Easter, Valentine's Day, and Halloween. Many people regularly practice and observe these various "holidays" that are on the secular calendar (and also defend them vigorously), but they have NOTHING to do with YHWH's Moedim (appointed times) or Feast Days. So, we should take the example from Galatians and stop practicing and celebrating pagan holidays if that is what we are doing; otherwise, we will give an account for these things on Judgment Day!

That there is an inherent enmity (hostility) in the carnal mind against the Almighty and His law; and also between Jew and Gentile, rich and poor, black and white and between nations. But that in Y'shua we are made 'one people' in the covenant. (Rom 8:7)

And that the Messiah came to abolish (slay) that enmity in order to make mankind obedient to YHWH's Torah. (Eph 2:15-16, Rom 8:3-4) This is the ultimate objective of salvation: that the Messiah came to save his people from their sins. (Matt 1:21)

That is what these texts are telling us which confuses so many Christians.

All right, I can see that the Sabbath according to the Scriptures is the seventh day of the week, but how can the modern believer be sure that Saturday is the seventh day?

To prove that the day called Saturday is the seventh day of the week, we will consider the history of mankind in three parts:

From the creation of the world to Israel's Exodus from Egypt;

From the Exodus to the Apostolic era - when the Messiah walked on this earth;

And from the apostolic era to the present time.

1. From the Creation to the Exodus

We will suppose, for the moment, that the Sabbath was "lost" between the Creation and the Exodus. It may not have been, of course, for YHWH's laws were known and kept by faithful believers long before they were given to Israel at Mount Sinai (see Gen 26:5) and the sacred calendar and weekly cycle was followed as far back as the days of Noah (Gen 7:11, 8:9-14) – but even supposing that the Sabbath had been lost, we can be certain that it was identified and established again by the Almighty in the days of Moses.

Here is how we know this fact. In Exod 16:14-30, we read of how the Almighty fed Israel with manna. By the following three miracles performed every week, YHWH made known His Sabbath day to the whole nation. He gave Israel twice as much manna on the sixth day.

He withheld manna on the Sabbath, the seventh day.

And He kept the manna given on the sixth day from spoiling overnight (which it normally did) in order that His people might rest on the seventh day.

By these three distinct miracles, which occurred every week for 40 years, YHWH identified the seventh day as His Sabbath.

2. From the Exodus to the Apostolic Era

Was the identity of the seventh day "lost" between the exodus and the time of Y'shua? The answer is, No it wasn't. But again, for the sake of this investigation, we'll assume that it was.

We can be certain that it was again identified when the Messiah observed it, for just prior to his death on Golgotha the Saviour categorically stated that he had kept his Father's commandments. (John 15:10) He could hardly have said this if the day that he had been keeping for some thirty-three years was the wrong one. Besides, if he had kept the wrong day, he would have been a sinner and that would have disqualified him from being our Saviour.

We are, therefore, certain that the Saviour kept the correct seventh day Sabbath.

3. From the Apostolic Era to the Present Time

Has the identity of the seventh day of the week been "lost" over the past 2,000 years? We can assure the reader that it hasn't been. Here is the proof:

Soon after the capture of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, the Diaspora took place. The Diaspora is the scattering of the body of Jews to lands other than their own. Initially, the exiles had fled to the surrounding countries of Egypt, Syria and Phoenicia; but in the course of time as persecution mounted, the Jews went further and further afield; and today you will find Jewish communities in every country on the face of the earth.

The Jews took the Holy Scriptures with them and their knowledge of the true Sabbath day. Every seventh day since then, orthodox Jews all over the world have remembered the seventh day. The reason is because it was instituted by YHWH and given as a heritage right from the beginning in Genesis Chapter 1 when the earth was created and has been observed in this manner ever since. And it will continue this way until the end of time because the Scriptures declare it in Exod. 31:16 and many other places. This covenant of the Sabbath was given to all people and not just the Jews. Those who left Egypt in the Exodus were a mixed multitude, meaning Jews and non-Jews; and they were all under one Covenant. They still are, as those who are of the "natural branches" and the "grafted-in branches" into one Tree of Life in the Seed of the Woman (Messiah).

And what do we find in this 21st Century? We find the Jews still keeping the original seventh day Sabbath, the same day they knew at the time of the Diaspora, which was the same day Y'shua kept.

There is absolutely no disagreement or dispute amongst the Jews (scattered, as they still are) as to which day is the true Sabbath Day. Every synagogue in every country is in perfect agreement that Saturday is the Sabbath Day.

Had there been any change of the day, any loss or gain of time, any deliberate or accidental slip or alteration in the weekly cycle (which would have resulted in the Jews in one country observing a different weekly Sabbath from Jewish believers in the next), then we would readily agree that the identity of the seventh day of the week was in doubt. But we do not find that situation anywhere on earth. Instead, we have a total agreement amongst all the Jews of all nations that the day known throughout the world as Saturday is the seventh day of the week, the Sabbath Day originated by YHWH and given to us as a *heritage* and a *set-apart (holy)* day when He created the earth in Genesis 1 and re-iterated in Exod. 20.

Calendar Changes:

Some point out that the civil calendar was changed in the Sixteenth Century and the weekly cycle itself was altered all over the world; so no one can be certain that Saturday is the true seventh day of the week.

Those who use this argument are misinformed. Here are the facts of history: In the year 1582, the Julian calendar (named after the Emperor Julius Caesar) was found to be 10 days late when compared with the position of the sun. That is, the vernal equinox was not occurring on or about March 20/21 as it should do in a correct solar calendar; but was gradually receding towards the beginning of March. The reason for this error was that the Julian calendar worked on the basis that a year was 365½ days in length, whereas in truth it is about 11 minutes more than that. Over the centuries this 11-minute discrepancy accumulated, causing the Julian calendar to steadily recede until by the sixteenth century it had lost 10 days and the equinox was occurring on March 11th.

To correct this discrepancy, Pope Gregory XIII ordered that 10 days be added to the Julian calendar dates to bring them into line with the sun. The month of October was chosen for the amendment, and in the calendar of 1582 that month appeared as follows:

OCTOBER 1582

SUN	MON	TUE	WED	THU	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	15	16
17	18	19	20	21	22	23
24	25	26	27	28	29	30
31						

You will notice from the above that the weekly cycle, the order of the days of the week, remained unchanged even though the Gregorian calendar dates had increased by ten between the Thursday and the Friday. In other words, in both calendars, the day after Thursday the 4th was still a Friday.

This amendment understandably was not very popular in some countries, mainly because it had been organised by a Roman Catholic Pope. Several Protestant countries refused to acknowledge it and continued to use the Julian calendar; but one by one they came into line. Here is a short list of when they did:

Germany (Catholic States)	1583
Germany (Protestant States)	1700
Netherlands	1700
England	1752
Rumania, Turkey and Russia	1919

All those years between 1582 and 1919, while both calendars were in use, the sequence of the days in the weekly cycle was the same in every country. In other words, Sunday in Rome in 1900 was also Sunday in Russia in that year even though both countries were using a different calendar. And as each nation adopted the Georgian calendar, it simply added 10 days to its Georgian Calendar date. There was no need to change the order of the days of the week, because they already agreed.

To Summarise:

YHWH re-identified the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath in the days of Israel's Exodus from Egypt. The Messiah kept the seventh day of the week as the Sabbath. Had he not done so, he would have been a sinner. Therefore, since Messiah himself kept the Sabbath Day, we should also keep the same day holy and follow in Messiah's footsteps instead of the traditions of men.

Calendar changes did not affect the days of the week in the weekly cycle.

Jewish communities around the world have, since the Diaspora, kept track of the seventh day Sabbath and all agree it is the day called Saturday.

These facts prove that Saturday is the seventh day of the week and is the true Sabbath.

How does one keep the Sabbaths of the Almighty?

The commandment at its basic level is "*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*". The second part about "*resting from one's labour*" is added in order that the first part "*Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy*". can be met. The original Hebrew word translated "*holy*" in our English Bibles is *qadosh* or *qodesh*. Besides meaning "sacred", this word means to "separate" to "set apart".

The Sabbath Day, in other words, is a day that YHWH set apart for sacred use. He wants us to remember that fact and to keep the day holy, set apart, for sacred use. How is it done? What is involved? What does one do or not do on the Sabbath?

Without attempting to pontificate on so deep a matter and certainly with no intention of judging another believer's performance, I offer these brief guidelines about Sabbath observance with a prayer to the Almighty that He will use them to fulfil in every reader the spiritual potential latent in him or her.

The Sabbath is a day of rest from Labour. The Hebrew word translated "labour" in Exod 20:9 is *abad*. It means "to do", "to serve". Who are we allowed to serve, what are we allowed to do on the first six days of the week? The answer is "*Six days shalt thou labour (serve) and do thy work*". In other words, you may serve your own interests for six days each week; but on the seventh day, the Sabbath, you must stop serving your own interests and devote that day to the service of the Almighty. Why? Because that is His holy (*qodesh*) day; it has been set apart for His service, His work.

What is YHWH's work and how may we become engaged in it? We find our answer in the Scriptures.

It is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day (Mark 3:4)

It is lawful to heal on the Sabbath day (Matt 12:10)

It is lawful to rescue someone on the Sabbath day (Matt 12:11)

It is lawful to engage in spiritual activities on the Sabbath, such as: attending synagogue services, preaching, teaching, Bible study, prayer, visiting the sick and aged, walking in the countryside, etc. (Luke 4:31, 6:1-2)

All these activities are permissible on the Sabbath day. Indeed, these are the very things the Messiah did when He walked on this earth. Sad to say, some of the Pharisees (the legalistic ones) did not agree with the Saviour on some of these points. They incorrectly supposed that He was breaking the Sabbath when He healed people. They misunderstood the fact that the Sabbath - YHWH's *qodesh* day - had been set apart for that very purpose, for doing good, for doing the Almighty's work. The Saviour, however, knew what He was doing. Had He not, as the Creator, made the Sabbath in the first place? He was not only aware of which day was the Sabbath, but he also knew how to keep it. The reader will not go astray if he/she endeavours to do likewise.

Activities to refrain from. There are, of course, certain things which are permissible on ordinary days but should not normally be done on the Sabbath – for example:
Buying, selling, and engaging in business deals;
Doing laborious field work;
Pursuing self-interests.

(See Neh 10:31 and 13:13-21, Isaiah chapter 56, also chapter 58; but especially verses 13-14)

If you remember that the Sabbath is YHWH's holy day (the portion of time that He set apart for His work); and if you rest from your own labours and interests and devote yourself to His service, then you will be on the glorious path of Sabbath observance. And what's more, you will be blessed in this world and the next in direct fulfillment of this amazing promise:

(13) *"If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words:*

(14) *Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it".*

Isaiah 58:13-14

The Sabbath is a day for holy convocations. The Hebrew word translated "convocation" in Lev 23:2 is *migra*. It means "a calling together" an "assembly". In other words, wherever possible, a believer should attend a congregation on the Sabbath. Religious "convocations" or assemblies were called for in order that the church may grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Most High. The seventh day of the week has been set aside for YHWH's service, and it is at these commanded assemblies that His Spirit is most active. So, attend a Sabbath meeting if one is held in your area.

Keeping the Feasts. The Feast Days of the Most High are also days of rest and are kept in the same way as the weekly Sabbath, except that on them extra special meals (feasts) are partaken of. These are literal banquets as already pointed out, which typify the spiritual nourishment and power YHWH's Bride is scheduled to receive in the near future when supernatural happenings, similar to those which took place on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2), will again occur.

Without allowing a Feast to deteriorate into a show of gluttony, try to ensure that an extra special meal is served on the Feast day. In this way, you will declare your faith in YHWH's breathtaking Programme of Salvation which He has made possible through His Son to prove your desire to partake of the real spiritual banquets that He has prepared for those who serve Him.

YHWH has made many promises to the believer who is willing to observe His Feasts. Space does not allow us to print them all, but we will end this section with this beautiful millennial picture of multitudes of true believers keeping the Feasts of the Almighty in a Jerusalem purged of sin. HalleluYah!

(33) *"Thus saith the Lord GOD; In the day that I shall have cleansed you from ALL your iniquities I will also cause you to dwell in the cities, and the wastes shall be builded.*

(34) *And the desolate land shall be tilled, whereas it lay desolate in the sight of all that passed by.*

(35) *And they shall say, This land that was desolate is become like the Garden of Eden; and the waste and desolate and ruined cities are become fenced, and are inhabited.*

(36) *Then the heathen that are left round about you shall know that I the LORD build the ruined places, and plant that that was desolate: I the LORD have spoken it, and I will do it.*

(37) *Thus saith the Lord GOD; I will yet for this be enquired of by the house of Israel, to do it for them; I will increase them with men like a flock.*

(38) *As the holy flock, as the flock of Jerusalem in her solemn feasts; so shall the waste cities be filled with flocks of men: and they shall know that I am the LORD". (Ezek 36:33-38)*

END OF Section IV - Messiah's Teachings

SECTION V

MESSIAH'S KINGDOM PARABLES

MATTHEW 13:1-58

AND OTHER KINGDOM PARABLES

TEXT:

- (1) The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side.
- (2) And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore.
- (3) And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow;
- (4) And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up:
- (5) Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth:
- (6) And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away.
- (7) And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them:
- (8) But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold.
- (9) Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.
- (10) And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables?
- (11) He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given.
- (12) For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath.
- (13) Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand.
- (14) And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive:
- (15) For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them.
- (16) But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear.
- (17) For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them.
- (18) Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower.
- (19) When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side.
- (20) But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it;
- (21) Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended.
- (22) He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.
- (23) But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.
- (24) Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field:
- (25) But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat, and went his way.
- (26) But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also.
- (27) So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares?
- (28) He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up?
- (29) But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them.
- (30) Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn.
- (31) Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field:

- (32) Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof.
- (33) Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened.
- (34) All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them:
- (35) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world.
- (36) Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field.
- (37) He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man;
- (38) The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one;
- (39) The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels.
- (40) As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world.
- (41) The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity;
- (42) And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- (43) Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear.
- (44) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field.
- (45) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls:
- (46) Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it.
- (47) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind:
- (48) Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away.
- (49) So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just,
- (50) And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth.
- (51) Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord.
- (52) Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old.
- (53) And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence.
- (54) And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?
- (55) Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas?
- (56) And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things?
- (57) And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house.
- (58) *And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief".*

Introduction

The subject of the *Kingdom of YHWH* is the essential lesson of the Bible, beginning with creation account in Genesis, and its final realization in the book of Revelation.

The message of the Kingdom is the message of the Gospel:

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God". (Mark 1:14)

A study of the Kingdom is one of the more interesting and complex that a Bible student can undertake. Not only are there many aspects to the Kingdom, but there are also different "levels" at which one can investigate all that Scripture presents and hints at. For now, we will simply say that a study of the Kingdom can be approached on these levels:

A basic level where we are concerned mostly with the literal text;

A level where we seek to understand some of the deeper truths;

A mystical level.

Such mystical teachings will mostly be found in an in-depth Revelation study. For now, two examples will be provided. One can be found in the book of Zechariah. The prophet, speaking of this time, says that this is when the "name" of YHWH will be made one:

"*And the LORD shall be king over all the earth: in that day shall there be one LORD, and his name one*".
(Zech 14:9)

Another, found in the *Talmud*, says that the Temple represents the Kingdom of YHWH:

"*The goal of Creation is that the Kingdom of God (represented by the Temple) shall be established on earth, as it is in heaven; and finally, the name of the Messiah, i.e., the assurance that God's purpose will ultimately be achieved*". (Soncino Talmud - footnote to Mas. Pesachim 54a)

In this exegesis of Matthew, we will remain focused on the more basic aspects of the Kingdom; looking to a degree at some of its deeper truths. We will first present an overview of the Kingdom, then examine some of Y'shua's parables from this chapter of Matthew as well as the other Gospels.

The Kingdom of YHWH

The Kingdom of YHWH is spoken of throughout Scripture and in Jewish writings as an everlasting Kingdom where YHWH and those who are faithful to Him exist in harmony. The Kingdom of YHWH is also called the "*Kingdom of Heaven*" (especially in the book of Matthew), as "*heaven*" is often substituted for "*YHWH*" (or G-d) in Jewish texts.

Depending on context, the Kingdom can mean one or both of two "time periods". It can be said to be the 1,000-year Messianic Kingdom on earth and/or eternity in *Olam Haba*, the world to come. The former, a time when there is still some degree of sin and death, leads directly into the latter where sin and death will be no more:

- (24) "*Then cometh the end, when he shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he shall have put down all rule and all authority and power.*"
(25) "*For he must reign, till he hath put all enemies under his feet.*"
(26) "*The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death*". (1 Cor 15:24-26)

Both the *Tenach* and "New Testament" show us that the Kingdom is also the restored kingdom of Israel. King David was promised that the Kingdom of Israel, established through his offspring, would one day be this everlasting Kingdom of YHWH:

- (8) "*Now therefore so shalt thou say unto my servant David, Thus saith the LORD of hosts, I took thee from the sheepright, from following the sheep, to be ruler over my people, over Israel:*"
(9) "*And I was with thee whithersoever thou wentest, and have cut off all thine enemies out of thy sight, and have made thee a great name, like unto the name of the great men that are in the earth.*"
(10) "*Moreover I will appoint a place for my people Israel, and will plant them, that they may dwell in a place of their own, and move no more; neither shall the children of wickedness afflict them any more, as beforetime,*"
(11) "*And as since the time that I commanded judges to be over my people Israel, and have caused thee to rest from all thine enemies. Also the LORD telleth thee that he will make thee an house.*"
(12) "*And when thy days be fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee, which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom.*"
(13) "*He shall build an house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever.*"
(14) "*I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men:*"
(15) "*But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee.*"
(16) "*And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever*". (2 Sam 7:8-16)

"*And they that went before, and they that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna; Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord: (10) Blessed be the kingdom of our father David, that cometh in the name of the Lord: Hosanna in the highest*". (Mark 11:9)

"*When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?*" (Acts 1:6)

The "Kingdom" Of Satan

Counter to the Kingdom and YHWH's plan to establish it is Satan and his efforts to establish his own unholy Kingdom. The book of Revelation shows the final chapters of this story, including mention of the Kingdom coming at the time of Satan's defeat:

"And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Y'shua: for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night". (Rev 12:10)

Perhaps the earliest reference to the battle between these two kingdoms is the dialogue between YHWH and the serpent in the Garden of Eden:

"And I will put enmity between thee and the woman, and between thy seed and her seed; it shall bruise thy head, and thou shalt bruise his heel". (Gen 3:15)

Those in opposition to YHWH's truth can be said to be supporting Satan and his kingdom:

"Ye are of your father the devil, and the lusts of your father ye will do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own: for he is a liar, and the father of it". (John 8:44)

"I know thy works, and tribulation, and poverty, (but thou art rich) and I know the blasphemy of them which say they are Jews, and are not, but are the synagogue of Satan". (Rev 2:9)

It is important to note here that the two verses above are often misused to say that the Pharisees were blind to whom Y'shua was, because they "kept the Law". Nothing could be further from the truth, as Y'shua Himself said that the *Tenach* (Old Covenant) spoke of Him (Luke 24:44-45); and He Himself kept the *Torah* and said none of it was done away with (Matt 5:17-21).

The correct understanding of these statements has to do with the fact that many of the Pharisees (who were the most powerful religious group of the time – but not the only one) had misused the *Torah*. They did this to establish their own righteousness based on their ability to do the works of the *Torah* and/or their simply being born Jews. Both Y'shua and Paul castigated such people and said that this is why they missed the Messiah. A correct understanding of the *Torah*, resulting in obedience to the commandments of YHWH in faith (i.e., Heb 4:2), will point a person to Y'shua. He is the goal of the *Torah* (Rom 10:4 is incorrectly translated as "Y'shua is the end of the law" in almost all Bibles. The word "end" is *telos* in the Greek text, and should be translated as "goal". (See *Vines Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words* and also *Jewish New Testament Commentary* by David Stern.))

My *Verse by Verse Explanation of Revelation* study shows that the "battles" between these kingdoms are waged both in the heavenly realms as well as on earth. In the earthly realm, Satan's kingdom is identified with Edom, the (non-believing) world, Babylon or Rome. YHWH's Kingdom is associated with Israel, and specifically with David or Jacob:

"And he shall reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there shall be no end". (Luke 1:33)

The Kingdom prior to Y'shua

YHWH's work to establish His Kingdom can be seen by tracing the "faithful remnant" that has existed in every generation. With Abraham, he set aside a specific people, Israel, to be His "Messiah" that would bring about the Kingdom. The promise continued through Jacob and his sons, the twelve tribes of Israel.

Finally, with Moses and the children of Israel who were taken out of Egypt, the opportunity came to usher in the Messianic age. Due to the unbelief of the people (including the sins of the Golden Calf and the episode of the twelve spies), this chance was forfeited.

The earthly kingdom of Israel was established in David's time with the building of the Temple by Solomon. As seen above, a promise was made that this would be an everlasting kingdom – but there was still much to occur before that would happen.

The Kingdom at Y'shua's time

As we have discussed earlier in this study, another offer of the Kingdom came again with the arrival of Y'shua:

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

"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand". (Matt 10:7)

"But if I cast out devils by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God is come unto you". (Matt 12:28)

Once more, however, the sin of the people prevented this from happening; although the offer continued to be extended after Y'shua's death (Acts 3), probably until around the time the Temple was destroyed – at which point it was again withdrawn.

There will not be another offer of the Kingdom dependent on the faithfulness of human beings. YHWH will "forcibly" usher in His Kingdom at a future date as seen in the book of Revelation (as well as Scriptures such as Matthew chapters 24 and 25).

The Kingdom today

Although there is a literal earthly and heavenly Kingdom to come, there is also a degree to which we can "experience" the Kingdom in our lifetime. The "New Testament" states that those who are following YHWH in faith are said to already belong to the Kingdom. This is similar to saying that although we are presently "saved", we are not yet experiencing the "totality" of that salvation until we are actually with YHWH.

Since the Kingdom is a time where we are "one with YHWH", those things that would presently be considered "miraculous" would be normal in the Kingdom. Y'shua's twelve apostles could be said to have been "walking in the Kingdom" as they had superior, God-given insight into the Scriptures and were able to perform open miracles (those outside of the laws of nature).

This idea is not foreign to Jewish interpretation of Scripture; however, it definitely belongs in the area of mystical studies. For instance, consider the following from a recent book on Nachmanides, one of the most famous teachers in Jewish history. Teaching from Deut 11:22, he says:

"Possibly this cleaving includes the remembering of God and continually loving Him, that is, don't separate your thoughts from Him while you walk on the road, when you lie down, and when you get up. Such an individual will relate to people, but his heart, his innermost thoughts and feelings are always facing God. Furthermore, possibly the souls of such elevated individuals are bound up with the mystical life source, even while alive, for they themselves are a dwelling place for the Shekhinah". (Ramban: Philosopher and Kabbalist, Chayim J. Henoch, Jason Aronson, Inc., London, 1998, p.103.)

Conversely, the kingdom of Satan has its own "opportunity" for the miraculous. Some of the more common occurrences seen today are the actions of popular "psychics" as seen on television and in magazine advertisements. Although many of these people are charlatans, some do possess uncanny powers to reveal hidden truths about people. Offering people a "shortcut" into the spiritual realm is one of Satan's oldest tricks.

It should be noted, however, that not all things done in opposition to YHWH are blatantly "unbiblical". Y'shua warned in Matthew chapter 7 that there would even be those who did things in His Name that He would turn away.

Scripture teaches us that we are to pray for the coming of YHWH's Kingdom (i.e., the "Our Father" [Matthew 6] that we have seen is a typical Jewish prayer). Y'shua Himself prayed for this time in terms of our unification with Adonai:

(21) *"That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.*

(22) *And the glory which thou gavest me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one:*

(23) *I in them, and thou in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that thou hast sent me, and hast loved them, as thou hast loved me". (John 17:21-23)*

The Kingdom in Matthew 13

Matthew 13 is the single chapter of the "New Testament" with the most references to the Kingdom of YHWH. Here, Y'shua speaks of the Kingdom, using a series of parables. When asked by His disciples why He spoke in parables, He replied:

"...Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given".
(Mat 13:11)

Here, Y'shua is not saying that there was some elite group that could understand while others could not. Every person has the choice of responding to YHWH in faith, and receiving greater understanding of all of the word of YHWH. The key is humility (i.e., Moses was a great prophet due to his humble nature. Y'shua compare this characteristic to the faith of little children).

"Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven".
(Mat 18:4)

On the other hand, the pitfalls are many; including any religious doctrine not based in YHWH's revealed will as found in His *Torah*:

"Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of my Father which is in heaven". (Matt 7:21)

There are several other direct and indirect references to the Kingdom of YHWH in the Gospel of Matthew, the other Gospels and the epistles. We will also examine these as part of this section.

Y'shua offers eight parables in Matthew 13, which can be divided into several categories:
Acceptance and rejection of the Kingdom (13:3-8);
Growth of the Kingdom (13:31-32 & 33), with possible reference to evil within it;
Evil mixed in the Kingdom (13:24-30 & 47-48);
The Kingdom being worth everything to be part of (13:44 & 45-46);
The Kingdom with regard to teachers (13:52).

13:1-2 Sat by the sea side

"(1) The same day went Jesus out of the house, and sat by the sea side. (2) And great multitudes were gathered together unto him, so that he went into a ship, and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore".

Y'shua was sitting at the Sea of Galilee.

13:3-9 The first parable

"(3) And he spake many things unto them in parables, saying, Behold, a sower went forth to sow; (4) And when he sowed, some seeds fell by the way side, and the fowls came and devoured them up: (5) Some fell upon stony places, where they had not much earth: and forthwith they sprung up, because they had no deepness of earth: (6) And when the sun was up, they were scorched; and because they had no root, they withered away. (7) And some fell among thorns; and the thorns sprung up, and choked them: (8) But other fell into good ground, and brought forth fruit, some an hundredfold, some sixtyfold, some thirtyfold. (9) Who hath ears to hear, let him hear".

Parable: "A method of speech in which moral or religious truth is illustrated from the analogy of common experience". (Westminster Dictionary)

English - parable = story told to illustrate a moral or spiritual truth.
Hebrew - mashal = similitude, proverb.
Greek - parabole = similitude.

"... Indeed without a parable he (Y'shua) said nothing to them". (Matt 13:34)

Parables help explain deep spiritual concepts and realities which otherwise would be difficult, if not impossible, to understand. By using parables and similes: "like a lion", "like a snake", "like leaven", "like salt", etc. Y'shua the Messiah was able to teach those with functioning spiritual ears and eyes (investigative & willing minds) eternal Truth. If, however, a listener did not want to know, then the parable invariably appeared like a children's story; perhaps a little entertaining but of little practical use. The Master used parables nonetheless, whether his hearers wanted to know or not; simply because parables best explain the invisible realities of the Kingdom of Heaven.

In two places, Y'shua explains the meaning of His parables to some degree. In verses 18-23, he explains this first parable by showing four possible scenarios involving people who hear the Gospel message of the Kingdom. (See verse 18-23.) (The seventh parable being the second place.)

13:10-17 Why Y'shua spoke in parables

"(10) And the disciples came, and said unto him, Why speakest thou unto them in parables? (11) He answered and said unto them, Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. (12) For whosoever hath, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whosoever hath not, from him shall be taken away even that he hath. (13) Therefore speak I to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand. (14) And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Esaias, which saith, By hearing ye shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing ye shall see, and shall not perceive: (15) For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted, and I should heal them. (16) But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. (17) For verily I say unto you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which ye see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which ye hear, and have not heard them".

Isaiah's prophecy:

(9) "And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear ye indeed, but understand not; and see ye indeed, but perceive not.

(10) Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed".

(Isaiah 6:9-10)

As said earlier, Matthew 13 is the single chapter of the "New Testament" with the most references to the Kingdom of YHWH. Here, Y'shua speaks of the Kingdom using a series of parables. When asked by His disciples why He spoke in parables, He replied:

"...Because it is given unto you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given".
(Matt 13:11)

Ultimately, one understands that there is nothing that is secret, nor is there anything that YHWH hides from us. Truth is always here, in the present moment, and is obvious to all who have eyes to see it right in front of them. But, it is man's own carnal nature that keeps him from seeing the obvious. Man must rightfully blame himself for his failure to see that which he does not.

Spiritual concepts, designs, structures and realities are often misunderstood by us mortals simply because they are invisible to the human eye. The Messiah knew this and used parables to unveil and explain "things which had been kept secret from the foundation of the world" (Matt 13:35). Indeed he never preached a sermon without using a parable (verse 34). To the spiritually 'blind', the parables were at best 'mystifying tales' of little value. But to those with spiritual 'eyesight', they were visual aids, dramatic word-pictures of real life truths. Parables unlock spiritual mysteries hitherto beyond the believer's comprehension. Virtually every good teacher the world over uses 'parables', 'illustrations' and 'visual aids' to teach his/her lessons. So effective was this method of preaching, that when the Saviour had finished one great session of parabolic instruction, he asked this question: Matt 13:51 "Have you understood all these things? They say unto him, 'Yea Lord'.

Also see "The Kingdom in Matthew 13" above.

13:18-23 The interpretation of the first parable

"(18) Hear ye therefore the parable of the sower. (19) When any one heareth the word of the kingdom, and understandeth it not, then cometh the wicked one, and catcheth away that which was sown in his heart. This is he which received seed by the way side. (20) But he that received the seed into stony places, the same is he that heareth the word, and anon with joy receiveth it; (21) Yet hath he not root in himself, but dureth for a while: for when tribulation or persecution ariseth because of the word, by and by he is offended. (22) He also that received seed among the thorns is he that heareth the word; and the care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful. (23) But he that received seed into the good ground is he that heareth the word, and understandeth it; which also beareth fruit, and bringeth forth, some an hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty".

Why do equally honest, intelligent and diligent Bible scholars do not understand the Bible alike? Three observations are in order:

one's apparent honesty may be a deception (Matt 7:15);

intelligence is not important to an understanding of the Bible and can be a hindrance (1 Cor 1:18-21);
diligence in study without the desire to do what we learn is useless (John 7:17).

But Y'shua answered this question in the Parable of the Sower. This parable answers the question, Why do some understand the Gospel and some do not?

At the time Y'shua taught this lesson in the Galilee, He was followed by such large crowds that he got into a boat on the Sea of Galilee so he could address them all (Matt 13:1-2; Mark 4:1; Luke 8:4). But trouble had already begun to develop, and it would deepen. Though Y'shua's words and works proved Him to be from YHWH, the Jewish leaders had already stubbornly rejected Him by foolishly attributing His miracles to Satan (Matt 12:22-24). Soon after this, even some of His disciples quit following Him (John 6:66). Y'shua's disciples needed to be prepared for the fact that many would reject Him and His Word, that persecution would come upon His disciples; and that even some of them would turn back from following Him. We need to be prepared for the same realities.

Y'shua spoke of a sower going out to sow, a simple scene with which His hearers were very familiar (Matt 13:3; Mark 4:3; Luke 8:5). As the sower scattered the seeds of grain by hand on the ground, some seeds were blown by the wind on the footpath between the fields. Here the soil was so hardened by pounding feet that no seed could penetrate it. The sandals of passers-by crushed the grain and hungry birds quickly gobbled it up so that it bore no fruit (Matt 13:4; Mark 4:4; Luke 8:5).

Other grain fell upon thin soil over bedrock. This soil was warmed quickly by the spring sun, so the grain quickly germinated and sprouted. But the summer sun scorched the plants which could not send down roots for moisture because of the rock beneath, and the plants withered and died without producing any grain (Matt 13:5-6; Mark 4:5-6; Luke 8:6).

Some seeds fell where the soil was encumbered with thorns. As the good seed and the weeds grew together, the harder weeds used up the richness and moisture of the earth and blocked out the sunlight; and the stalks of grain were choked out and died (Matt 13:7; Mark 4:7; Luke 8:7).

But some seed fell upon good earth and yielded abundantly (Matt 13:8; Mark 4:8; Luke 8:8).

The lesson of this parable is so important, that all who are capable of understanding must do so (Matt 13:9; Mark 4:9; Luke 8:8).

Later, when Y'shua was alone with His disciples, they asked Him two things: why He spoke in parables and the explanation of this parable (Matt 13:10; Mark 4:10; Luke 8:9). Y'shua first explained His purpose for speaking in parables.

He was teaching "the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven" (Matt 13:11; "kingdom of God"; Mark 4:11; Luke 8:10). A "mystery" is simply a "hidden purpose or counsel". (Thayer 420). It is not necessarily difficult to understand. It's simply secret from general knowledge until revealed or made known. The "kingdom of heaven" is YHWH's rule, particularly in the hearts of His people (cf. Dan 4:3, 25-26, 34-35; Luke 17:20-21). This parable makes known how YHWH exercises His rule among men so that some are lost and some are saved. For those who heed, this profound concept will cease from being a mystery and become a revelation.

YHWH in His eternal wisdom and rule has decreed that some will understand and receive the Gospel and some will not. To those to whom it is given to understand, the parables of Y'shua simplify the truth and make it easier to remember. To those to whom it is not, the parables obscure the truth. Those with receptive hearts keep on learning. As with any body of knowledge, those who fail to learn the first principles soon forget what little they did learn. They have the ability to see, but they don't see; they can hear, but they don't hear; they can understand, but they don't understand. The problem is with their dullness of heart. For whatever reason, they refuse to accept the truth. Their refusal to comprehend prevents their turning to YHWH and receiving forgiveness of sins. Those who do see are blessed of YHWH. The prophets of old desired to know the precious truths they accepted (Matt 13:11-17; Mark 4:11-12; Luke 8:10; cf. Isaiah 6:9-10; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

According to Y'shua, in YHWH's sovereign will, the heart of the hearer determines his salvation. YHWH has not chosen in eternity before time to save certain individuals. He has chosen to save a certain kind of people, those who will receive the Word of His Son.

Y'shua then explained the Parable of the Sower, both to give His disciples a key to understand all parables and to help them understand this parable of paramount importance (Mark 4:13).

The seed represents the word of YHWH (Luke 8:11). The seed has the power to bring forth life (John 6:63), nor has that power diminished with the centuries (1 Peter 1:24-25).

The sower is the preacher (Mark 4:14; cf. Rom 10:14-17). His work is to faithfully proclaim the Word (2 Tim 4:1-5). If he accurately presents the Gospel and hearers reject it, it is their fault – not his.

The soils are four kinds of human heart:

The wayside soil is the heart so hardened that it refuses to understand the truth. Satan quickly sends false teachers to convince him of the error he wants to believe, so he never believes the truth and is not saved (Matt 13:19; Mark 4:15; Luke 8:12).

The stony ground soil represents the hearer who is ruled by his emotions and quickly and joyfully believes; but just as quickly falls away when pressure, persecution and temptation come. He lacks depth of conviction (Matt 13:20-21; Mark 4:16-17; Luke 8:13).

The thorny ground is the hearer who receives the Word, but he becomes "choked with cares, riches, and pleasures of life" and thus "becomes unfruitful". The things of this world crowd the kingdom out of his heart and life (Matt 13:22; Mark 4:18-19; Luke 8:14).

The good ground is the hearer with a good and honest heart. He understands the Word, accepts it, keeps it, and bears "fruit with patience". (Matt 13:23; Mark 4:20; Luke 8:15).

Others tell it as:

Some won't understand the message when it is presented. Why they don't, Y'shua doesn't exactly say. However, it could be that they had given little time to learning about the things of YHWH, and when the "secrets" of the Kingdom (see verses 11 & 35) were presented; they were clueless as to the importance. This lesson is reflected in the opposite (positive) sense in the two short parables in verses 44-46, where Y'shua shows that the Kingdom is worth more than anything this life has to offer; and the wise man would give up anything in this life for it.

The second person is one who grasps the message, but is overcome by certain "negative" influences (i.e., incorrect doctrine from others) and pressured into letting go of it.

The third type of person also has some understanding; but in this case, is overcome by certain "positive" things (i.e., love for the cares of the world) and also loses hold.

Lastly are those who are prepared, understand, and take hold.

So, why do some understand the Gospel and some do not? YHWH in His sovereignty has determined that those with good and honest hearts will understand, accept, and keep His Word and bear fruit with patience. It is all a matter of the attitude of your heart. In fact, your attitude toward the Word of YHWH will determine the destiny of your soul. *"Therefore take heed how you hear"*. (Luke 8:18)

How little is heard these days about the Kingdom of YHWH. Preachers must also beware of sowing 'corrupt seed', 'counterfeit seed', 'seed mixed with tares', and seed that is not based on the Real Word of YHWH.

13:24-30 The second parable

"(24) Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is likened unto a man which sowed good seed in his field: (25) But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat,

and went his way. (26) But when the blade was sprung up, and brought forth fruit, then appeared the tares also. (27) So the servants of the householder came and said unto him, Sir, didst not thou sow good seed in thy field? from whence then hath it tares? (28) He said unto them, An enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? (29) But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. (30) Let both grow together until the harvest: and in the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, Gather ye together first the tares, and bind them in bundles to burn them: but gather the wheat into my barn".

The second parable is also another that Y'shua gives some explanation to (in verses 37-43). These verses are really a synopsis of what is seen in the book of Revelation, which is in turn based on prophecies from the *Tenach* (Old Testament) showing YHWH's vengeance being carried out by His angels of judgment. Here, the concept of belonging to one of two Kingdoms is seen with the reference to Children of the Kingdom and Children of the wicked one. Note that the latter, though part of "Satan's kingdom", are also said to be in the Kingdom of YHWH until it is time for them to be cast out.

Interestingly, even those in Satan's kingdom are serving the will of YHWH:

"For God hath put in their hearts to fulfil his will, and to agree, and give their kingdom unto the beast, until the words of God shall be fulfilled". (Rev 17:17)

13:31-33 The third and fourth parables

"(31) Another parable put he forth unto them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like to a grain of mustard seed, which a man took, and sowed in his field: (32) Which indeed is the least of all seeds: but when it is grown, it is the greatest among herbs, and becometh a tree, so that the birds of the air come and lodge in the branches thereof. (33) Another parable spake he unto them; The kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, till the whole was leavened".

Verses 31-32 are the third parable and verse 33 the fourth. These short parables are the most peculiar. The first, involving the mustard seed, would indicate that the Kingdom of YHWH would grow enormously despite its humble beginnings. However, the reference to the birds coming to land in the branches may be an indication of evil in the Kingdom. The latter parable involves leaven, which is also normally a metaphor for sin or evil. In this case as well, it may seem that Y'shua is saying that evil spreads throughout the Kingdom.

A grain of Mustard seed

1. Small beginnings

Man's way of doing things is to start with an impressive show: to do something big, something spectacular, something that will win the attention and admiration of as many people as possible. This is natural and human, but very immature; especially when the end is total failure. YHWH's way is the very opposite. He begins everything He does in a small way: with a seed, an idea, a word, a baby. But then there is growth, increase and steady progress. Let us examine this spiritual concept of '**small beginnings**' and steady growth and see how the Most High seeks to work in our lives. And if He isn't already doing so, then let us determine to change.

Points to Note:

The size of the seed. It was the least (smallest) of all the seeds;
The man sowed it in his own field;
Its steady and continued growth. It became the largest plant in his garden.

"The common mustard of Palestine is sinapis nigra or black mustard. It grows wild, attaining the height of a horse and rider ... It is also cultivated in gardens for its seed, which is used as a condiment". (Westminster Dictionary of the Bible)

2. What is a seed?

The seed represents a characteristic of the Kingdom of Heaven. Initially, it may appear of small account and not worthy of attention. But, like that tiny mustard seed, YHWH's truth is infinitely powerful; and once it takes root in the human mind, it can become the most important thing in a believer's life. YHWH's Kingdom: His Word, His Law, His power, His authority, His fame and His ever-growing influence over all things may initially appear insignificant and small; but never underestimate truth and its power. This fact is encompassed in the

parable of the black mustard seed. Let us look at a few examples of this characteristic of the Kingdom of Heaven in the past.

Gideon:

- (14) "And the LORD looked upon him, and said, Go in this thy might, and thou shalt save Israel from the hand of the Midianites: have not I sent thee?"
(15) And he said unto him, Oh my Lord, wherewith shall I save Israel? behold, **my family is poor in Manasseh, and I am the least in my father's house.**
(16) And the LORD said unto him, **Surely I will be with thee**, and thou shalt smite the Midianites as one man". (Judges 6:14-16)

In other words, "*I don't have the money, my family is poor and I am the least important person in my clan*". If you study the full story, you will see how Gideon with YHWH's help routed the enemy and delivered Israel. He didn't think it could be done. But with the Almighty on his side he accomplished the impossible.

The Little Maid:

- (2) "And the Syrians had gone out by companies, and had brought away captive out of the land of Israel a **little maid**; and she waited on Naaman's wife.
(3) And she said unto her mistress, Would God my lord were with the prophet that is in Samaria! **for he would recover him of his leprosy.**
(4) And one went in, and told his lord, saying, Thus and thus said the maid that is of the land of Israel".
(2 Kings 5:2-4)

This little girl knew where healing could be obtained. And she overcame her natural hatred for her captor and imparted that knowledge (small, though, it appeared to be) to him. As a result, Naaman the Syrian was healed of his leprosy; and he and his family became worshippers of the Elohim of Israel.

The Little Boy:

- (5) "When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?
(6) And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.
(7) Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little.
(8) One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, saith unto him,
(9) **There is a lad here**, which hath **five barley loaves, and two small fishes**: but what are they among so many?
(10) And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand.
(11) And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would". (John 6:5-11)

This little lad was probably the most insignificant person in the crowd and his lunch box held so little - even the fish were '**small fish**'. And yet, what a miracle was accomplished with his gift. Five thousand people were fed. Imagine for a moment the thoughts of that lad as he witnessed the multiplication of his lunch. Would he ever forget it? All through eternity he will recall the story we know so well. It will never leave his memory; a mighty miracle worked on so small a gift.

The Young Man:

- (12) "And when it was day, certain of the Jews banded together, and bound themselves under a curse, saying that they would neither eat nor drink till they had killed Paul.
(13) And they were more than forty which had made this conspiracy.
(14) And they came to the chief priests and elders, and said, We have bound ourselves under a great curse, that we will eat nothing until we have slain Paul.
(15) Now therefore ye with the council signify to the chief captain that he bring him down unto you to morrow, as though ye would enquire something more perfectly concerning him: and we, or ever he come near, are ready to kill him.
(16) And when Paul's sister's son heard of their lying in wait, he went and entered into the castle, and told Paul.

- (17) Then Paul called one of the centurions unto him, and said, Bring this **young man** unto the chief captain: for he hath a certain thing to tell him.
- (18) So he took him, and brought him to the chief captain, and said, Paul the prisoner called me unto him, and prayed me to bring this young man unto thee, who hath something to say unto thee.
- (19) Then the chief captain took him by the hand, and went with him aside privately, and asked him, What is that thou hast to tell me?
- (20) And he said, The Jews have agreed to desire thee that thou wouldest bring down Paul to morrow into the council, as though they would enquire somewhat of him more perfectly.
- (21) But do not thou yield unto them: for there lie in wait for him of them more than forty men, which have bound themselves with an oath, that they will neither eat nor drink till they have killed him: and now are they ready, looking for a promise from thee". (Acts 23:12-21)

Here was a young man who saved Paul's life. If he had not done so, many Books of the New Covenant would never have been written. This boy saved Paul's life!

Little Creatures:

Read Prov 30:24-28 and note the following:

- Ants.** Tiny and apparently weak creatures: but wise, industrious and able to feed themselves;
- Conies.** Weak and defenseless, but wise enough to shelter in the rock;
- Locusts.** They have no king, but they are organised and a force to be feared;
- Lizards.** They can penetrate the palaces of kings.

Can we as believers learn from these tiny creatures? Can we do what they can do? Do we attempt those things? In spiritual matters, are we as able as those little creatures? Bear in mind that they were all put on earth by the Eternal to **illustrate spiritual lessons**. Are we learning those lessons? Are we applying them? These little creatures teach us about the Kingdom of Heaven. They are '**object lessons of great spiritual truths**' which you and I may apply on the spiritual plane. Are we wise, industrious, able to shelter in the Rock (Y'shua). Are we organised or disorganised? Have you ever penetrated the palace of a king or ruler? Learn from them.

3. What can we do?

From these examples, we can learn certain facts about the Kingdom of Heaven; of which every believer is a part. Here is a brief (though not complete) list of taboos of which to rid yourself:

- Never imagine that poverty, weakness or insignificance disqualifies you from being effective in the work of YHWH's Kingdom. The lack of size, power, wealth, good appearance and talent are no handicap in spiritual matters. If anything, being small may be a positive advantage. Remember Gideon! Even the weakest believer can pray – and prayer is a mighty weapon. Prayer can do anything that YHWH can do. Learn to pray: because more can be accomplished by prayer than by money, talent or even by hard work.
- Never underestimate the power and potential of the seed of Truth. Its power is measureless. It is well able, if sown with prayer, to outgrow any plant in the garden. Remember the black mustard seed.
- Never imagine that the Truth is unable to penetrate certain places. Like the ant, the spider and the lizard, truth can penetrate the palaces of kings. It can enter and flourish in any mind, if allowed to.
- Never suppose that by giving to the cause of the kingdom, you will somehow beggar yourself. Like that little boy, you will not only feed others; but the Most High will bless your gift no matter how small it may be – and you will get it all back with more besides. Remember the little boy and his little fish.
- Never think that the truth you possess is only for your own salvation. Pass it on. Remember the young man who saved Paul's life. Truth saves lives.
- Never withhold the message of salvation from your enemies, no matter how much you may dislike them. Pass on the truth and remember the little maid.

Be a mustard seed in the Garden of YHWH!

13:34-43 The interpretation of the second parable

"(34) All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: (35) That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world. (36) Then Jesus sent the multitude away, and went into the house: and his disciples came unto him, saying, Declare unto us the parable of the tares of the field. (37) He answered and said unto them, He that soweth the good seed is the Son of man; (38) The field is the world; the good seed are the children of the kingdom; but the tares are the children of the wicked one; (39) The enemy that sowed them is the devil; the harvest is the end of the world; and the reapers are the angels. (40) As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. (41) The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; (42) And shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. Who hath ears to hear, let him hear".

This parable probably teaches us about Truth; let's consider what might be hidden inside...

Most sermons preached today on the "Parable of the Wheat and the Tares" usually interpret the "children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one" as people. And on one level of Truth, this may be a true thing. In many cases they also appear to use these passages of Scripture to reinforce a certain belief system that may be different or more advanced than others. But then in many cases, they go on and add to it the idea that *they* are the only ones with the Truth. Therefore, *they* are the wheat and all others who believe differently are living in the darkness of error. That means that all others are the tares and will be burned. In the Christian arena, you hear this over and over and over again! And because such a teaching promotes the attitude of elitism and separatism instead of unity, there is indeed something wrong with this teaching.

As the First Century Christian, Clement of Alexandria stated: "Not all true things are Truth!!" And why is that? It's because Truth is multi-faceted, like a diamond with many sides. At any one time, the perception of mankind can only perceive just one angle or facet of something that is absolutely enormous. It has so very many angles and facets, that the human mind in one lifetime could never comprehend it. That is why we, who are seekers, must be "Champions of the Quest". Moving from one facet of Truth to another facet of Truth is indeed an adventure and a journey. And what is the treasure? It is simply for a glimpse at that one single ray of light that bursts forth its colors from that one particular facet. Then, it's time to move on to a new adventure for another glimpse at another facet.

There are many in the Christian arena who are so taken with the facet they have that they never move on. For them, their experience of Truth is limited to just that one area of light. But, because of limitations, does that make them "living in the darkness of error and ignorance"? Well, it may be a *true thing* that they are living in a kind of ignorance because they are not aware of the other facets of Truth; but to them, they have all the light they need from the facet they have! Ignorance may be a *true thing*, but *it is not Truth!* For we are *all* ignorant in that there are ever more facets of Truth to explore! The error is in the idea that the facet of Truth one has *is the only Truth!*

Another error is in the idea that because one has discovered a facet of Truth in a burst of light in revelation knowledge, that they are the only ones. Therefore, because they are the only ones, they need to start a new religion based upon that light! We see many denominations and non-denominations today based upon that very thing – and as a result, have corrupted themselves! But, the worst error of all is in the judgment upon those who seek more light, more revelation and more facets of Truth – which is not just error – it is evil and is a tare sown in with the wheat!

There is another facet of Truth to the parable of the wheat and the tares. And that is that the "children of the kingdom and the children of the wicked one" *are the fruit of our own thoughts, ideas, and perceptions*. In our own thoughts, ideas and perceptions are sown the good seed by the Son of man; and the bad seed by the wicked one. Note in the parable of the wheat and the tares in verse (25) "*But while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat...*" This happens to us while we are spiritually asleep. What we get in our own experience is *both* wheat and tares. Anyone who says they have no tares in their own life is utterly deceived! Our fruit are our children! And what are the children/fruit of the kingdom of heaven? It's revealed in Galatians 5:22 & 23, "*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance*"... Count them. How many are there? There are 9! And 9 in gematria means, "fruit, or fruit of the understanding (good or bad)". Our children (wheat or tares) are the fruit of our own understanding based upon our own thoughts, ideas, and perceptions! The fact is, I would love to have the tares in my own life burned to ashes.

And there is yet another facet of Truth to the parable of the wheat and the tares. And it has to do with Truth itself. In the world are many understandings, thoughts, ideas, and perceptions too numerous to count. And many of them say they are "The" Truth. The fact is, that sown among *all* understandings, thoughts, ideas, and perceptions in the world today are both wheat and tares. In all of them one can find, if he looks hard enough, many *true things* as well as many tares that need burning. And what does Y'shua say about these things? Read again verses 28-30, above – "*He said unto them, an enemy hath done this. The servants said unto him, Wilt thou then that we go and gather them up? But he said, Nay; lest while ye gather up the tares, ye root up also the wheat with them. Let them grow together until the harvest, and in the time of harvest "I" (not us) will say to the reapers...*"

Y'shua says to "*let the tares alone, lest you root up the wheat with them*" – at the time of the end of the world, HE will give the orders to root them up! It is not our job to be rooting up other people's fields; however, we can search out their fields for the wheat existing in all of them, for the wheat existing in other fields are new facets of Truth to behold that the light in us might be brighter and fuller. This is why many may consider adhering to the *Torah* an error. The fact is, that existing in those other fields are both *true things and error*. It is NOT our job to eliminate them, because to do so would be in disobedience to the will of YHWH as stated above in verses 28-30.

However, it is our job to be able to *discern* between the two. What is true and what is error? The big, big question! The truth is that it all depends! And it all depends, based upon how much light we have managed to accumulate in all of our searching! It's different for each individual. It could be that one individual has discovered more facets of Truth than another. What one might consider a true thing may be different from what another might consider true.

It is very important that we not box ourselves in regarding the Truth, for it closes the doors to much, much light. *Many fear what is different*. This is a tare and not wheat. The fact is, we've been given a guide who will guide us into all Truth. And that guide is the Spirit of Truth. We need not fear where we go, for we have a mighty steed called the Holy Spirit to guide us no matter how dangerous the journey! We can go to these places in absolute safety, take from them what is wheat and leave the tares. Again, the skill in doing this is in the discernment between the two.

This now leads us to yet another facet of Truth. And it has to do with the very "nature" of Truth itself. As absolutely everything in the universe and in the heavens is a trinity; so, too, is Truth a trinity. Truth is a trinity as is everything else, whose foundation is Love. It's comprised of three: Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge. Knowledge without Wisdom is not Truth. Understanding without Knowledge is not Truth. And Wisdom without Understanding is not Truth. For something to be Truth, it absolutely *MUST* have all three elements.

I'm sure we all have seen people who have great, great Knowledge; but their Wisdom in the use of that Knowledge is much to be desired. This is probably the error that has caused the splintering all through Christianity. People who have much Knowledge, but absolutely no Wisdom. People who have much Understanding, but no Knowledge. And People who have much Wisdom, with no Understanding. Without the trinity of the three in perfect operation, it is *not Truth*; it is rather a *true thing*! There is actually only one who has all three in perfect operation, and that is Y'shua Messiah Himself. This is why He had the confidence to say He was "The Truth".

In order for a trinity to be perfect, all three elements must be working in proper order. If one element of a trinity falls, it changes and weakens the whole trinity. The trinity of Wisdom, Understanding, and Knowledge fell when the luminary light bearer of Knowledge, Lucifer, lifted himself up in pride.

Take heed as to what one considers knowledge. And if you sense in yourself the "pride of knowledge", this is a tare and not wheat. Does the light of your revelation say to you, "This is THE Truth, and none else" or "Everyone else is so ignorant!" Take heed to what you are thinking, for your knowledge is not mixed with Wisdom or Understanding. One could have a true thing that is not Truth at all!

Always remember, *not all true things are Truth*. Make sure that all forms of knowledge are mixed with both wisdom and understanding. If it lacks any of these, pick and choose the wheat very carefully from among the tares. But, also take care as to what you call tares: for it may simply be another level of Truth you are unaware of; therefore, hinder not the Champions of the Quest.

13:44-46 The fifth and sixth parables

"(44) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. (45) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: (46) Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it".

Verse 44 is the fifth parable and verses 45-46 are the sixth. These two short parables are less difficult to interpret. As mentioned above, Y'shua makes it clear that the most important thing in this life is to make certain you make it into the Kingdom of YHWH - it is worth more than anything this world can offer:

"For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matt 16:26)

Y'shua's reference to a "pearl" is based on Jewish mystical teachings:

Bahir 72: "Another explanation of "Bring to life Your works in the midst of Years": What is this like? A king had a beautiful pearl, and it was the treasure of his kingdom. When he is happy, he embraces it, kisses it, places it on his head, and loves it". (*The Bahir: Illumination, Translation Introduction and Commentary* by Aryeh Kaplan, Samuel Weiser, Inc. York Beach, Maine, 1979, p. 26. The *Bahir* is one of the oldest texts in Hebrew mystical literature. Aryeh Kaplan's comments to this verse state that "the pearl" is a reference to the Kingdom. Kaplan's comments also indicate that "the field" is a reference to the spiritual world around us, within which one finds the Kingdom, a treasure.)

The Kingdom's Treasures

Just like the precious metals and gems of the physical world, many of YHWH's spiritual treasures lie hidden from human view. To possess them, we must dig deep and search; and when we find them there is still work to be done: *refining, shaping, polishing* and *finishing* before their eternal value can be fully appreciated. YHWH has organised a spiritual Treasure Hunt for mankind, and all of us are taking part in it. He has extremely good things available for His people, but His best treasures are always hidden or camouflaged.

"(44) Again, the **kingdom of heaven** is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field. (45) Again, the **kingdom of heaven** is like unto a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls: (46) Who, when he had found **one pearl of great price**, went and sold all that he had, and bought it". (Mat 13:44-46)

These parables teach us several basic truths about the **Kingdom of Heaven**.

1. The Worth of YHWH's Kingdom

The Kingdom of Heaven is the most wonderful and powerful Kingdom in the entire universe. Its spiritual resources are endless and its moral wealth incalculable. The Kingdom of Heaven, also called the Kingdom of YHWH, is in fact the subject of most of the Saviour's sermons. He came to earth to preach the Gospel of the Kingdom of YHWH. In this passage, the worth of the Kingdom of Heaven and particularly of its King is likened to an inestimable find. The structure of this Kingdom may be briefly described as follows:

Its King: El Shaddai, YHWH - the Almighty God of Israel;

YHWH's Son: Y'shua the Messiah;

Its Motivator: The Holy Spirit of the Most High;

Its Laws: Heaven's eternal constitution;

Its Citizens: The holy angels and the redeemed host;

Its Manifesto: The programme of salvation and future projects;

Its Resources: The spiritual/physical expanse of the universe;

Its Track Record: An unbroken sequence of achievement and victory.

Oh yes, the Kingdom of Heaven is a priceless treasure! No voice can do it justice, no brush can paint it and no pen can adequately describe its matchless worth. Only when we enter it will we know.

2. Temporarily Hidden from our Eyes

But for all this, the Kingdom of Heaven is currently invisible to the human eye. And even though everything about it is more lasting than the things we can see, the fact is - the Kingdom of YHWH is currently hidden from human view. Indeed, YHWH has purposely hidden it. It is, as it were, "*buried in a field*". To find this

hidden treasure requires effort on one's part. One must diligently search for it. Consider these verses about searching for hidden things:

"(31) *Therefore take no thought, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, Wherewithal shall we be clothed?* (32) *(For after all these things do the Gentiles seek:) for your heavenly Father knoweth that ye have need of all these things.* (33) **But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you**". (Mat 6:31-33)

"(7) **Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and ye shall find; knock, and it shall be opened unto you:** (8) **For every one that asketh receiveth; and he that seeketh findeth; and to him that knocketh it shall be opened**". (Mat 7:7-8)

"*If ye then be risen with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God*". (Col 3:1)

It is vitally important that everyone in this audience accept the Almighty's astonishing offer of salvation. It is free! Take up His offer and become a citizen of the Kingdom of Heaven - Now!

3. Recognising Value

Before beginning any search, one must be able to recognise things of value and also the things that are worthless. Oh, how often people exchange things of great worth for valueless trifles and trinkets. They exchange:

Honour and Truth for ... wealth

Virginity and Virtue for ... cheap thrills

Friendship and Love for ... power and authority

Time and Effort for ... perishable trinkets

Good Health for ... temporary enjoyment

Respect and Decency for ... applause and fame

Eternal Salvation for ... the pleasures of sin

Unlike the experienced merchantman seeking goodly pearls, they are unable to recognise a valuable thing when they see it; and they barter away their most precious possessions for worthless junk.

4. Total Commitment Commanded

Though entry to the eternal **Kingdom of Heaven** is freely obtainable through Y'shua the Messiah, a believer must put forth some effort to realise available benefits. Both parables stress the important point of total commitment.

At All Cost:

"*Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto treasure hid in a field; the which when a man hath found, he hideth, and for joy thereof goeth and selleth all that he hath, and buyeth that field*". (Matt 13:44)

The Pearl Merchant:

"*Who, when he had found one pearl of great price, went and sold all that he had, and bought it*". (Matt 13:44-46)

Total commitment is not simply an ideal which believers may or may not strive for. It is commanded.

"And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might". (Deut 6:5)

"*And now, Israel, what doth the LORD thy God require of thee, but to fear the LORD thy God, to walk in all his ways, and to love him, and to serve the LORD thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul*".

(Deut 10:12) (See also Deut 11:13)

"*Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind*". (Matt 22:37)

There are, of course, millions of believers who do not render this kind of service. They barely believe. They serve the Most High, but with a subdued fervour and a restrained commitment. Most start off very well, but too many slumped back into a kind of half-hearted service. Their results will not be good. It is a sad truth, but they will be the eternal losers in the long run.

13:47-50 The seventh parable

"(47) Again, the kingdom of heaven is like unto a net, that was cast into the sea, and gathered of every kind: (48) Which, when it was full, they drew to shore, and sat down, and gathered the good into vessels, but cast the bad away. (49) So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, (50) And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth".

This parable resembles the second of two parables, showing that both good and evil will co-exist in the Kingdom until the end of the age. (The first example being the first parable.)

Why were Parables given?

- (1) **Give ear, O my people, to my law:** incline your ears to the words of my mouth.
- (2) **I will open my mouth in a parable:** I will utter dark sayings of old:
- (3) **Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us.**
- (4) **We will not hide them from their children, shewing to the generation to come the praises of the LORD, and his strength, and his wonderful works that he hath done.**
- (5) **For he established a testimony in Jacob, and appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that they should make them known to their children:**
- (6) **That the generation to come might know them, even the children which should be born; who should arise and declare them to their children:**
- (7) **That they might set their hope in God, and not forget the works of God, but keep his commandments:** (Psalm 78:1-7)

Parables are illustrative stories, which explain spiritual concepts and truths **about YHWH's law**. They were used extensively by the Saviour to unveil "...things, which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world". (Matt 13:35) Their main purpose is to explain the Almighty's involvement in human affairs. To those who understand parables, they impart a wealth of information; but to those who don't, they are a mystery. The parables of Y'shua teach faith and obedience. The parable of the dragnet adds some awesome truths. When we analyse this parable we learn the following:

The Net

The dragnet may be compared to the different spiritual efforts made to gather souls into the Kingdom of YHWH. Fishermen use a variety of hooks, lures and nets to catch fish; each method having its own particular advantage or disadvantage. Winning souls is similar to catching fish. It includes activities like:

Prayer Meetings ... calling upon YHWH's assistance to guide the fish to the net. Prayer is the most successful form of fishing for souls. Sad to say, few Christians realise this fact. Prayer harnesses YHWH's power when fishing for souls.

Gospel Sermons ... throwing out the net. Evangelical radio and TV broadcasts, Bible study, Youth activities, etc. This is man's part in fishing for souls.

Gospel Literature ... The written word is still one of the most powerful tools in winning souls. The Protestant Reformation owes much of its success to the Bible which began to be printed in large numbers in the 16th century.

Who knows, the Internet may catch more souls than the printing press. We'll have to wait and see. However, the Internet is also a very powerful *technological communication tool*, in which there are literally millions of websites offering articles, videos, sermons, and other teaching tools to help people learn. The key, though, is using *discernment* in these matters, because there is also a lot of false teaching on the Internet.

The Fishermen

The chief fisherman in this expedition is the Saviour himself. He is far more interested in catching '**fish**' (human souls) than we ever will be. His understanding of the human mind is all-important, and his success in bringing fish to the net is unparalleled. When a fish is caught, it normally brings other fish with it. One could conclude from this fact that a "*captured fish could well become a fisherman*".

"And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men". (Matt 4:19)

The Fish

In this parable, the fish represent human beings. You will find every kind of individual in the synagogue/church: rich and poor, educated and ignorant, black and white, young and old. YHWH nets every

kind of fish: some turn out to be good fish, others bad. As in the parable of the **wheat and the tares**, every kind is found in the church of the Most High – both bad and good alike.

The Judgment

But there is coming the Day of Judgment, a time of sifting and sorting when the fish will be closely examined. In Bible terms, that sort program is called the Day of Judgment. Let no one forget that the Day of Judgment is near. The Saviour's return **is very near**, 'even at the doors'. When he comes, the great '**sort program**' will take effect. Unclean fish, those unfit for spiritual consumption (see Lev 11:9-12) will be cast out. They are an abomination to YHWH.

"(10) ... for we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. (11) For it is written, As I live, saith the Lord, every knee shall bow to me, and every tongue shall confess to God. (12) **So then every one of us shall give account of himself to God**". (Rom 14:10)

"For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ; **that every one may receive the things done in his body, according to that he hath done, whether it be good or bad**". (2 Cor 5:10)

(11) "And I saw a great white throne, and him that sat on it, from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away; and there was found no place for them.

(12) "And I saw the dead, small and great, stand before God; and the books were opened: and another book was opened, which is the book of life: and **the dead were judged out of those things which were written in the books, according to their works**". (Rev 20:11-12)

For some people, the Day of Judgment will be a day of eternal bliss. For others, it will be a day of terrifying anguish. Multiplied millions of souls will then realise that they are spiritually unfit for the kingdom. They have been weighed in the balance and found wanting – they are unclean fish! They will be thrown to utter destruction. Oh, what a frightening prospect is displayed here! Make sure you are saved and walking right with YHWH *in Torah*.

The Destination

Many Believers believe that the Almighty is too good to eternally banish the persistent sinner from the Kingdom of YHWH and that somehow; perhaps after many years of purification in the fires of purgatory, every soul will eventually make it to paradise. This is a fallacy. The Bible teaches the very opposite. It clearly spells out that the destination of the wicked is hellfire – not some transitional state called purgatory; a word which doesn't even appear in the Bible. Some folks will not accept this fact, but it will not quietly go away to please them. It is scheduled to come to pass – and come to pass it will, no matter what anyone believes. Y'shua the Messiah says this:

"(49) So shall it be at the end of the world: the angels shall come forth, and sever the wicked from among the just, (50) And shall cast them into the furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth". (Matt 13:49-50)

In the parable of the wheat and the tares (weeds), the Saviour voices the same truth; that the unbeliever will perish at the coming Judgment. Not that unbelievers are worse than believers. Oh no! Many unbelievers are apparently good people, who are often better than believers. But unbelievers are sinners. They have rejected pardon for the sins they have committed. **Their greatest sin is unbelief, a sin of the mind and heart which is infinitely more weighty than that of the flesh.** And for those sins, **particularly their unbelief**, they will die. The believer, on the other hand, has accepted pardon for all his/her sins, and makes sure to sincerely **repent** for any sins committed in their walk with YHWH. He/she will live because of his/her faith.

"(40) As therefore the tares are gathered and burned in the fire; so shall it be in the end of this world. (41) The Son of man shall send forth his angels, and they shall gather out of his kingdom all things that offend, and them which do iniquity; (42) And **shall cast them into a furnace of fire: there shall be wailing and gnashing of teeth**".

(Mat 13:40-42)

"And the sea gave up the dead which were in it; and death and hell delivered up the dead which were in them: and they were judged every man according to their works.

(14) And death and hell were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.

(15) **And whosoever was not found written in the book of life was cast into the lake of fire**". (Rev 20:13-14)

Summary

The lessons from the parable of the dragnet are as follows:

All are invited to the Kingdom of YHWH and all kinds of 'fish' enter the net (the church/synagogue).

But before anyone is permitted to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, there will be a time of *sorting, evaluation and judgment*. 'Unclean fish' will be thrown out.

On that Day of Judgment (Great white throne), millions will realise that they are not only excluded from the Kingdom of Heaven, but are consigned to the fires of Hell.

Every believer should ensure that he / she is living a holy life. Only then can they be sure of being sorted with the clean fish – those who have been cleansed by living faith in the Y'shua the Saviour, the Son of the living Elohim.

13:51-52 The eighth parable

"(51) Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord. (52) Then said he unto them, Therefore every scribe which is instructed unto the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which bringeth forth out of his treasure things new and old".

This last parable is a different type than the previous seven, in that it is directed to those who will understand enough of the Kingdom in order to teach its truths to others. The reference to "*things new and old*" may have to do with having greater spiritual insight into the Scriptures that they already knew based on the insights revealed to them through Y'shua.

Note that this parable comes on the heels of Y'shua asking His disciples if they understood everything to that point:

"Jesus saith unto them, Have ye understood all these things? They say unto him, Yea, Lord". (Matt 13:51)

We will examine other parables and aspects of the Kingdom in the next section of this study.

13:53-54 And when he was come into his own country

"(53) And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these parables, he departed thence. (54) And when he was come into his own country, he taught them in their synagogue, insomuch that they were astonished, and said, Whence hath this man this wisdom, and these mighty works?" (Matt 13:53-54)

"And when he was come into his own country". Not where Y'shua was born – Bethlehem. It was Nazareth, where He was educated and where his parents and close relatives lived. He "taught them in their synagogue".

This is the boldness of Y'shua. Not long ago they wanted to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-29); now He is back again teaching amongst the scribes and rulers in their own synagogues. They were astonished by his wisdom until...

13:55-58 Is not this the carpenter's son?

"(55) Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? (56) And his sisters, are they not all with us? Whence then hath this man all these things? (57) And they were offended in him. But Jesus said unto them, A prophet is not without honour, save in his own country, and in his own house. (58) And he did not many mighty works there because of their unbelief". (Matt 13:53-58)

"Is not this the carpenter's son?" Meaning Joseph, who was by trade a carpenter, and whose son Y'shua was supposed to be; and who very probably was now dead, which may be the reason he is not mentioned by name. The Greek word here used for "carpenter" signifies any mechanic, or artificer. The Syriac expresses it by a word, which signifies both a carpenter and a blacksmith; and Munster's Hebrew Gospel renders it, "the blacksmith's son". But the generally received notion of the ancient Christians is, that he was a carpenter, and that Y'shua was brought up to the same business, which lay in making ploughs and yokes". (John Gill's Exposition of the entire Bible.)

Yoseph was a well-known and best – or perhaps the only carpenter in Nazareth. What the people of Nazareth could not comprehend was how one with the origin and environment of Y'shua's here in Nazareth could possess the wisdom which he appeared to have in his teaching. That has often puzzled people – how

a boy whom they knew could become the man he apparently is after leaving them. They knew Yoseph, Miriam, the brothers (four of them named) and sisters (names not given). Y'shua passed here as the son of Yoseph, and these were younger brothers and sisters (half-brothers and sisters, technically).

Was Y'shua a carpenter?

In addition, Y'shua was born King of the Jews (Matt 2:2). The King of the Jews must Himself be Jewish (Deut 17:15). His aunt Elizabeth was Jewish (a descendant of Aaron, Moses' brother) and His uncle Zachariah was a Jewish priest (Luke 1:5, 36). Y'shua was circumcised according to Jewish law (Luke 2:21, Lev 12:2-3), and redeemed according to Jewish law (Luke 2:22-23, Num 18:15). His mother atoned according to Jewish law (Luke 2:24, Lev 12:6-8). He is called *The Consolation of Israel* (Luke 2:25) and *The Glory of Thy People Israel* (Luke 2:32). Y'shua was born a Jew.

But where do we get the idea from, that Y'shua Himself was a carpenter? Perhaps another myth? Significant manuscripts of Mark support Matt 13:55 which only describes Y'shua as "son of the carpenter"; not as the "carpenter, son of Mary". Indeed, the early 3rd century church writer Origen writes against Celsus' assertion that Y'shua was a mere carpenter, that "*in none of the Gospels current in the churches is Jesus Himself ever described as being a carpenter*" (Origen, *Against Celsus*, 6.36).

This is still a widely-debated topic (Vincent Taylor, *Mark*, p.299f vesus Cranfield, *Mark*, p.194f); however, Geza Vermes (Geza Vermes, *Jesus the Jew*, p.21. Cf. D. Flusser, *Jesus*, Herder & Herder, New York, 1969, p.20; yYeb.9b; yKid.66a, bAZ 50b) highlights an Aramaic use of the term carpenter/craftsman (*naggar*) to metaphorically describe a 'scholar' or 'learned man'. Nevertheless, the majority of wandering rabbis had a trade to support their learning and teaching; and there is no reason to doubt that carpentry may have been an occupation of Y'shua. Although Origen dismisses Y'shua's role as carpenter, the earlier church writer Justin (Justin Martyr, a 2nd century Christian writer writing in *Dialogue with Trypho the Jew*, 88) cites it. He says that "*He was considered to be the son of Joseph the carpenter; and He appeared without comeliness, as the Scriptures declared; and He was deemed a carpenter (for He was in the habit of working as a carpenter when among men, making ploughs and yokes; by which He taught the symbols of righteousness and an active life)*".

Y'shua and Jewish Education

During the so-called 'missing years' filled in by spurious apocryphal gospels, Y'shua undoubtedly received a Jewish education – perhaps along these lines: "*at 5 years of age*" he would be "*ready for the study of the written Torah, at 10 years of age for the study of the Oral Torah, . . . at 20 for pursuing a vocation, at 30 for entering one's full vigour*". Interestingly, Y'shua did just that, entering his ministry at about 30 years of age.

Also at 30, a Jewish father might publicly declare his son to be the inheritor of his estate (or an adopted son in his place). The voice that spoke out of heaven at Y'shua's baptism (Luke 3:22) was YHWH, declaring Y'shua to be His true son and inheritor. (The fifth of the Jewish Lifecycle customs – Matt 3:17)

The Jews of Y'shua's era were world innovators in comprehensive universal education (Introduced during the 1st century B.C. and the 1st century A.D.). The majority (if not all) were taught to read and write. The philosopher Seneca remarked that the Jews were the only people who knew the reasons for their religious faith – something which the apostle Peter continued to commend (1 Peter 3:15). We often reflect on how Christianity was the initiator behind much of the modern education system, yet that motivation derives from its Jewish educational foundations.

The remark of a contemporary Jewish Rabbi was that education began at six, and from then on we "*stuff him [with Scriptural teaching] like an ox*" (Mishnah, *Baba Bathra*, 21a.) Y'shua only needed to hint at Scriptural verses for his hearers to recollect the whole contexts in their minds. Their minds worked like *Strong's Concordances*. The Scriptural knowledge of most Jewish children then would have surpassed that of most church leaders now; nevertheless, it was faith and application that YHWH was looking for. Lessons began with the Book of Leviticus (a reason given for this is that Leviticus teaches on pure sacrifices, and the sacrifice of a child is pure) at age 5 or 6 and progressed onward. Higher education began at 15 when one would embark on theological discussion with learned teachers or Rabbis. (Mishnah, *Aboth*, 5.21)

We know that Y'shua was growing in understanding by the age of 12, as he was found in the Temple precincts "*both listening and asking questions*" (Luke 2:46). The contemporary method of teaching included questioning to elicit intelligent responses, so Y'shua's asking of questions may not have been just to obtain knowledge but also to teach it. Indeed, "*they were astonished at his understanding and answers*".

Memorisation was the chief technique of learning. Hence, this is the reason why Y'shua's followers were able to reproduce his teachings so accurately when they were later written down as our Gospels. Given this fact, it means that we can have faith in the accurate transmission of Y'shua's teachings. We know from early documentation that Matthew's was the earliest Gospel and that it was written in Hebrew. Y'shua himself must have taught in Hebrew (as all rabbis did), as he says that "not one yodh or little horn (this is the literal meaning of keraia the Greek word here) shall pass away from the law" (Matt 5.18) referring to the smallest Hebrew letter *yodh* and the small hook or serif on others. Our Greek Gospels are translations themselves of Y'shua's Hebrew teachings and possibly, too, of an original Hebrew Gospel of Matthew. (According to Papias, an early church bishop at the beginning of the Second Century.)

The study of Greek in Palestine in Y'shua's day was not encouraged, although it was a necessity of daily life in the *Diaspora* lands outside of Palestine. Greek philosophy was equally denounced in Palestine. Early church theologians were later to remark "*what has Athens to do with Jerusalem*" (Tertullian), decrying Greek thinking blend with Christian doctrine. It is unfortunate, in the least, that even in the church; "New Testament Greek" is studied in preference to Hebrew, and the Greek classics instead of Jewish writings such as the *Talmud* and *Mishnah*.

Two rabbinic stories give a flavour of the Palestinian attitude towards Greek:

A Rabbi wrote: "*There were a 1000 pupils in my father's school, of whom 500 studied Torah and 500 studied Greek philosophy; and of the latter none are left but myself and my nephew*" (*Mishnah, Baba Kamma, 83a*)

"A Rabbi asked 'since I have learnt the whole of Torah may I now study Greek philosophy?'" the reply came "This book of Torah shall not depart out of your mouth but you shall meditate in it day and night (Joshua 1.8)', 'now go and search out at which hour it is neither day nor night and devote it to the study of Greek philosophy"

Access to copies of the Hebrew Scriptures was virtually universal via the synagogues and schools. In addition, every household might purchase one scroll or another according to their wealth. However, it was unlawful to make copies of small portions out of context through fear of transmission of error. Exceptions were made for certain passages though: Genesis 1-9 (the history of the world from creation to the flood); Leviticus 1-9; Numbers 1-10, 35. Since Scripture was memorised from a young age, these manuscripts were luxuries rather than essential.

Given all of this information, we can see that Y'shua learned his Scripture as any other Jewish boy did. If He was trained to be a full-time carpenter from a boy, He would possibly not have had the time to learn. And later on in His life, He would not have time to travel and preach about the Kingdom of YHWH. Y'shua was earmarked for education to spend time in studying the Scriptures.

But being the Son of YHWH, there is supernatural help for Y'shua to obtain wisdom: "*And the child grew and became strong, filled with wisdom; and the favor of God was upon him*". (Luke 2:40) Bear in mind that knowledge (of Scripture) and wisdom is not synonymous.

It is interesting to note the Bible indicates that Timothy, who had known the Scriptures (the Old Covenant) from his childhood which were able to make him wise unto salvation (2 Tim 3.15).

Also see the section, "Y'shua's childhood and upbringing", under "Matt 2:22-23 "... that He should be called a Nazarene".

James the Brother of Y'shua

"Is not this the carpenter's son? is not his mother called Mary? and his brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? (Matt 13:55 and Mark 6:3)

"But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother". (Gal 1:19)

(5) *"But there rose up certain of the sect of the Pharisees which believed, saying, That it was needful to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the law of Moses.*

(6) *And the apostles and elders came together for to consider of this matter.*

(7) *And when there had been much disputing, Peter rose up, and said unto them, Men and brethren, ye know how that a good while ago God made choice among us, that the Gentiles by my mouth should hear the word of the gospel, and believe.*

- (8) And God, which knoweth the hearts, bare them witness, giving them the Holy Ghost, even as he did unto us;
- (9) And put no difference between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith.
- (10) Now therefore why tempt ye God, to put a yoke upon the neck of the disciples, which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?
- (11) But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved, even as they.
- (12) Then all the multitude kept silence, and gave audience to Barnabas and Paul, declaring what miracles and wonders God had wrought among the Gentiles by them.
- (13) And after they had held their peace, **James answered**, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me:
- (14) Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name.
- (15) And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written,
- (16) After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:
- (17) That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things.
- (18) Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world.
- (19) Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God:
- (20) But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood.
- (21) For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day". (Acts 15:5-21)

Some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, "It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses". ...James replied, "My brothers, listen to me...I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to YHWH (with too many Instructions from Torah all at once), but we should write to them (to start) to abstain from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood".

Antiquities 20. 9.1 199-203: "The younger Ananus, who had been appointed to the high priesthood, was rash in his temper and unusually daring. He followed the school of the Sadducees, who are indeed more heartless than any of the other Jews, as I have already explained, when they sit in judgment. Possessed of such a character, Ananus thought that he had a favorable opportunity because Festus was dead and Albinus was still on the way. And so he convened the judges of the Sanhedrin, **and brought before them the brother of Jesus, the one called Christ, whose name was James, and certain others, and accusing them of having transgressed the law delivered them up to be stoned.** Those of the inhabitants of the city who were considered the most fair-minded and who were strict in observance of the law were offended at this. They therefore secretly sent to King Agrippa urging him, for Ananus had not even been correct in his first step, to order him to desist from any further such actions. Certain of them even went to meet Albinus, who was on his way from Alexandria, and informed him that Ananus had no authority to convene the Sanhedrin without his consent. Convinced by these words, Albinus angrily wrote to Ananus threatening to take vengeance upon him. King Agrippa, because of Ananus' action, deposed him from the high priesthood which he had held for three months and replaced him with Jesus the son of Damnaeus". (Louis Feldman translation)

The death of James does not appear in the New Covenant. The events described by Josephus occurred about 62 AD – which is just about when the latest writing of the New Covenant, the Book of Acts, comes to a close – with Paul waiting in Rome for two years after arriving there in 60 AD. James is depicted in Acts as the leader (with Peter) of the Jerusalem Believers after the death of Y'shua, and depicts James as adhering to the full Jewish law.

Josephus' account is interesting in that it demonstrates the Sadducees as enemies of James and the believers to the extent of resorting to summary execution to dispose of them. The accusation against James is that he transgressed the Law of Moses. But he is defended by those "*strict in the observance of the law*", which is a way Josephus often refers to the Pharisees. The dispute here thus seems to be another of the Sadducee-Pharisee arguments, with James the victim in the middle; Acts depicts Paul as being in the same spot three years earlier (Acts 23:6-10).

Thus there was some question in the minds of both Jews as well as the Nazarenes as to whether James completely supported adherence to the Law of Moses. It is interesting to see Pharisees defending James, as some Pharisees are also shown in the Acts passage cited above to belong to James' group of Netsari. And in Acts 5:34, Rabbi Gamaliel of the Pharisees similarly defends Peter and John.

Some scholars have questioned the authenticity of this reference to Y'shua just as they have the Testimonium Flavianum passage. But the current consensus is that there is no indication this is a late interpolation; if it is, it is an unusually subtle and skilful one. In addition, the implied Sadducee-Pharisee factional battle and the vague accusation of transgression of the Torah support the idea that whoever was the subject of this passage played a role in the city similar to that of James; thus the context supports the name identification.

It appears that Josephus was not in Jerusalem at this time to witness the events. From his autobiography, he was most likely on his way to Rome.

END OF Section V - Kingdom Parables

VARIOUS SECTIONS ON THE KINGDOM OF YHWH

Additional References

The *Kingdom of YHWH* is mentioned in other places in Scripture as well as in Jewish commentaries. In this section, we will examine some of these references as a supplement to our Matthew study.

The Kingdom and forgiveness

Elsewhere in Matthew, Y'shua alludes to the Kingdom when answering Peter's question on the subject of forgiving others. The lesson is simple, yet important. If you do not forgive, you will not be forgiven. This is often overlooked today. There are many people who think they have an easy path to heaven just because they "believe", while holding unforgiving grudges against others they feel did them wrong. Y'shua teaches otherwise:

"(21) Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? (22) Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven. (23) **Therefore is the kingdom of heaven** likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. (24) And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. (25) But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. (26) The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (27) Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. (28) But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. (29) And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (30) And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. (31) So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. (32) Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: (33) Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? (34) And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. (35) So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses". (Matt 18:21-35)

The kingdom and Eunuchs

A more peculiar Kingdom teaching relating to "eunuchs", is found in the following chapter of Matthew:

"*For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it*". (Mat 19:12)

Some insight to the above can be found by going back to the *Torah* where YHWH command that eunuchs were not allowed to enter the Tabernacle/Temple:

"*He that is wounded in the stones, or hath his privy member cut off, shall not enter into the congregation of the LORD*". (Deut 23:1)

In the Kingdom of YHWH, however, even these eunuchs (as well as Gentiles) will have access to all the things of YHWH. This is because the kingdom is a time of *tikkun* (repair), where things that are now separated are to be united:

(4) "For thus saith the LORD unto **the eunuchs** that keep my sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant;

(5) Even unto them will I give in mine house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, **that shall not be cut off**". Isaiah 56:4-5

Entry into the Kingdom

Y'shua offers another Kingdom parable where he teaches the principle that, although we may accept YHWH's offer of the Kingdom, we do not "earn" our way in. It should be noted that this teaching does not go against the principle that there will be varying degrees of reward in heaven. This has to do solely with entry into the Kingdom:

"(1) For **the kingdom of heaven** is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. (2) And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. (3) And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, (4) And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. (5) Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. (6) And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? (7) They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. (8) So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. (9) And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. (10) But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. (11) And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, (12) Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. (13) But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? (14) Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee. (15) Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good? (16) So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen". (Mat 20:1-16)

The Kingdom and your talents

A Kingdom parable with a harsh lesson is found later in Matthew. Here, Y'shua teaches that even those who are given the minimal amount of opportunity by YHWH are without excuse if they fail to act on it:

"(14) For **the kingdom of heaven** is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. (15) And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. (16) Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. (17) And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. (18) But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. (19) After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. (20) And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. (21) His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (22) He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. (23) His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (24) Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: (25) And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. (26) His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: (27) Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. (28) Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. (29) For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. (30) And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth". Matt 25:14-30

The Kingdom and the Torah

The following parable has a fairly simple beginning, but the ending demands some study. Here, Y'shua speaks of a King (YHWH) who was ready to hold a wedding feast for his son (Y'shua) and sent invites through his servants (the prophets) to those destined to come (Israel). They (Israel) did not hold this message in high regard, even killing some of the servants (the prophets). The invitations then went out to a general audience (the Gentile world), many of whom accepted it.

That's the "easy" part. The difficulty arises with the last section. One of those invited did not bother to put on a proper wedding garment, and was cast out:

"(1) And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said, (2) **The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,** (3) And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. (4) Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. (5) But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: (6) And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. (7) But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. (8) Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. (9) Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. (10) So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests. (11) And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there **a man which had not on a wedding garment:** (12) And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither **not having a wedding garment?** And he was speechless. (13) Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (14) **For many are called, but few are chosen".** (Matt 22:1-14)

What is the significance of this wedding garment? We know a bit more about the wedding garment of the end-time marriage feast, from the Book of Revelation:

(7) "Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready.

(8) And to her was granted that she should be arrayed **in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints.** Rev 19:7-8

The Greek term for "righteousness" (as found in the King James Version above), is *dikaioma*, a noun meaning "righteous acts". This, of course, would be acts of *Torah*; prepared for us from before the foundation of the world (i.e., Eph 2:10). This is consistent with other verses in Revelation that also state that those who obey YHWH's *Torah* (including faith in Y'shua), are the ones who are declared righteous:

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are **they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus".** (Rev 14:12)

"Blessed are **they that do his commandments,** that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city". (Rev 22:14)

It would seem, then, that the white wedding garment is directly tied to following *Torah*. This is also found in the Hebrew *Zohar*:

Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 226b: "Alas for men that they look not to their foundation, and neglect the precepts of the Torah. For some of these precepts fashion **a glorious garment** above, and some **a glorious garment** below, and some **a glorious garment** in this world; and man requires them all".

The Book of Zechariah tells of a vision the prophet received, associated with the establishment of the Kingdom of YHWH. Here, a high priest named Joshua (not the Joshua of Moses' day) was unable to immediately take his proper place as Satan had an accusation against him (for iniquity - violating *Torah*). The angel of YHWH ordered a "change of garments" for Joshua, and charged him to walk in His ways (*Torah*) in order to continue on as high priest:

(1) "And he shewed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the LORD, and Satan standing at his right hand to resist him.

(2) And the LORD said unto Satan, The LORD rebuke thee, O Satan; even the LORD that hath chosen Jerusalem rebuke thee: is not this a brand plucked out of the fire?

(3) Now Joshua was **clothed with filthy garments**, and stood before the angel.

- (4) And he answered and spake unto those that stood before him, saying, Take away the **filthy garments** from him. And unto him he said, Behold, I have caused thine iniquity to pass from thee, and I will clothe thee with **change of raiment**.
- (5) And I said, Let them set a fair mitre upon his head. So they set a fair mitre upon his head, and **clothed him with garments**. And the angel of the LORD stood by.
- (6) And the angel of the LORD protested unto Joshua, saying,
- (7) Thus saith the LORD of hosts; If thou wilt walk **in my ways**, and if thou wilt keep my charge, then thou shalt also judge my house, and shalt also keep my courts, and I will give thee places to walk among these that stand by.
- (8) Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, thou, and thy fellows that sit before thee: for they are men wondered at: for, behold, I will bring forth my servant the **BRANCH**.
- (9) For behold the stone that I have laid before Joshua; upon one stone shall be seven eyes: behold, I will engrave the graving thereof, saith the LORD of hosts, and I will remove the iniquity of that land in one day.
- (10) In that day, saith the LORD of hosts, shall ye call every man his neighbour under the vine and under the fig tree". (Zech 3:1-10)

Those who claim to follow the Messiah, and expect to be priests in His Kingdom one day, should take heed to previous warnings that YHWH gave on this subject:

"My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to me: seeing thou hast forgotten the law of thy God, I will also forget thy children". (Hosea 4:6)

The Kingdom and the lesson to always be prepared

Lastly, the following parable with its lesson on always being prepared is especially interesting, as there is a similar story found in Jewish literature:

"(1) Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. (2) And five of them were wise, and five were foolish. (3) They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: (4) But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. (5) While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. (6) And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. (7) Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. (8) And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. (9) But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves. (10) And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. (11) Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us. (12) But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not". (Mat 25:1-12)

Here is the teaching from the *Midrash Rabbah* on the book of Ecclesiastes. This teaching seems to be a synthesis of the parables in Matt 22:1-14 and 25:1-12, above:

Midrash Rabbah – Ecclesiastes IX:7: "To a king who made a banquet to which he invited guests. He said to them, 'Go, wash yourselves, brush up your clothes, anoint yourselves with oil, wash your garments, and prepare yourselves for the banquet', but he fixed no time when they were to come to it. The wise among them walked about by the entrance of the king's palace, saying, 'Does the king's palace lack anything?' The foolish among them paid no regard or attention to the king's command. They said, 'We will in due course notice when the king's banquet is to take place, because can there be a banquet without labour [to prepare it] and company?' So the plasterer went to his plaster, the potter to his clay, the smith to his charcoal, the washer to his laundry. Suddenly the king ordered, 'Let them all come to the banquet'. They hurried the guests, so that some came in their splendid attire and others came in their dirty garments. The king was pleased with the wise ones who had obeyed his command, and also because they had shown honour to the king's palace. He was angry with the fools who had neglected his command and disgraced his palace. The king said, 'Let those who have prepared themselves for the banquet come and eat of the king's meal, but those who have not prepared themselves shall not partake of it'".

THE END ON THE VARIOUS SECTIONS ON THE KINGDOM OF YHWH

SECTION VI TEACHINGS AND MIRACLES

MATTHEW 14:1-36

TEXT:

- (1) "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus,
- (2) And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him.
- (3) For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife.
- (4) For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her.
- (5) And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet.
- (6) But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod.
- (7) Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask.
- (8) And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger.
- (9) And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her.
- (10) And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison.
- (11) And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother.
- (12) And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus.
- (13) When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities.
- (14) And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick.
- (15) And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.
- (16) But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat.
- (17) And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes.
- (18) He said, Bring them hither to me.
- (19) And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
- (20) And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full.
- (21) And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children.
- (22) And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away.
- (23) And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone.
- (24) But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary.
- (25) And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea.
- (26) And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear.
- (27) But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid.
- (28) And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water.
- (29) And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus.
- (30) But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me.
- (31) And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?
- (32) And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased.
- (33) Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God.
- (34) And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret.
- (35) And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;
- (36) And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole."

14:1-4 Herod and the imprisonment of Yochanan the Immerser

"(1) At that time Herod the tetrarch heard of the fame of Jesus, (2) And said unto his servants, This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead; and therefore mighty works do shew forth themselves in him. (3) For Herod had laid hold on John, and bound him, and put him in prison for Herodias' sake, his brother Philip's wife. (4) For John said unto him, It is not lawful for thee to have her."

Yohchanan preached the Torah of YHWH and urged people to abide by it. In this case, it is seen that he preached YHWH's Torah against adultery; and he eventually lost his life for such preaching.

Herod, who was a Jew, violated Negative Law 347: Lev 18:20 - No relations with another man's wife; therefore, *Yochanan* corrected him (verses 3-4). Recalling *Y'shua*'s words in Matt 3: 11 that *Yohchanan* fulfilled righteousness by his works, it should be evident that it is indeed righteousness to preach the Torah of YHWH, including his Torah against adultery. *Yohchanan* was beheaded (verses 6-12) because of preaching righteousness.

For more information on Herod and the Roman politics at the time, refer to "Who was Herod?" under "Matt 2:1 Why Bethlehem and not Jerusalem?"

14:5-12 They counted him as a prophet

"(5) And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet. (6) But when Herod's birthday was kept, the daughter of Herodias danced before them, and pleased Herod. (7) Whereupon he promised with an oath to give her whatsoever she would ask. (8) And she, being before instructed of her mother, said, Give me here John Baptist's head in a charger. (9) And the king was sorry: nevertheless for the oath's sake, and them which sat with him at meat, he commanded it to be given her. (10) And he sent, and beheaded John in the prison. (11) And his head was brought in a charger, and given to the damsel: and she brought it to her mother. (12) And his disciples came, and took up the body, and buried it, and went and told Jesus."

What is a prophet? To many people, the word is associated with someone who predicts the future. Although this can be a part of a prophet's life, this is not representative of what a Biblical prophet is all about. Nor should Biblical prophets be defined solely as messengers of impending doom or calls for repentance – although they may have done that at times as well.

Interestingly, the first person in the Bible to be called a "prophet" is not one that people usually associate much with that title. That person is Abraham.

YHWH told King Abimelech:

"Now therefore restore the man his wife; for he is a prophet, and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live: and if thou restore her not, know thou that thou shalt surely die, thou, and all that are thine." (Gen 20:7)

As Scripture shows us, Abraham was best known for his intimacy with YHWH and carrying out of YHWH's will wherever he went.

The Hebrew word for prophet is *Navie*, which may come from the root *Nava* – meaning "to flow" or "gush forth". This would imply that a prophet is also a "channel" for bringing spiritual power from YHWH to bear on a certain situation.

Thus, we have YHWH saying this to Moses about his brother:

"And the LORD said unto Moses, See, I have made thee a god to Pharaoh: and Aaron thy brother shall be thy prophet." (Exod 7:1)

Many people associate Aaron (the prophet) with being YHWH's spokesman to Pharaoh. However, examining the account of the meetings with Pharaoh, we see that it was Moses that did the talking directly. Scripture does show us, however, that it was Aaron that brought about the first miracles. Aaron acted as a prophet for Moses, being the "*channel*" for bringing down YHWH's spiritual power (Meditation and the Bible, Aryeh Kaplan, 1978, Samuel Weiser, Inc. York Beach, Maine, pp. 27-30).

All of the above should not blur the distinction between the "office" of prophet, which has a time and place in history; and the gift of prophecy, which we are told to seek after:

"Follow the way of love and eagerly desire spiritual gifts, especially the gift of prophecy." (1 Cor 14:1)

The "flow" or "gushing forth" of the will of YHWH through a person was promised by Y'shua:

"He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water." (John 7:38)

The ancient historian Josephus tells us that Herod imprisoned Yochanan the Immerser because he feared Yochanan's political power with the masses, just as verse 5 says: "And when he would have put him to death, he feared the multitude, because they counted him as a prophet":

"Now some of the Jews thought that it was God who had destroyed Herod's army, and that it was a very just punishment to avenge John, surnamed the Baptist. John had been put to death by Herod, although he was a good man, who exhorted the Jews to practice virtue, to be just one to another and pious towards God and to come together by baptism. Baptism, he taught, was acceptable to God provided that they underwent it not to procure remission of certain sins but for the purification of the body, if the soul had already been purified by righteousness. When the others gathered round John, greatly stirred as they listened to his words, Herod was afraid that his great persuasive power over men might lead to a rising, for they seemed ready to follow his counsel in everything. Accordingly he thought the best course was to arrest him and put him to death before he caused a riot, rather than wait until a revolt broke out and then have to repent of permitting such trouble to arise. Because of this suspicion on Herod's part, John was sent in chains to the fortress of Machaerus ... and there put to death. The Jews therefore thought that the destruction of Herod's army was the punishment deliberately sent upon him by God to avenge John." (Josephus, Antiquities, xviii, pp. 116-119, as quoted by F. F. Bruce, in New Testament History (Garden City, New York: Doubleday and Company, 1971), pp.152-153.)

Yochanan "was brought in chains to Machaerus [Antipas' fortress on the eastern side of the Dead Sea] ...and put to death there" (Antiq. 18:119). Mark 6:17-29 provides additional details of Yochanan's execution.

Salome

Salome is famous for the part she played in the execution of Yochanan the Immerser. Her name does not appear in the Gospels. We know her name from Josephus' account of the story (Antiq. 18:136-137) and from the coin that bears her portrait – incidentally, hers is the only portrait of a person mentioned in the Gospels.

14:13 By ship into a desert place apart

"When Jesus heard of it, he departed thence by ship into a desert place apart: and when the people had heard thereof, they followed him on foot out of the cities".

The Shem-Tov Hebrew Matthew says "... into the wilderness of Judea." This would make sense, as the origins of both Yochanan and Y'shua's ministries are in this area.

14:14-18 We have here but five loaves, and two fishes

"(14) And Jesus went forth, and saw a great multitude, and was moved with compassion toward them, and he healed their sick. (15) And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals. (16) But Jesus said unto them, They need not depart; give ye them to eat. (17) And they say unto him, We have here but five loaves, and two fishes. (18) He said, Bring them hither to me"

Y'shua "replicates" a miracle by the great prophet Elisha, only to a far greater magnitude:

(42) *And there came a man from Baalshalisha, and brought the man of God bread of the firstfruits, twenty loaves of barley, and full ears of corn in the husk thereof. And he said, Give unto the people, that they may eat.*

(43) *And his servitor said, What, should I set this before an hundred men? He said again, Give the people, that they may eat: for thus saith the LORD, They shall eat, and shall leave thereof.*

(44) *So he set it before them, and they did eat, and left thereof, according to the word of the LORD."*
(2 Kings 4:42-44)

14:19-21 He blessed, and brake

"(19) And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the grass, and took the five loaves, and the two fishes, and looking up to heaven, he blessed, and brake, and gave the loaves to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. (20) And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the fragments that remained twelve baskets full. (21) And they that had eaten were about five thousand men, beside women and children "

One of the common misconceptions is that Y'shua "blessed the food" (here, and at the "Last Supper" where it is said He "blessed the bread and the wine"). This is an incorrect understanding of what was being done, and has led to many unscriptural traditions (such as blessing of pets, cars, etc.) Some even teach that by "blessing" unkosher food, this makes it permissible to eat. What Y'shua did, and what Jews do today, is to bless YHWH. The prayer over the food is actually a prayer thanking YHWH for his sustenance and because He is the Creator of all good things.

A typical prayer Y'shua would have said (which is still said today), is:

"Baruch attah Adonai, Eloheinu Melech ha-Olam, haMotzi lechem min ha'aretz."

Which may be translated (note who is being blessed):

"Blessed are you, Lord our God, King of the Universe, who brings forth bread from the earth."

Tabgha - The place of the miracle

There is no place around the Sea of Galilee where the traditions of Y'shua and his disciples are more prevalent than at Tabgha on the Northwest coast. There is also probably no place with more natural beauty: with lovely flowers, the flowing of pleasant springs, and abundant shade trees. The site is today probably one of the most popular pilgrim sites in the land of Israel. Some New Covenant events commonly associated with the Tabgha area are the reinstatement of Peter, the miracle of loaves and fishes here in verses 19-21, and the miraculous catch of fish. It is thought that early believers at nearby Capernaum may have kept these traditions alive until Catholics enshrined them with church buildings in the Fourth Century.

The dual site of Tabgha today contains two Catholic shrines built in the Twentieth Century; The Church of the Multiplication and the Church of the Primacy of Peter. These modern churches are built over the ruins of ancient Fourth and Fifth Century structures. Parts of the ancient Fourth Century foundations can still be seen in the Church of the First Feeding. In that church can also be seen some of the finest mosaic floors in Israel. These mosaics from the Fifth Century include the famous one of the loaves and fishes.

How did Tabgha get its name?

Where did the name "Tabgha" come from? Apparently it is a corruption of the Greek name "*Heptapegon*" meaning "seven springs". In time, it was shortened to *Et-Tapega* and then simply to Tabgha. There is still plenty of evidence of the springs from which the area is named. Spring-fed streams still meander through the church grounds. In several places, the springs can be seen emptying into the Sea of Galilee. Just a short walk from the Primacy of Peter Church there is a large spring, which at one time was capable of turning a flour mill.

The springs of Tabgha are unique in that they are warm, with temperatures varying from 84-86 degrees (29-30 C). It was at these springs that New Covenant fishermen often gathered in pursuit of the *Talipia* (also known as the St Peter's Fish). The *Talipia*, being a tropical fish, found it difficult to survive the cold winter months in the Sea of Galilee. In order to do so, the fish swam in great numbers to the warm springs of Tabgha.

One local fisherman and renowned expert on ancient fishing is Mendel Nun. Nun declares that until the 1940s, Tabgha was still a wonderful place to fill his nets with St. Peter's Fish. Even today, it is not an uncommon sight to observe fishermen with their nets at Tabgha. Since the fish still arrive at the area in great numbers, the biblical story of nets so full they were breaking is certainly verified. For modern pilgrims, the good news is that the mouth-watering *Talipia* are still served at many restaurants around the sea.

An interesting thing can often be observed along the shoreline at Tabgha. The Jewish fishermen, who still work in the area, often toss catfish onto the bank to decompose. These large and lazy fish are plentiful in the

Sea of Galilee, but according to biblical law they are unclean for Jewish fishermen (Lev 11:9-10). Tabgha thus makes the parable of the net come to life (Matt 13:47-50). We realise that not all who are called will be chosen (Matt 22:14). It is true with followers and with fish that there are the clean and the unclean. In the last day, the angels of YHWH will separate these "kosher" from the "non-kosher". Y'shua will take the good for Himself and the bad He will cast away.

14:22-29 The disciples saw him walking on the sea

"(22) And straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship, and to go before him unto the other side, while he sent the multitudes away. (23) And when he had sent the multitudes away, he went up into a mountain apart to pray: and when the evening was come, he was there alone. (24) But the ship was now in the midst of the sea, tossed with waves: for the wind was contrary. (25) And in the fourth watch of the night Jesus went unto them, walking on the sea. (26) And when the disciples saw him walking on the sea, they were troubled, saying, It is a spirit; and they cried out for fear. (27) But straightway Jesus spake unto them, saying, Be of good cheer; it is I; be not afraid. (28) And Peter answered him and said, Lord, if it be thou, bid me come unto thee on the water. (29) And he said, Come. And when Peter was come down out of the ship, he walked on the water, to go to Jesus."

Evidently, Y'shua was in a state where He could be seen at night across the waters. This may be compared to his appearance when seen with Moses and Elijah, in Matthew chapter 17.

His return is described as being in such radiance as well:

"And then shall that Wicked be revealed, whom the Lord shall consume with the spirit of his mouth, and shall destroy with the brightness of his coming:" (2 Thes 2:8)

14:30-31 He was afraid; and beginning to sink

"(30) But when he saw the wind boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink, he cried, saying, Lord, save me. (31) And immediately Jesus stretched forth his hand, and caught him, and said unto him, O thou of little faith, wherefore didst thou doubt?"

Peter was no doubt an expert swimmer, being a fisherman by trade. Why was he so fearful when he went under water only a few feet from the boat? Evidently, the plain meaning (*p'shat*) of the text may not tell the full story.

There is a spiritual connotation to the water – especially "the sea". In mystical Jewish literature, the "sea" is the spiritual realm. Sinking into the sea, as such, can be seen as a rapid deterioration of one's spiritual condition (something that occurred in Peter's life more than once, such as in Matt 16:23 and Matthew chapter 26). Peter's cry, as he was sinking, was not for a lifeguard.

14:32-35 And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased

"(32) And when they were come into the ship, the wind ceased. (33) Then they that were in the ship came and worshipped him, saying, Of a truth thou art the Son of God. (34) And when they were gone over, they came into the land of Gennesaret. (35) And when the men of that place had knowledge of him, they sent out into all that country round about, and brought unto him all that were diseased;"

Not only was Peter's condition calmed (verse 30), but so were the physical elements.

"Who stillest the roaring of the seas, the roaring of their waves, and the tumult of the peoples." (Psalm 65:8)

14:36 As many as touched were made perfectly whole

"And besought him that they might only touch the hem of his garment: and as many as touched were made perfectly whole."

The same was said about Paul's clothing. In fact, even his garments had some kind of miraculous power about them (Acts 19:12). Unfortunately, due to a lack of grounding in YHWH's *Torah*, many superstitions have emanated from these specific miracles. Instead of focusing on learning and doing the *Torah* (which conforms us to the image of YHWH), people have resorted to creating and using everything from medals to "prayer cloths" in vain attempts to bring themselves "closer to God". Another more recent trend is the misuse of "Jewish things", such as the tallit (in both Christian and Messianic circles) for a similar purpose.

(See "The thread of the "tallit" through the Old Testament" under "Matt 3:4 Yochanan's appearance" for more information on garments.)

SECTION VI

TEACHINGS AND MIRACLES

MATTHEW 15:1-39

TEXT:

- (1) "Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,
- (2) Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread.
- (3) But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?
- (4) For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death.
- (5) But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;
- (6) And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.
- (7) Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying,
- (8) This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.
- (9) But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.
- (10) And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:
- (11) Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man.
- (12) Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?
- (13) But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up.
- (14) Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch.
- (15) Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable.
- (16) And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding?
- (17) Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught?
- (18) But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man.
- (19) For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:
- (20) These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.
- (21) Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.
- (22) And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.
- (23) But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us.
- (24) But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
- (25) Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.
- (26) But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.
- (27) And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.
- (28) Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilst. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour.
- (29) And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there.
- (30) And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them:
- (31) Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel.

- (32) Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way.
- (33) And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude?
- (34) And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes.
- (35) And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground.
- (36) And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude.
- (37) And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full.
- (38) And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children.
- (39) And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala."

15:1 Scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem

"*Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying,*"

Jerusalem is the headquarters of the conspiracy against Y'shua with the legalistic Pharisees as the leaders of it. Already, we have seen the Herodians combining with these men for the purpose to put Y'shua to death (Mark 3:6; Matt 12:14; Luke 6:11). Soon, Y'shua will warn the disciples against the Sadducees also (Matt 16:6).

15:2 Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread

"Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread."

The story in this chapter one that has consistently been misused to teach that the Messiah did away with the Levitical food commandments (*kosher* laws). The text plainly shows that this is not the subject at hand, yet many ignore this in order to teach against the *Torah*. (See comments on verses below).

The context of the discussion is stated clearly in this verse (and at the end of the topic, in verse 20). The subject is not the *kosher* laws, but that of "washing of hands". There is more to this **tradition** than what the Scripture reveals, however. (Hence, the advantage of knowing the Hebrew background to the discussion.)

There were varying mystical beliefs among some Jews of Y'shua's day – not all firmly grounded in the *Torah*. Some of these ideas had to do with how a person could become spiritually "clean" or "unclean". (A concept that is, of course, quite biblical.) One such teaching was that during the night, evil spirits could come into a man's body. These spirits would exit the body through the hands (more precisely, the fingertips). The body would become spiritually "clean" again in the morning, with the exception of the fingertips/hands. It was taught that the hands had to be washed in order to remove any defilement that would cause anything touched (i.e., food) to become unclean.

Y'shua is showing the legalistic Pharisees that this hand-washing tradition that was **not based on the Torah** (for the normal man on the street), was in fact nullifying the *Torah*. They were calling unclean, foods that YHWH Himself had declared clean, simply by eating with unwashed hands. He also chastises these teachers for breaking the true *Torah* commandments (while laying these unnecessary burdens on the people) by citing their own lack of properly following the commandment of honouring father and mother (see comments further on in this section.) This is the lesson of verses 2-20.

Another Scripture cited in the same incorrect fashion is Peter's vision of the unclean animals in Acts chapter 10. Here, too, the context and explanation are ignored in order to support false doctrine. Dreams in Scripture commonly use specific items and themes to represent certain people, places, things and teachings. In the case of Peter's dream in Acts 10, he clearly explains this vision several times throughout the book of Acts. Not once does Peter say that YHWH showed him that the laws of *kashrut* are done away with. Rather, in every case, he explains the meaning of the dream as being that Gentiles were not to be considered as "unclean" and could directly come to faith through Y'shua – something that YHWH had not provided for before Y'shua's death. (See comments to verse 24 below.)

The only washing of hands in the Torah

In pre-Pharisaic times, the washing of hands was necessary for handling holy objects (*Shabbat 14b*), and only applicable to the *cohanim* (priests) before entering the Temple (**Positive Law 24: Exod 30:19 - On Cohanim washing hands & feet before entering Temple.**) This was later extended to some in the handling of food. But once again, there was a debate between the Schools of *Shammai* and *Hillel*. *Shammai* insisted on washing the hands before filling the cup. *Y'shua* referred to this when he said, “*they clean, or declare pure, the outside of the cup.*” Hand washing was not, then, a universal command; although some chose to live under such restrictions. Apparently at this time, a majority of purity laws applied only to priests or to laymen who had occasion to enter the Temple.

Y'shua's response to this situation compared favourably with other rabbis of his time. The famous First Century rabbi, Yohanan ben Zakkai, stated: “*In life it is not the dead who make you unclean; nor is it the water, but rather the ordinances of the king of kings that purifies.*” Much later, Maimonides made the same comment, “*For to confine oneself to cleaning the outward appearance through washing and cleaning the garment, while having at the same time a lust for various pleasures and unbridled license ... merits the utmost blame.*” So, *Y'shua*'s analysis and criticism were quite Jewish and most appropriate. The evil things that come out of our heart make us unclean.

Many have interpreted the passage in Mark 7:17-19 to mean that *Y'shua* set aside the food laws - clean and unclean foods. But by doing so, he would have contradicted himself. His attackers had just accused him of not observing their traditions, and He had responded that they did far worse; they did not observe the commandments of the *Torah* (verse 9-13). For *Y'shua* to set aside a commandments of the *Torah* would have undermined the point he was trying to make. Bottom line, what *Y'shua* was saying was this, “*the washing or not washing of hands before you eat does not make you ceremonially clean or unclean, but it is what comes out of your heart that makes one unclean. Therefore the foods you eat, pass through you, and have no affect on the cleanliness of the heart. Therefore all food God has given you to eat is ritually clean, whether you have washed or not washed.*”

We **cannot assume** that *Y'shua* opposed the Jewish dietary food laws established by YHWH. But by the Third Century, Origen understood it as signifying the rejection of Jewish dietary laws by *Y'shua*. The overwhelming majority of modern translators accept Origen's interpretation when they take Mark 7:19 to mean, “*Thus he declared all foods clean.*”

If this was so, why did Peter react so strongly against the possibility of eating non-kosher food when he saw the vision in Acts 10? He expressed great indignation and shock. Why did he not say in Acts 11, “*Now, I remember the words of Y'shua, all foods are clean*”? He said nothing of the sort, because *Y'shua* had not, in fact, set aside the dietary laws of the *Torah*.

The tradition of washing hands

The tradition of the elders: this was the oral law, handed down by the elders of the past in “ex cathedra” fashion and later codified in the *Mishna*. Handwashing before meals is not a requirement of the Old Covenant. It is, we know, a good thing for sanitary reasons; but these legalistic rabbis made it a mark of righteousness for others at any rate. This item was magnified at great length in the oral teaching. The washing (*niptonta*) of the hands called for minute regulations. It was commanded to wash the hands before meals and it was one's duty to do it after eating. The more rigorous did it between the courses. The hands must be immersed in the water which must be “clean”. The cups or pots used must also be ceremonially “clean”. Vessels were kept full of clean water ready for use (John 2:6-8). Thus, a real issue was raised between *Y'shua* and the rabbis. It was far more than a point of etiquette or of hygienes. These legalistic rabbis held it to be a mortal Sin. The incident may have happened in a Pharisee's house.

15:3-8 Why do ye also transgress the commandment of YHWH by your tradition?

“(3) But he answered and said unto them, **Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?** (4) For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. (5) But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; (6) And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect **by your tradition.** (7) Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, (8) This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me.”

Here is a second statement about the problem at hand – Y’shua is not telling them the *kosher* laws (given by YHWH) are suspended (in violation of His own words in Matt 5:17-18), but clearly says they are breaking YHWH’s *Torah* by this particular man-made (not God-given) tradition.

It should be noted that Y’shua is not against tradition – including many of the traditions of the Pharisaic Judaism (which He himself followed; i.e., celebration of *Chanukkah*, called the "Festival of Dedication" in the Gospel of John). Such tradition is the way in which we "walk out" our faith (called *halakha*). As we will see in the next chapter, Y’shua even gave the power to set aside such "tradition" to His disciples.

Y’shua admits that the disciples had transgressed the rabbinical traditions. Y’shua treats it as a matter of no great importance in itself, save as they had put the tradition of the elders instead of the commandments of YHWH. What Y’shua is opposed to is any tradition not founded in the *Torah* that places itself above the *Torah*.

When the two clashed (as was often the case), the legalistic rabbis transgressed the Torah of YHWH "because by your tradition". The word "by" is *dia* in Greek. The accusative with *dia* means that, not "by means of." Tradition is not good or bad in itself. It is merely what is handed on from one to another. Custom tended to make these traditions binding like law. There could be no compromise on this subject and Y’shua accepts the issue. He stands for real righteousness and spiritual freedom, not for bondage to mere ceremonialism and tradition. These rabbis placed tradition (the oral law) above the *Torah* of YHWH.

From Mark 7:1-5

It is important to understand that because Y’shua was teaching His disciples the **correct** manner in which to apply the instructions of the *Torah*, it sometimes caused His *Torah* teachings to conflict with those of the other rabbis:

- (1) "And the Pharisees were assembled to Him, also some of the scribes, coming from Jerusalem.
- (2) And seeing some of His disciples **eating bread with unclean, that is unwashed hands, they found fault.**
- (3) For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash the hands with the fist, holding **the tradition of the elders.**
- (4) And coming from the market, if **they do not immerse themselves** (wash their hands), they do not eat. And there are many other things which they received to hold: **dippings of cups, and of utensils, and of copper vessels, and couches.**
- (5) Then the Pharisees and scribes questioned Him, *Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders, but eat bread with unwashed hands?*" (Mark 7:1-5)

"(3) But answering He said to them, *Why do you also transgress the command of God on account of your tradition? (4) For God commanded, saying, "Honor your father and mother," and, "The one speaking evil of father or mother, by death let him die."*" (Mat 15:3-4 LITV)

Y’shua was referring to "**Positive Law 210: Exod 20:12 - On honouring parents**", "**Negative Law 318: Exod 21:17 - Not cursing parents**" and "Deut 5:16."

However, as said earlier, the *Torah* command about washing hands pertains only to the Priesthood and not to the common people:

- (18) "Thou shalt also make a laver of brass, and his foot also of brass, to wash withal: and thou shalt put it between the tabernacle of the congregation and the altar, and thou shalt put water therein.
- (19) For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:
- (20) When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:
- (21) So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even **to him and to his seed throughout their generations.**" (Exod 30:18-21)

This command was given to *Aharon* (Aaron) the High Priest and his descendants, and was to be done as a ritual before they began to do service in the Tabernacle. The ritual washing of hands and feet was never a *Torah* requirement for the common person. (It must be pointed out that it is perfectly fine for a person to wash their hands before eating. Certainly, it shows a respect for the food and for YHWH who has given it to us for consumption; however, it is not a requirement.)

Nevertheless, the School of Shammai (the strictest of the schools of the Pharisees), whose teachings predominated during the First Century, taught that all men **must** ritually wash their hands prior to eating a meal. As can be seen, Y'shua's teaching on this matter held to the original intent of the *Torah*. Thus, Y'shua showed that He did not come to do away with the instructions of the *Torah*, but to restore them to their original and true meaning. On the other hand, this is not to say that by restoring the proper *Torah* teachings, Y'shua did away with all the **traditions and customs** of the Jews. On the contrary, He and His disciples continued to observe many, if not most, of the customs of His people as long as those customs and traditions did **not contradict the true intent of the Torah**. Thus it is written:

"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)

Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me

"(4) For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. (5) But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me;" (Matt 15:4-5)

"*But ye say*". This is in sharp contrast to the *Torah* of YHWH, because here man "says" it and not what YHWH commanded. Y'shua had quoted the fifth commandment (Exod 20:12) with the penalty "die the death", "go on to his end by death" in imitation of the Hebrew idiom. They dodged this *Torah* of YHWH about the penalty for dishonouring one's father or mother by the use "*Corban*" (korban) as Mark calls it (Mark 7:11). All one had to do to evade one's duty to father or mother was to say "*Corban*" or "Gift" (*dwrn*) with the idea of using the money for YHWH. By an angry oath of refusal to help one's parents, the oath or vow was binding. By this magic word, one set himself free (he shall not honour) from obedience to the fifth commandment. Sometimes unfilial sons paid graft to the rabbinical legalists for such dodges.

Ye made the commandment of YHWH of none effect by your tradition

"(6) And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. (7) Ye hypocrites, well did Esaias prophesy of you, saying, (8) This people draweth nigh unto me with their mouth, and honoureth me with their lips; but their heart is far from me". (Matt 15:6)

It was a stinging indictment that laid bare the hollow pretence of their quibbles about handwashing. *Kuros* means force or authority; *akuros* is without authority – null and void. It is a late verb, *akurow*, and substantive occurrence in legal phraseology like canceling a will, etc. In other words, the moral force of YHWH's *Torah* is annulled by their hairsplitting technicalities and immoral conduct.

There is sarcasm in this pointed application of Isaiah's words (Isaiah 29:13) to these rabbis. He "beautifully pictured" them. The portrait was to the very life, "teaching as their doctrines the commandments of men". They were indeed far from YHWH if they imagined that YHWH would be pleased with such gifts at the expense of duty to one's parents.

15:9-10 Teaching for doctrines the commandments of men

"(9) But in vain they do worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men. (10) And he called the multitude, and said unto them, Hear, and understand:"

He repeats His criticism. They are elevating the doctrines of men over the commandments of the *Torah*. The *kosher* laws are from YHWH; they are not traditions of men. In fact, teaching that the *kosher* laws (or any part of *Torah*) are done away with would be what YHWH would consider "commandments of men" and goes against His Word (Matt 5:17-18).

15:11 Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth

"Not that which goeth into the mouth defileth a man; but that which cometh out of the mouth, this defileth a man."

This is the verse that is commonly pulled out of its context to support the idea that the *kosher* laws have been done away with. Y'shua is teaching that we don't make clean foods unclean by failing to ceremonially

wash our hands before we eat. Non-kosher food is not part of this discussion as the surrounding verses show.

"Defileth the man." This word is used in two senses, either what is "common" to all or general like the *Koin*, the Greek (Gentiles), or what is unclean and "common" either ceremonially or in reality. The ceremonial "commonness" disturbed Peter on the housetop in Joppa (Acts 10:14). One who is thus religiously common or unclean is cut off from doing his religious acts. "Defilement" was a grave issue with the rabbinical ceremonialists. Y'shua appeals to the crowd here: "*Hear and understand*" (verse 10.) He has a profound distinction to draw. Moral uncleanness is what makes a man common, defiles him. That is what is to be dreaded, not to be glossed over. One can see the pretenders shrivel up under these withering words.

15:12 The Pharisees were offended

"Then came his disciples, and said unto him, Knowest thou that the Pharisees were offended, after they heard this saying?"

"Were offended." First aorist passive. "Were caused to stumble, have taken offence" (Moffatt), "have turned against you" (Weymouth), "were shocked" (Goodspeed), "War ill-pleased" (Braid Scots). They took umbrage at the public rebuke and at such a scorpion sting in it all. It cut to the quick because it was true. It showed in the glowering countenances of the legalistic Pharisees so plainly that the disciples were uneasy.

15:13 Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up

"But he answered and said, Every plant, which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up."

With allusions to the sower parables in Matthew chapter 13.

15:14-19 Blind leaders of the blind

"(14) Let them alone: they be blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind lead the blind, both shall fall into the ditch. (15) Then answered Peter and said unto him, Declare unto us this parable. (16) And Jesus said, Are ye also yet without understanding? (17) Do not ye yet understand, that whatsoever entereth in at the mouth goeth into the belly, and is cast out into the draught? (18) But those things which proceed out of the mouth come forth from the heart; and they defile the man. (19) For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornications, thefts, false witness, blasphemies:"

Despite "popular opinion", the situation is the same today. The vast majority of people who say they believe in the YHWH of the Bible follow teachers who tell them that they are "free" from what they call "the Law" (an inaccurate translation of "Torah", which is YHWH's revelation/instructions on how to live for all who claim to be His people). The examples given above (Matt 5:17-21; 15:2-20, Acts 10, etc.) indicate how people ignore what is explained in the text of the Bible in favour of following man's anti-Torah doctrines. This is not dissimilar to what many of the religious leaders of Y'shua's day did. Then, as now, men reject the truth of God's *Torah*.

This is **NOT** to say that we must first learn and follow the *Torah* to be saved. That has never been the case, as men and women have always been saved by trusting YHWH through faith, which is a free gift from Him. No one can merit entry into heaven based on works. What is being said throughout this exegesis is that once anyone "...comes to know YHWH" and His salvation in Y'shua His Son – there is a path for them to "walk"; and this is to learn of and begin doing YHWH's *Torah* (Rom 2:13; James 1:22-25).

The only other path is the "false torah" of the flesh and of the world (i.e., Rom 7:23). Picking and choosing commandments from the *Torah* is not an acceptable position with YHWH (James 2:10); nor is "straddling the fence" (i.e., Rev 3:15-16).

Those commandments that we are able to keep are the ones we should strive to learn of and follow, in order to be conformed to the image of YHWH – which is a main purpose of the *Torah*. We cannot keep **all** of YHWH's commandments perfectly, because there is no Temple or Aaronic priesthood (and also because most of us are living outside the land of Israel).

Because followers of the Messiah have rejected the Torah for such a long time, we need to diligently re-learn the *Torah* precept by precept. The Holy Spirit is our guide, but this does not alleviate us of our responsibility of diligently studying YHWH's Word:

"*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth.*" (2 Tim 2:15)

"*These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with all readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether those things were so.*" (Acts 17:11)

The Holy Spirit will never contradict the *Torah*, as it is YHWH's Word. If someone believes the "spirit" is telling them that it is permissible to go against any *Torah* command (correctly understood in context), then that person is being led by some other spirit.

One question to ask is, "If someone tells a person they are a sinner and need to repent (i.e., as in most "salvation messages" given today), how does that person know what 'sin' is?" Scripture tells us that sin is violation of YHWH's *Torah*, including all the teachings of the *Tenach*/"Old Testament".

The *Torah* was the **ONLY** standard used by *Y'shua* and his disciples. Paul and the others only taught *Y'shua* and salvation out of the *Tenach* as there was no "New Testament" around at the time. Neither *Y'shua* (Matt 5:17-21), nor Paul (Rom 3:31), nor any of the other disciples did away with any part of the faith of Israel. The original believers continued in this faith – only now with knowledge of the promised Messiah.

The "New Testament" is, of course, inspired of YHWH; but it was never meant to be read outside of the context of the *Torah*. Unfortunately, this is exactly what is done today with churches giving **their own meaning** to the teachings of the "New Testament". They then use this to explain the "Old Testament". This is "putting the cart in front of the horse"; (i.e., the common practice of handing out New Covenant's to people, rather than complete Bibles.)

Gentiles who came to faith in *Y'shua* did not become "Christians", as there was no such separation from Judaism ("the faith of Israel") until much later. Gentiles who came to faith, came into the faith of Israel with its *Torah* (Eph 2:10-13) and began to learn more of the *Torah* as they were taught within the faith of Israel (Acts 15:21). They were originally called the *Gerim*.

Are ye also even yet without understanding?

"And Jesus said, **Are ye also yet without understanding?**" (Mat 15:16)

It occurs in papyri and inscriptions, though condemned by the old grammarians. "*In spite of all my teaching, are ye also like the Pharisees without spiritual insight and grasp?*" One must never forget that the disciples lived in a Pharisaic environment. Their religious worldview was Pharisaic. They were lacking in spiritual intelligence or sense, "totally ignorant" (Moffatt).

15:20 But to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man

"*These are the things which defile a man: but to eat with unwashed hands defileth not a man.*"

Y'shua wraps up the discussion by making it clear what the subject has been since verse 2. And that is that, eating with unwashed hands is not a sin.

Furthermore, Christians should not read suggestions into the Scripture; i.e., verse 2, to do away with the *Torah* commandment of eating only clean foods.

15:21-28 I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel

"(21) *Then Jesus went thence, and departed into the coasts of Tyre and Sidon.* (22) *And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil.* (23) *But he answered her not a word.* And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. (24) *But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel.* (25) *Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me.* (26) *But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs.* (27) *And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table.* (28) *Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt.* And her daughter was made whole from that very hour."

As Paul also stated the following:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek (Nations/Gentiles). "(Rom 1:16)

It should be noted that the Gospel was not sent out to the Gentiles. Both Y'shua and His disciples went only to "the lost sheep of the House of Israel". Something very mysterious happened with His death – Gentiles could now come to YHWH of Israel in a more direct fashion – by placing their faith in the Messiah of Israel and follow His Torah Instructions.

Why is this? The basic explanation is that Y'shua was/is the *Torah* ("Word") in the flesh (i.e., John chapter 1:1, 14). Just as the *Torah* is the revelation of the invisible YHWH – Y'shua is also the image of the invisible YHWH (Col 1:15). Coming to trust in Y'shua is coming to trust in YHWH (as much as we mere mortals can know Him, which is revealed in His *Torah*). Y'shua is the door to this relationship. *Torah* is the path beyond this door - for all who wish to put their trust in Him. Sadly, most people will not end up on the right path, even after learning of Him (Matt 7:12-21).

Most people who come to know of the Elohim of the Bible are soon taught that He changed His mind about His *Torah* two thousand years ago – that it was somehow done away with by Y'shua. This is taught despite the fact that Y'shua is the *Torah* in the flesh (the "goal" of the *Torah* - Rom 10:4), who said Himself in no uncertain terms that none of the *Torah* was done away with by His arrival (Matt 5:17-21).

After Y'shua's death, the practice of the disciples was to go to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. For instance, in every town Paul went to, he first visited the local synagogue. (Paul skipped over some very large cities in his travels that lacked a significant Jewish presence.) In each case, the Gospel was preached to the Jews first. In every location, there would be some Jews that accepted his message and others that rejected it. Once "Israel" had made its "decision" (in each town), then, and only then, would the message be given to the local Gentile population.

A woman of Canaan

"And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil."

The Gospel of Mark gives us more information – it goes to great lengths to inform us that she was a pagan in that she was both Greek and, by race, a Phoenician (Mark 7:26.) This foreshadows the confrontation between the pagan world and Y'shua's mission to the children of Israel. The Phoenicians were descended from the Canaanites, the original inhabitants of Palestine. They were of a Semitic pagan race. "Have mercy on me" indicates she made her daughter's case her own.

She crieth after us

"But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us." (Matt 15:23)

The disciples greatly disliked this form of public attention – a strange woman crying after them. They disliked a sensation.

It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs

"(25) Then came she and worshipped him, saying, Lord, help me. (26) But he answered and said, It is not meet to take the children's bread, and to cast it to dogs. (27) And she said, Truth, Lord: yet the dogs eat of the crumbs which fall from their masters' table. (28) Then Jesus answered and said unto her, O woman, great is thy faith: be it unto thee even as thou wilt. And her daughter was made whole from that very hour." (Matt 15:21-28)

She took no offence at the implication of being a Gentile dog. Rather, she with quick wit, took Y'shua's very word for little dogs (*kunaria*) and deftly turned it to her own advantage; for the little dogs eat of the crumbs (*psichi'n*, little morsels, diminutive again) that fall from the table of their masters (*kuri'n*).

By implication it looks like Y'shua call all outside the Torah covenant dogs. It is then the "dog's" responsibility to come into the owner of the house (YHWH's Kingdom by submitting to the owner Y'shua), and get under

the table (Torah covenant covering) to eat of the crumbs (the bread is the truth of Torah). (See Psalm 22:16 how Gentiles are depicted as dogs (meaning those outside the Torah Covenant). See our *Christian Foundational Teachings* series for the detail).

15:29-39 They saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see

"(29) And Jesus departed from thence, and came nigh unto the sea of Galilee; and went up into a mountain, and sat down there. (30) And great multitudes came unto him, having with them those that were lame, blind, dumb, maimed, and many others, and cast them down at Jesus' feet; and he healed them: (31) Insomuch that the multitude wondered, when they saw the dumb to speak, the maimed to be whole, the lame to walk, and the blind to see: and they glorified the God of Israel. (32) Then Jesus called his disciples unto him, and said, I have compassion on the multitude, because they continue with me now three days, and have nothing to eat: and I will not send them away fasting, lest they faint in the way. (33) And his disciples say unto him, Whence should we have so much bread in the wilderness, as to fill so great a multitude? (34) And Jesus saith unto them, How many loaves have ye? And they said, Seven, and a few little fishes. (35) And he commanded the multitude to sit down on the ground. (36) And he took the seven loaves and the fishes, and gave thanks, and brake them, and gave to his disciples, and the disciples to the multitude. (37) And they did all eat, and were filled: and they took up of the broken meat that was left seven baskets full. (38) And they that did eat were four thousand men, beside women and children. (39) And he sent away the multitude, and took ship, and came into the coasts of Magdala."

As mentioned earlier, these were signs of the Gospel (Jubilee) message as prophesied in the *Tenach*.

And they cast them down at his feet

A very strong word flung them down – not carelessly, but in haste; because so many were coming on the same errand. It was a great day for "they glorified the Elohim of Israel."

Three days of feeding the multitudes

"*Three days*", a parenthetic nominative. In the feeding of the five thousand, Y'shua took compassion on the people and healed their sick (Matt 14:14). Here, the hunger of the multitude moves him to compassion. So he is unwilling to send them away hungry.

Three days from an Eschatological point of view

Is it not remarkable that Y'shua was with the multitudes for a period of **three days**? (Matt 15:32) With the Samarian (Gentile) woman at the well, he tarried two days; and on the **third day** proceeded to the Galilee (Jews) (John 4:43)

On the **third day**, there was a marriage (Marriage supper of the Lamb) in Cana of Galilee (John 2:1) Y'shua said, "Blessed are those servants who are ready when their lord who comes in the **third watch**, and finds them ready." (Luke 12:38)

Why three? Prophet Hosea's great prophecy magnifies the truth, which gives great insight into the plan of YHWH. It mentions both houses of Israel - the Northern Tribes of Ephraim and the southern Tribe of Judah.

(14) "*For I will be unto Ephraim* (Lost ten Tribes) *as a lion, and as a young lion to the house of Judah:* (Judah with Benjamin) *I, even I, will tear and go away; I will take away, and none shall rescue him.*

(15) *I will go and return to my place, till they acknowledge their offence, and seek my face: in their affliction they will seek me early* (note early in the third millennium). (Hos 5:14-15)

(1) "*Come, and let us return unto the LORD:* for he hath torn, and **he will heal us**; he hath smitten, and he will bind us up.

(2) *After two days* (after 2 000 years) *will he revive us* (wake them up): *in the third day* (early in the 3rd millennium – our time) *he will raise us up* (cause the Israelites to return to Israel), and *we shall live in his sight* (at the Second Coming and beyond when Y'shua returned).

(3) *Then shall we know, if we follow on to know the LORD: his going forth is prepared as the morning* (early in the 3rd millennium); and *he shall come unto us as the rain, as the latter and former rain unto the earth.*" (Hos 6:1-3)

"**After two days will he revive us**" means ± two thousand years after Y'shua's First Coming, He started to put His plans into action for their return.

1897 - Theodore Hertzl was an Israelite with a mission to get a national homeland for the Nation of Israel in Palestine and to assist the Israelites to return. He started the Zionist movement on 29 August 1897 in Basel, Switzerland (Deut 30:4; Ezek 37:21; Jer 30:8, 10).

1917 - Dr. Chaim Weizman, a Jewish scientist, developed the explosive TNT for the British government and thereby assisted them to win World War I. When the British leaders wanted to reward him, he said: "give me not money, but give me Palestine as a national homeland for my Nation Israel." The Balfour declaration, on 2 November 1917, led to Palestine being declared Israel's legal homeland. On 9 December 1917, the British soldiers under Lord Allenby recaptured Jerusalem from the Turks without firing a single shot. (Pamphlets warning the Turks that the city would be invaded were thrown out of aeroplanes with Allenby's name on it. The Turks, who had never seen an aeroplane before, thought it was "Allah" their god and fled). Since then, the Israelites started to return to their new homeland (Isaiah 31:5).

1948 - Israel is declared a Nation again, miraculously reborn on 14 May 1948 after Britain gave the land to Israel, due to the ongoing conflict between the Jews and the Arabs. At 16:00 hours, David Ben Gurion declared a meeting and they sang the Israeli anthem, the 'Ha-Tikvah.'

1950's - Israel began to use the monetary unit of Shekel again (Ezek 45:12).

1955 - Planting of foreign plants and seedlings in Israel (Isaiah 17:10).

1967 - (5 June 1967) The six day war with Egypt, Syria and Jordan – Israel won and gained more ground (from 20,560 km² to 67,000 km²) and old Jerusalem was re-gained for the first time in ± two thousand years (Luke 21:24).

1980 - Jerusalem is declared the only and un-dividable capital city of Israel. The then mayor, Mr Teddy Kollek, said this: 'I have a bigger task than any other mayor, as Jerusalem must be prepared for the return of the Messiah.'

1992 - The desert and hills in Israel are planted and prepared for Israelites when they return to Israel (Ezek 36:8-10).

1993 - Israelis return from one hundred and twelve countries in the world:

From 1991 to 1998 – seven hundred thousand returned.

From 1948 to 2003 – more than three million returned.

There is an estimated population in Israel now of more than six and a half million (Ezek 37:21; Joel 3:1).

1995 - The blue prints to rebuild the Temple in Jerusalem – all the Temple vessels, priestly garments etc., are completed and the building material readily available. Jewish men have already been trained in ancient animal sacrifice (Isaiah 2:2-3).

1996 - Build up of mourning and tears at the Wailing Wall. More than ever, the tears are down the wall. Israel is crying for their Messiah (Lam 2:18).

2001 - International conflict over Israel started - many of the world's tensions and problems are in some way linked to the Middle East; example, the World Trade Centre, etc. The present worldwide recession is a direct result of Israel refusing to give old Jerusalem back to the Arabs (Zech 12:2-3).

"In the third day he will raise us up" means in the third thousand years from Y'shua's first coming, speaking of the dawn of the third millennium!

Look at the track record of how they returned...

1917 – 25,000

1922 – 83,000

1932 – 80,000

1935 – 300,000

1937 – 430,000

1945 – 500,000

2000 – 5,000,000+

2001 Onwards – ?

"But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days (after 2 millenniums), saith the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people." (Jer 31:33)

Y'shua came as their Messiah for the Jewish nation ± two thousand years ago; and sadly, they rejected him. He then opened the door for the Gentile nations, which started with the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. This period will last for two thousand years. The Scripture is clear that He will return on the "third day", **early in the third millennium.**

Magdala, home of Mary Magdalene

On the Sea of Galilee near the base of towering Mount Arbel, lie the ruins of the ancient city of Magdala. Today, the remains of the city can be found by travelling north about six kilometres on the coastal road from Tiberias.

Magdala was placed on the map forever because of its most famous First Century resident. We know her from the dozen references in the New Covenant as Mary Magdalene. We also know from the Gospels that Y'shua delivered this woman from a demonised life (Mark 16:9). Thereafter, she became a disciple par excellence. Mary accomplished something that the twelve selected disciples did not accomplish. She followed Y'shua all the way to the crucifixion stake (John 19:25), and three days later she was the first witness to the resurrection of Y'shua (John 20:14-18).

Mary's city, Magdala, is mentioned only once in Scripture, here in Matt 15:39. Here it is stated that Y'shua came to the region of Magdala. However, even in this instance, the NIV translates Magdala as Magadan. The area of Magdala is also associated in the New Testament with the name Dalmanutha, as seen in Mark 8:10. All other references to the city are indirect ones.

Like so many other ancient cities, Magdala was rediscovered in the past century. In 1971-74, Corbo and Loffreda excavated the city. In their excavations, they discovered a mini-synagogue, a water reservoir and some mosaics. One of the mosaics, now on display at Capernaum, depicts an ancient boat with both sails and oars; not unlike the famous boat actually discovered in the general area in 1986.

How Magdala got its name

In the *Talmud*, Magdala is called by its Aramaic name, *Migdal Nunaiya* (Pes. 46a). This name gives us a clue to the basic enterprise going on in the area, since the name means "Tower of Fish". Magdala was famous for its skill in processing fish. In the First Century, the town was called by another name illustrating this. In the Greek language, it was called *Tarichaea*; again, referring to it as a place of salting or processing fish.

We read in the New Covenant about two miracles that Y'shua performed, both including some kind of small fish. It is thought today that the small fish were the plentiful *Kinneret* sardines. Obviously, the boy could not have had them in his lunch unless they were preserved in some fashion. It is likely that the fish were either salted or smoked. It is even quite possible that these little fish were originally processed at Magdala.

History of Magdala

Soon after the time of Y'shua, Magdala suffered a tragic blow. After the revolt against Rome began in A.D. 66, the Romans defeated Magdala. The historian Josephus recounts that the Romans under Titus conquered the city with much bloodshed. Since Magdala was a boat-building centre, many of the remaining residents fled to the sea in their vessels. A great sea battle resulted, with a total of 6,500 Jews slaughtered in the sea and on land. Josephus describes how the sea became bloody and full of dead bodies. Titus' father, Vespasian, then decreed that the remaining citizens would not be spared. The old and infirm were slaughtered. Six thousand of the city's strongest were given as slaves to Nero, and the remaining thousands were sold in the slave markets (Josephus Flavius, *The Wars of the Jews*, Book 3, Ch. 1.)

Somehow, Magdala continued on as a city. In later times, the *Talmud* mentions Magdala once again as a boat-building centre. The city is also characterised as one noted for its wealth and depravity.

Y'shua cleanses Mary

In their book entitled, "*Jesus and His World, An Archaeological and Cultural Dictionary*", the authors John Rosseau and Rami Arav ask concerning Magdala: "*Can a correlation can be made between its depravity and the seven demons that Jesus cast out of Mary (Luke 8:2)?*" It would seem possible that in this affluent city, Mary associated with the wrong crowd. Somehow, demonic forces began to enter and take control of her life.

When Mary Magdalene met the Master, she met deliverance. We are told in Scripture that Y'shua cast seven demons out of Mary. From that point on, she loved the Master with a great and enduring love. For the remainder of Y'shua's ministry, Mary was there to serve Him.

Regardless of what our modern and postmodern world proclaims, our lives can be greatly influenced for good or evil by the kind of company we keep. The Apostle Paul exhorts us, "*Do not be misled: Bad company corrupts good character*" (1 Cor 15:33). Obviously, the reverse of this statement is also true. When Mary met Y'shua and began to travel with him and his disciples, her life took a turn toward the beautiful. The same thing can happen to us.

Magdala today

Today, the ancient city of Magdala lies in ruins. However, not far from the old city is the modern farming community of Migdal. This modern community once more takes its name from the Hebrew word for "tower." As early as 1885, some German Catholic families began new settlements in the area. At the turn of the century, their land was purchased by a group of Zionist Jews from Russia. Their intent was to establish a colony that could assist the Jewish people in learning agricultural techniques. By 1910, the settlement could boast itself as a successful farming area, and soon more settlers were attracted.

In 1921, a construction camp was established in the area as work was begun on the Tiberias-Rosh Pina highway. This work battalion was under the direction of the legendary hero, Joseph Trumpeldor. In the intervening years, the community of Migdal continued to grow; and today it boasts a population of some 1,500 people. Most of today's inhabitants are occupied in the farming industry. They grow olives, citrus crops of all kinds, dates, mangoes, avocados and many other fruits. Their picturesque farms dot the Plain of Genassaret lying just below the city. Migdal also attracts many vacationers who love its beautiful and peaceful area and its proximity to the Sea of Galilee.

Situated on the crest of Migdal's hill and overlooking the Sea of Galilee is the Galilee Study Center, presently operated by the evangelical Christian ministry called the Jerusalem Cornerstone Foundation. At this center, Christians from all over the world come to spend a few days. They rest, pray, study and tour near the place where Mary Magdalene once lived and where Y'shua once ministered.

Like the disciples of old, they hike over the hills with Bibles in hand, sit under the fig and olive trees and learn more about the land of Israel. As they experience this "disciple country" first hand, they also learn much more about the Master whom they serve.

SECTION VI

TEACHINGS AND MIRACLES

MATTHEW 16:1-28

TEXT:

- (1) "The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven.
- (2) He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red.
- (3) And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?
- (4) A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed.
- (5) And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread.
- (6) Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.
- (7) And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread.
- (8) Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread?
- (9) Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?
- (10) Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?
- (11) How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees?
- (12) Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees.
- (13) When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am?
- (14) And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets.
- (15) He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am?

- (16) And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.
- (17) And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.
- (18) And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it.
- (19) And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- (20) Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ.
- (21) From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day.
- (22) Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.
- (23) But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men.
- (24) Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me.
- (25) For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.
- (26) For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?
- (27) *For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works.*
- (28) *Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."*

16:1-3 Ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?

"(1) The Pharisees also with the Sadducees came, and tempting desired him that he would shew them a sign from heaven. (2) He answered and said unto them, When it is evening, ye say, It will be fair weather: for the sky is red. (3) And in the morning, It will be foul weather to day: for the sky is red and lowring. O ye hypocrites, ye can discern the face of the sky; but can ye not discern the signs of the times?"

History reveals that there was a great deal of "Messianic fervor" among the Jews at this time in history. The Dead Sea Scrolls texts show this began at least 100 years before Y'shua's time. This "Messianic period" lasted until about the time of the second war with Rome, around A.D. 132. The determination that this was a time that Messiah would appear was arrived at through a proper study of the *Tenach*.

Between the "timing", His teachings and the specific miracles He performed (always giving glory to YHWH), Y'shua says there was enough evidence for the Pharisees and Saducees to see what was going on and who He was. Although this is true, this "evidence" is not easily seen when reading the Bible in an abstract and modern way. Much of the method of understanding that the Pharisees and Saducees had (or should have had) has been lost since shortly after that time. This began in the 2nd and 3rd centuries when "following the Messiah" changed from being a continuation of the faith of Israel with its *Torah* and Y'shua Messiah to following a non-Jewish, anti-*Torah* Christian "Jesus."

People today will often point to "Old Testament" verses saying they are "Messianic prophecies" (which they well may be), and then claim that Y'shua fulfilled these (which He may have). But they lack the means to prove the connection, as the correlation is often at mystical (sod) level of interpretation.

16:4-10 A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign

"(4) A wicked and adulterous generation seeketh after a sign; and there shall no sign be given unto it, but the sign of the prophet Jonas. And he left them, and departed. (5) And when his disciples were come to the other side, they had forgotten to take bread. (6) Then Jesus said unto them, Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees. (7) And they reasoned among themselves, saying, It is because we have taken no bread. (8) Which when Jesus perceived, he said unto them, O ye of little faith, why reason ye among yourselves, because ye have brought no bread? (9) Do ye not yet understand, neither remember the five loaves of the five thousand, and how many baskets ye took up? (10) Neither the seven loaves of the four thousand, and how many baskets ye took up?"

A comparison is made here (and later in Matthew's Gospel) between the generation of Y'shua's time and that of the time of Moses following Mount Sinai. (See also Matt 23:30.) The Pharisees and Saducees had the

witness of *Torah* for than 1,300 years by the time Y'shua arrived. By this point, Y'shua had already performed many miracles, so there was no need for more.

It should be noted that His miracles alone did not attest to Him being the Messiah. In fact, the *Torah* warns not to blindly follow anyone who can perform miracles, saying that such miracles must support the revealed will of YHWH as found in the *Torah*.

16:11-12 The doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees

"(11) How is it that ye do not understand that I spake it not to you concerning bread, that ye should beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees? (12) Then understood they how that he bade them not beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and of the Sadducees"

As discussed already, the legalistic Pharisees and Saducees had corrupted the truth of YHWH's *Torah* through their own self-righteousness and the creation of laws that contradicted *Torah*.

16:13-16 Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets

"(13) When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? (14) And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. (15) He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? (16) And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God."

It is interesting to note that three deceased individuals are noted here (even more if you count "one of the prophets"). There were (and still are) beliefs in Judaism regarding resurrection, as well as the idea of the "spirit" of someone resting on another (i.e., Elijah's spirit onto Elias, Moses' spirit onto the elders). The point is being made here and in the following verse is that the people – though they knew Y'shua was a significant person – did not have the clear understanding yet that He was the promised Messiah.

16:17 Flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven

"And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven."

Peter was given insight that others did not yet have. In chapter 13, Y'shua had said that there were those who would receive special understanding of the mysteries of the Kingdom of YHWH that others did not yet have. Peter's revelation is one of those moments. Obviously, this was a "benefit" of following the Messiah directly. The twelve "apostles" (as they are usually called) do seem to merit a special place in the Kingdom (Rev 21:14). The revelation Peter received is the gift of prophecy. (See notes to verse 18 below.)

16:18 Upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it

"And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it."

In order to understand what Y'shua said and did, however, we must return these words to their context; to Second-Temple Judaism and the life and practices of First Century Israeli Jewry. We cannot understand these words if we transplant them into Gentile soil, for they were spoken by a Jew in the land of the Jews to no one but Jews. Only when we return to this place, this people, and this time can we truly comprehend the meaning and function of the true "church" (*ekklesia/qehillah*).

As mentioned earlier, the word "church" is not in Scripture and represents a theology based on the concept that YHWH replaced Israel's faith with a new one ("the Church") and that the *Torah* is no longer the standard to live by. Y'shua is saying that the type of revelation that Peter received (that comes by humility and submission to the *Torah*) is the essence of what "faith" in Him is all about. This is the part of the gift of prophecy discussed in chapter 14.

Theological Analysis

The term "church" is both very familiar and very misunderstood, generally at the same time. What is the church, who are a part of it, when did it begin, where does it exist, how does it operate, and why does it exist? These are the questions of ecclesiology, the study of the church. Does the church make believers or

do believers make the church the church? Is the church merely a local congregation of believers? Is it a denomination? Is it the entire believing community? Anyone who has interacted to any degree with believers of various communions knows that the answers to these questions are many and widely divergent.

In a theological analysis, it is essential that we stress the biblicality of the church – both the term, its definition, and its function. We must turn to the Bible for our understanding of ecclesiology. In analysing Holy Scripture, however, we must also be careful that we engage in exegesis, not eisegesis. The use of the latter has resulted in the maze of confusion on the subject that already exists, for men of good intentions have read into the texts of Scriptures the meanings which their culture, politics, or other environmental conditioning dictated. We must exegete the term *church* by literally "drawing out" the meaning of the words and texts of Scripture.

The Church, Etymologically Speaking

The word *church* is derived from the Greek word *kuriakos*, which means "belonging to the Lord." The word *church* must be understood, however, in the light of the New Covenant Greek term *ekklesia*, which refers to an assembly or gathering of people. In classical Greek, the word *ekklesia* meant an assembly of the citizens of a city (*polis*) with the understanding that those who were of this assembly had the right to vote on civic issues.

Ekklesia is derived from the verb which means "to summon forth". Hence, it has been said to mean "the called out". The full import of this meaning cannot be deduced from the Greek word *ekklesia* alone. For an understanding of the word *church*, we must go behind the Greek text of the New Covenant and return to the Hebrew in which the words of the apostles were either written or thought. In essence, we must return to the Hebrew foundations of faith in order to arrive at a proper definition of the one word that most often denominates the community of believers in Y'shua.

We begin to discover the spiritual meaning of the secular Greek word *ekklesia* when we turn to the Hebrew words which were rendered *ekklesia* by the translators of the Septuagint Version of the Old Covenant. Seventy scholars in Alexandria translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek in the third century B.C. to make it possible for the Hellenised Jews of the Diaspora to read the Scriptures in the *lingua franca* of the Mediterranean Basin. These scholars used the Greek word *ekklesia* to translate the Hebrew word *qahal*, which means, "congregation, assembly". The Hebrew word *qahal* has the same root, but with a different vowel pointing and means to "call together" or to "assemble people" when used in the hiphil. Both words are derivatives of the word for voice (*qol*) and ultimately refer to the summoning of an assembly or to the act of assembling. This term is generally used biblically to refer to the congregation of the people of Israel (e.g., *qahal Yisrael* – congregation of Israel); (*qahal YHWH* – congregation of YHWH); and (*qahal haElohim* – congregation of God). It often denotes the general assembly of the people—men, women, and children. The Jewish people are sometimes referred to as the *qehillah*, from this same root. The word is usually rendered *ekklesia* in the Septuagint.

A second Hebrew word that is translated "congregation" is ('*edah*), which refers to the collective people who are gathered, particularly at the tent of meeting. Some have suggested that since the term is first used in Exod 12:3, it indicates that the "congregation" or church of Israel came into being with the command (call) to celebrate Passover and leave Egypt. This word points to the community ("congregation") as centered in the law. Lothar Coenen has suggested that the term '*edah* means "*the unambiguous and permanent term for the ceremonial community as a whole*". He suggests, on the other hand, that "*qahal* is the "ceremonial expression for the assembly" that is called. In the New Covenant Greek, *ekklesia* is generally used to translate *qahal*; however, it is never used to translate '*edah*, which is usually rendered *sunagogue*.

In Biblical language, then, the church is the assembly of those who are called out to be in covenant with YHWH. Church is not exclusively a New Covenant term, for the origin of the term is found in the Septuagint version of the Old Covenant which the writers of the New Covenant used. The word which the apostles chose to use as an expression of their corporate identity was the same as that which had been used by the Jewish people since the exodus. This is why Stephen calls Israel "the *church* in the wilderness" in Acts 7:38 and why Heb 2:12 quotes Psalm 22:22: "*I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee*" as "I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the *church* will I sing praise unto thee." This is also why Heb 12:23 uses "general assembly" and "church of the firstborn" as virtually synonymous.

The New Covenant writers understood that the word *ekklesia* translated their Hebrew word *qahal* and meant the congregation of YHWH. For Y'shua and the apostles, there was absolute continuity between the congregation under the old covenant and the congregation under the new covenant – the church in the Old Covenant and the church in the New Covenant. Y'shua did nothing new, therefore, when he called unto him

whom he would and ordained twelve apostles to be the foundation of his reformed congregation or church (Mark 3:13, 14; 1 Cor 12:28; Eph 2:20). He was restoring Judaism to its original purpose and reforming it by introducing a new covenant sealed in his own blood.

The term *church*, then, might more accurately be translated *congregation* or *assembly*. Perhaps if the instructions of King James to the interpreters of the Bishops' Bible, which came to be known as the Authorised Version (King James Version) of the Scriptures had not proscribed the use of *congregation* in deference to the ecclesiastical term *church*, generations of Christians in English-speaking nations would have understood the church as the congregation of YHWH, which is a perpetuation of the congregation of Israel in complete continuity. Then we might have more readily understood Paul's Olive Tree metaphor in Romans 11 to reveal Israel, into which Torah-observant Gentile branches were grafted to share in the spiritual root and fatness of biblical Judaism as instructed by Y'shua.

Who Are The Congregation?

The question that begs to be asked is this: who are the people who comprise the assembly of those who are called out to be in covenant with YHWH? The answer is clear in the Old Covenant: it was the entire assembly of the descendants of Abraham through Isaac and Jacob who made the exodus from Egypt and appeared before YHWH at Sinai, and it was all of their subsequent posterity. While all of Israel was denominated and arranged accordingly around the tent of meeting in the Sinai desert, they were collectively considered '*edah*', the "congregation of YHWH". While there were various elections within Israel as Jacob noted in Genesis 49, all of Israel was the *qahal*; the ones called out to enter into covenant with YHWH. All of Israel, therefore, was the *church* in the wilderness. By the same token, we need to understand that those who came out of Egypt were actually a *mixed multitude* consisting of both Jews and non-Jews, and they were all treated as *one body* under one covenant.

The answer is equally clear in the New Covenant. Just as the Old Covenant church was baptised into one body unto Moses in the cloud and in the sea (1 Cor 10:2), so all believers have been baptised by one Spirit into one body (1 Cor 12:13), buried with Y'shua in baptism (Col 2:12). This includes everyone who has been "called out": "*There is one body, and one Spirit, even as ye are called in one hope of your calling*" (Eph 4:4). It is a calling into covenant with YHWH: "*Wherfore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead*" (Rom 7:4). *All believers are the children of God who have been espoused to one husband*" (2 Cor 11:2). Though there are diversities of callings and administrations in the community of Y'shua, the church is one—those who have been called out from the world to come before Golgotha and receive the impartation of YHWH's grace in the person of Y'shua HaMashiach and to enter into relationship with YHWH through the new covenant. It is important to understand that this includes walking in obedience to the commandments of Torah and keeping His appointed times (moedim) as part of this ONE covenant. The unity of all believers in the universal church does not limit the elections of YHWH for specific functions within the church; however, it does require that all of those elections operate in mutual respect for and submission to one another and that they maintain their ongoing interaction with one another as members of the one body of Y'shua.

It should be noted that the church is not merely the sum of all the local entities comprised of Believers. In virtually every instance of the use of the word *ekklesia* in the New Covenant, it refers to a local body of believers. Generally, this was the case with all believers in a city (Acts 5:11; 8:1; 11:22; 12:1, 5; 13:1); however, it also denotes house churches or congregations meeting in homes (Rom 16:5; Col 4:15). In two cases, it refers to all believers in a larger geographical area (Acts 9:31; 1 Cor 16:19). In every case, however, a single group of believers is never considered as a mere part of the whole church. The fullness of the church is found in each of its localised manifestations.

"No New Thing Under The Sun"

Most Christian scholars conclude that the church began on the Day of Pentecost. And, they are right, but in the wrong century!

The church did not begin on Pentecost at Mount Zion in Acts 2. It began on Pentecost at Mount Sinai in Exodus 20.

The truth is that Y'shua's "I-will-build-my-church" statement meant, "I will restore my congregation". James declared this to be Y'shua's work: "*After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up*" (Acts 15:16). Y'shua was a restorer, not an innovator. His never intended to destroy what YHWH had been molding among the Jewish people for

centuries so that he could start something totally different and completely new. He sought only to restore the house (congregation) of David that lay in ruin.

From Temple and Synagogue

The church of Y'shua was modeled after both the temple and the synagogue that were so intrinsically involved in the lives of First Century Jews. The church came to be thought of as the spiritual temple, the new habitation of YHWH through the Spirit (Eph 2:21, 22). Local assemblies of the church were still termed synagogues by James thirty years after the resurrection of Y'shua (James 2:2). The translators of the Scriptures have concealed this truth by rendering *sunagoge* as "assembly" or "gathering." At the same time, they seemed to have no difficulty translating "*synagogue of Satan*" in Rev 2:9; 3:9 and "*synagogue of the Jews*" in Acts 17:10.

The ongoing life of the church was patterned after the synagogue. Its officers were merely an extension of the form with which the apostles had been familiar all their lives. Each congregation of the church was autonomous like the synagogues before them. The leader of each assembly was called president (*nasi*) rather than pastor, until at least the middle of the Second Century. The government of the early church was purely egalitarian, both in the democracy of the local congregation and in the *yeshiva* or *Beit Din* of its translocal leadership (Acts 15). Monolithic organisations with hierarchical episcopacies were later accretions patterned after the governmental and military structures of the Greco-Roman world and of the nations in which Protestantism later developed.

The liturgy of the earliest church paralleled the liturgy of the synagogue. Forms of prayer and praise remained consistent with the patterns of the Judaism with which Y'shua and the apostles had expressed as their faith. Y'shua was **not seeking to establish a new order**; he merely brought a renewed covenant to YHWH's ancient system of praise, worship, and service—biblical Judaism.

Extended Family, Community

In reality, both synagogue and Temple in the economy of Israel were patterned after Abraham and Sarah's tent, so that even each Jewish family's gathering for food and fellowship was thought of as in a mini-Temple (*mikdash me'at*). The foundation of both the synagogue and the earliest church was the home; and congregations met in homes, as had the synagogues of which they had been a part. Some evidence suggests that no structures were constructed solely for worship until the Fourth Century A.D.

An accurate depiction of the church is that of an extended family, the family of YHWH. Community (fellowship) was foremost in the First Century church and should be the guiding principle for the church today. It is in the small groups of extended family that believers receive the mutual support, reinforcement and the accountability that they need for successful holy living.

Back to Basics

It is time that the church stopped **wasting millions of dollars on spectacular, single-purpose structures and on entertaining stage productions**. These monies can more effectively be spent on personnel to nurture the body of Messiah in communities patterned after the First Century church. YHWH's command to Moses is good advice to us: "See that you make all things according to the patterns shown you in the mount." In this case, the Mount Zion community of the First Century must be the pattern from which we contextualise the faith of the apostles in today's multi-cultural world society. When we do, we will find ourselves building on the Rock instead of the sands of human tradition; and the lives that we build and bring to maturity will stand for all time.

The reference to "*gates of hell*" is an example of a concept deeply rooted in Jewish mystical studies. It means that the demonic world will not prevail against those "walking in the Kingdom".

16:19-20 The keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven

"(19) And I will give unto thee *the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven*.
(20) Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ." (Matt 16:19-20)

The important reference here is to the Kingdom; which, as we mentioned in the notes to chapter 13, is the main message of Scripture. This is another verse that has been misused through history (mostly by Catholicism) – though not due to the reasons cited by its critics (Protestantism).

The text indicates that the concept of "keys" is directly associated with "binding and loosing". The issue at hand (as with all of the text of the "New Testament") must be understood within the context of biblical Judaism.

Y'shua is passing along a degree of authority to his immediate disciples regarding matters of *halakha*, which is best translated as "the way we walk out our faith". (Hence, Catholicism has the basic concept correct, but neglects the *Torah* as the final authority.) Scripture does not give us all the minute details of how we are to carry out all of YHWH's commandments. Decisions have to be made as to how the *Torah* is applied both by individuals and communities, as circumstances do change in people's lives and through the course of history.

The *Torah* is eternal and resolutions must be made in accordance with it. The idea of a "governing authority" that makes rulings for the body of believers is biblical. We can see this with the 70 elders of Moses' time and the Jerusalem Council of Acts 15.

As mentioned in the last chapter, by giving this authority to His disciples, Y'shua is allowing for "traditions" to be established. He had no problem with traditions based on the biblical *Torah*.

16:21-26 Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me

"(21) From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes, and be killed, and be raised again the third day. (22) Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. (23) But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men. (24) Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. (25) For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it. (26) For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Peter allowed himself to stray away from the light of YHWH's revelation and fell back to his own understanding (Prov 3:5). YHWH's ways are not our ways; and in this case Y'shua makes it clear that regarding understanding the mystical revelations of the Kingdom, there are but two sides to the story - YHWH's and Satan's.)

16:27 For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works

"For the Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works."

The allusion here is to the book of Revelation (and other Hebrew writings), which helps explain the following verse.

16:28 There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom

"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."

This is another deeply mystical verse and can be seen in two ways:

It is obvious that all those present have since died and Y'shua has not yet come into His kingdom. Here is another example of how one must go beyond the literal text (the *p'shat*) and look into the mystical (*sod*) level to understand what is being said. Y'shua's statement ties into what was said in the previous verses of this chapter. Those who completely surrender themselves to YHWH and seek to be conformed to His image through the *Torah* and prayer can (to a degree) experience the Kingdom of YHWH in the present time while still alive.

If you look at the verse strictly from a literal point of view (the *p'shat*), it means that when Y'shua returns again in the near future, some will be alive.

We know that Peter, James, and John received a direct revelation of a "transfigured" *Y'shua* (indicative of the Kingdom) in Matthew 17. John was given a vision of the coming of *Y'shua* and subsequent Kingdom in the book of Revelation.

SECTION VI

TEACHINGS AND MIRACLES

MATTHEW 17:1-27

TEXT:

- (1) "And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,
- (2) And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light.
- (3) And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him.
- (4) Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias.
- (5) While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him.
- (6) And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid.
- (7) And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid.
- (8) And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only.
- (9) And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead.
- (10) And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?
- (11) And Jesus answered and said unto them, Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.
- (12) But I say unto you, That Elias is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them.
- (13) Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist.
- (14) And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying,
- (15) Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.
- (16) And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.
- (17) Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me.
- (18) And Jesus rebuked the devil; and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour.
- (19) Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?
- (20) And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.
- (21) Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting.
- (22) And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men:
- (23) And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry.
- (24) And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute?
- (25) He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?
- (26) Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free.
- (27) Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee."

Chapter 17 builds upon the events and teachings of the previous chapters, going back to the parables of the Kingdom in chapter 13. As with the previous chapter, there continues to be deeply mystical teachings in this section.

17:1 Bringeth them up into an high mountain apart

"And after six days Jesus taketh Peter, James, and John his brother, and bringeth them up into an high mountain apart,"

There is a "sod" (hidden) level of understanding to this verse. The "going up" to a high mountain can also be understood as a heightened level of spiritual awareness (i.e., insight into the Kingdom), especially in light of what occurs over the next few verses.

17:2 And was transfigured before them

"And was transfigured before them: and his face did shine as the sun, and his raiment was white as the light."

It is possible that this had also occurred when they saw Y'shua walking on the water, as mentioned in an earlier chapter. (Compare His comment to Peter after the latter began to sink in the water to what He says the disciples could do if they had faith, in verse 20 below.)

17:3 There appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him

"And, behold, there appeared unto them Moses and Elias talking with him."

The key to understanding what is occurring here lies in the next verse.

17:4 Let us make here three tabernacles

"Then answered Peter, and said unto Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here: if thou wilt, let us make here three tabernacles; one for thee, and one for Moses, and one for Elias."

Peter clearly views this as a vision of the Kingdom of YHWH. His desire to build "tabernacles" (*succot*) is tied to the Feast of *Succot*. This is the last of the Feasts of YHWH, and the one directly associated with the coming of the Kingdom of YHWH.

Interestingly, the time of this vision is not *Succot*. The same allusion will be seen later in Matthew's Gospel, when people lay out palm branches (another *Succot* symbol) before Y'shua on His entry into Jerusalem just before *Pesach* (Passover) in the spring (Matt 21:8).

17:5-10 A bright cloud ... and behold a voice out of the cloud

"(5) While he yet spake, behold, a bright cloud overshadowed them: and behold a voice out of the cloud, which said, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him. (6) And when the disciples heard it, they fell on their face, and were sore afraid. (7) And Jesus came and touched them, and said, Arise, and be not afraid. (8) And when they had lifted up their eyes, they saw no man, save Jesus only. (9) And as they came down from the mountain, Jesus charged them, saying, Tell the vision to no man, until the Son of man be risen again from the dead. (10) And his disciples asked him, saying, Why then say the scribes that Elias must first come?"

The cloud is associated with the *Shekinah* - YHWH's visible presence on earth. (Much of Jewish mystical literature surrounding the Kingdom is concerned with the *Shekinah*.) The voice from heaven is called the *Bat-kol* (literally, "daughter of the voice"). The *Shekinah* and the *Bat-kol* are feminine in the Hebrew, as is the *Ruach haKodesh* ("Holy Spirit").

The "feminine aspect" of YHWH is one that is ignored, if not frowned upon, in Christianity. Again, this is partly due to the pagan doctrine of "the mother of God" (as found in Catholicism) and a lack of understanding of the deeper meaning of the Hebrew Scriptures that is lacking in both Catholicism and Protestantism.

YHWH is described as being both masculine and feminine at the time of the creation:

"So God created man **in his own image**, in the image of God created he him; **male and female** created he them." (Gen 1:27)

Interestingly, even Paul offers a feminine aspect to the coming Kingdom:

"**But Jerusalem which is above is free, which is the mother of us all.**" (Gal 4:26)

17:11 Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things

"And Jesus answered and said unto them, **Elias truly shall first come, and restore all things.**"

Y'shua says Elijah has yet to come, but the next verse says it in a different way.

17:12-13 That Elias is come already, and they knew him not

"(12) But I say unto you, **That Elias is come already, and they knew him not**, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them. (13) Then the disciples understood that he spake unto them of John the Baptist."

Y'shua, of course, is referring to John the Baptist, whom he says "was Elijah". Critics often point to this as a "contradiction". Some go as far to say that this indicates that Scripture teaches reincarnation.

However, the concept of multiple appearances of Elijah is not foreign to Judaism; nor is the idea of someone being "in the spirit" of a great prophet; nor is the concept of Elijah coming more than once:

Seder 'Olam Rabba, ch. 17: "*In the second year of (King) Ahazia, Elijah was hidden, and he will not be seen again until King Messiah comes. And then he will be seen but will be hidden a second time, and seen again only when Gog and Magog come.*" (*The Messiah Texts*, Raphael Patai, 1979, Wayne State University Press, Detroit, p.134.)

The prophesied *Elijah* from an eschatological point of view

Who are the two witnesses of the Revelation chapter 11? They are two men – not covenants or dispensations. They are YHWH's witnesses, because YHWH said "my two witnesses". They are possibly sent by YHWH to warn and prepare the Jews and Gentiles for the Great Tribulation period. It could be any two known or unknown men. YHWH tells us through the prophet Malachi (Mal 4:5) that He will send us Elijah "before the Coming of the great and dreadful Day of the Lord" (The Tribulation period). In this context, it is not clear if Elijah's spirit (as in the days of Yochanan the Immerser – Matt 11:7-14) or the person himself will return.

The two witnesses are symbolised in the *Tanach* by two olive trees and two candlesticks standing before YHWH (Zech 4:11-14). They will have power to destroy their enemies the same way their enemies sought to destroy them. When their ministry is finished, the Antichrist will be allowed to kill them; or better, they will possibly challenge the Antichrist to kill them to prove that they will be resurrected.

There are three men who never died a natural death, of which the possibility exists that the two witnesses can be from them. Scripture informs us that Elijah is a possible witness – now, who are the other two who have never died a natural death?

Enoch is the only other man in Scripture who has not seen death in his time on earth, and is now in heaven (Gen 5:24; Heb 11:5). Both Elijah and Enoch were prophets of judgment. Enoch also prophesied the Coming day of the Almighty's judgment and the return of Y'shua with his church (Jude 14-15). The lives of **Enoch** and Elijah are parallel in every sense, and many scholars accept that they will be the two witnesses.

On the other hand, YHWH buried **Moses** Himself; and nobody knows where the grave is till today (Deut 34:6). Moses and Elijah appeared with glorified bodies and talked to Y'shua on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matt 17:3). In Jude 9, Michael the archangel was in a dispute with Satan about the body of Moses. Satan challenged Michael's right to bury Moses, since Moses had murdered an Egyptian (Exod 2:11-15). Deut 34:5-6 indicates that Moses' burial was divinely arranged. Another interesting factor is that the prophet Malachi mentions both Elijah and Moses in his passage about the Messiah, and many scholars conclude that Moses is the second of the two witnesses. There are also similarities between the future plagues that they

bring and the judgments against Egypt. Furthermore, Moses always represented the "Torah", the law in the first five books of the Bible; and Elijah the prophet. Here we have the Bible in its entirety on the Mount of Transfiguration with Moses and Elijah representing the *Tanach*; and *Y'shua* the New Covenant. Is this why they appeared together with *Y'shua* – to affirm *Y'shua*'s claim as God's Messiah, as the *Tanach* points to the Messiah?

It is appropriate that these two great leaders should appear together again, to witness to humanity at the end of this age. Many scholars feel Deut 18:15,18-19 is directly linked to Moses and accept that he and Elijah will be the two witnesses.

Additional details provided by Luke

Luke, in Luke 9:30-31, gives details about the event described above that Matthew and Mark do not. For Luke notes that both Moses and *Elijah appeared in glory*, even as *Y'shua* himself had appeared in glory! Luke also informs us of what *Y'shua*, *Moshe* and *Elijah* spoke about – speaking about *Y'shua*'s departure that he was about to accomplish at Jerusalem!

It should be noted that the event the disciples Peter, James and John saw was "the kingdom of the Mighty One", even as Luke 9:27 says; for they saw *Y'shua*, Moses and *Elijah all in glory*! And this event took place before they died.

John's testimony about *Y'shua*

- (1) "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
- (2) The same was in the beginning with God.
- (3) All things were made by him; and without him was not any thing made that was made.
- (4) In him was life; and the life was the **light** of men.
- (5) And the **light** shineth in darkness; and the darkness comprehended it not.
- (6) **There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.**
- (7) The same came for a witness, to bear witness of the **Light**, that all men through him might believe.
- (8) He was not that **Light**, but was sent to bear witness of that **Light**.
- (9) That was the true **Light**, which **lighteth** every man that cometh into the world.
- (10) He was in the world, and the world was made by him, and the world knew him not.
- (11) He came unto his own, and his own received him not.
- (12) But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:
- (13) Which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.
- (14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.
- (15) **John bare witness of him, and cried, saying, This was he of whom I spoke, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me.**
- (16) And of his fulness have all we received, and grace for grace.
- (17) For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ.
- (18) No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him.
- (19) And **this is the record of John**, when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, Who art thou?
- (20) **And he confessed, and denied not; but confessed, I am not the Christ.**
- (21) And they asked him, What then? **Art thou Elias? And he saith, I am not.** Art thou that prophet? And he answered, No.
- (22) Then said they unto him, Who art thou? that we may give an answer to them that sent us. **What sayest thou of thyself?**
- (23) He said, **I am the voice of one crying in the wilderness, Make straight the way of the Lord, as said the prophet Esaias.**
- (24) And they which were sent were of the Pharisees.
- (25) And they asked him, and said unto him, Why baptizest thou then, if thou be not that Christ, nor Elias, neither that prophet?
- (26) **John answered them, saying, I baptize with water: but there standeth one among you, whom ye know not;**
- (27) **He it is, who coming after me is preferred before me, whose shoe's latchet I am not worthy to unloose.**
- (28) These things were done in Bethabara beyond Jordan, where John was baptizing.

- (29) *The next day John seeth Jesus coming unto him, and saith, Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world.* (30) *This is he of whom I said, After me cometh a man which is preferred before me: for he was before me.*
- (31) *And I knew him not: but that he should be made manifest to Israel, therefore am I come baptizing with water.*
- (32) *And John bare record, saying, I saw the Spirit descending from heaven like a dove, and it abode upon him.*
- (33) *And I knew him not: but he that sent me to baptize with water, the same said unto me, Upon whom thou shalt see the Spirit descending, and remaining on him, the same is he which baptizeth with the Holy Ghost.* (John 1:1-33)

Yochanan worked by the spirit and power of Elijah and not in the body of Elijah.

If we take the Bible literally when it says that Elijah **must** return before "the day of the Lord comes" (Mal 4:5), then Elijah must manifest in the body.

The "Day of the Lord" is the Tribulation period (see Rev 1:10).

The Orthodox Jews are currently waiting for Elijah to return to prepare the way for the Messiah.

Every Passover, Jews set a place at their seder meal in anticipation of the prophet's return, leaving a door or window slightly ajar in the hopes that this will be the year of Elijah's entrance to usher in the Messianic kingdom.

They recently started to fill the Jewish Passover cup for Elijah, which was left empty all these years.

Based on this, Elijah then **must first return in person; or else the (Orthodox) Jews will not accept the Antichrist as the Messiah.** (And we know they will accept the Antichrist because the Y'shua says so in John 5:39-43).

It is then accepted that the two witnesses will **make their debut first, then the Antichrist will come on the scene, and only then** will he be accepted as the Messiah and allow the Temple to be rebuilt.

The two witnesses will perform their duties in the first half of the Tribulation period.

17:14-17 I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him

"(14) *And when they were come to the multitude, there came to him a certain man, kneeling down to him, and saying, (15) Lord, have mercy on my son: for he is lunatick, and sore vexed: for oftentimes he falleth into the fire, and oft into the water.* (16) **I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him.** (17) *Then Jesus answered and said, O faithless and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? how long shall I suffer you? bring him hither to me.*"

As the subsequent verses indicate, the "fault" was with the disciples. Y'shua's words imply that they should have been able to deal with this.

17:18-19 And Jesus rebuked the devil

"(18) **And Jesus rebuked the devil;** and he departed out of him: and the child was cured from that very hour. (19) *Then came the disciples to Jesus apart, and said, Why could not we cast him out?*"

As mentioned earlier, this was a time of great "demonic activity" as it was in the time of Abraham and Moses; and will be again upon the return of Y'shua at the end of the age.

17:20 If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed

"*And Jesus said unto them, Because of your unbelief: for verily I say unto you, If ye have faith as a grain of mustard seed, ye shall say unto this mountain, Remove hence to yonder place; and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible unto you.*"

The potential for "walking in the Kingdom" is outlined here in an amazing fashion. This begs the question, why aren't we seeing these kinds of miracles today? Obviously, the twelve apostles had a unique relationship; but a good reason for the lack of the truly miraculous today is the rejection of the *Torah* by those who claim to be following YHWH for the past 1,900 years. This applies to both Gentiles who mainly follow a theology of an anti-*Torah* messiah figure; as well as most Jews who don't recognise the *Torah* in the flesh – Y'shua.

Many people jump to the conclusion that what is meant here with the "mustard seed" is that it refers to its small size. The point that Y'shua makes is: if your faith is as "whole" as the mustard seed, you will move mountains. It is not amazing that the mustard seed is one of the few seeds that does not have a "cut" (seam) in it.

17:21 Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting

"Howbeit this kind goeth not out but by prayer and fasting."

The subject of fasting is another that is often misunderstood. Many consider fasting simply to be a means of "getting something". YHWH is not some "puppet", however, whose strings you can pull when desired. Fasting is a means of clearing the mind of earthly thoughts and desires in order to connect to YHWH at a higher spiritual level.

17:22-25 Doth not your master pay tribute?

"(22) And while they abode in Galilee, Jesus said unto them, The Son of man shall be betrayed into the hands of men: (23) And they shall kill him, and the third day he shall be raised again. And they were exceeding sorry. (24) And when they were come to Capernaum, they that received tribute money came to Peter, and said, Doth not your master pay tribute? (25) He saith, Yes. And when he was come into the house, Jesus prevented him, saying, What thinkest thou, Simon? of whom do the kings of the earth take custom or tribute? of their own children, or of strangers?"

This is in reference to the Temple tax that all Jews were to pay to support the work of the Temple. This tax is also an atonement, according to the *Torah*.

- (11) **"And the LORD spake unto Moses, saying,**
- (12) **When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a ransom for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them.**
- (13) **This they shall give, every one that passeth among them that are numbered, half a shekel after the shekel of the sanctuary: (a shekel is twenty gerahs:) an half shekel shall be the offering of the LORD.**
- (14) **Every one that passeth among them that are numbered, from twenty years old and above, shall give an offering unto the LORD.**
- (15) **The rich shall not give more, and the poor shall not give less than half a shekel, when they give an offering unto the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls.**
- (16) **And thou shalt take the atonement money of the children of Israel, and shalt appoint it for the service of the tabernacle of the congregation; that it may be a memorial unto the children of Israel before the LORD, to make an atonement for your souls." Exod 30:11-16**

17:26 Then are the children free

"Peter saith unto him, Of strangers. Jesus saith unto him, Then are the children free."

Does Y'shua teach breaking of the *Torah* here by saying this?

No, for the same reason found in Matthew 12 when Y'shua was challenged as to the behaviour of his disciples on the Sabbath. If the religious authorities recognised who Y'shua was, they would have realised that they had a greater "Tabernacle/Temple" before them in the form the Messiah.

Y'shua's presence among them took priority over the physical Temple, which was (in this sense, only) a "lesser" representation of the image of YHWH and His Kingdom, (a "shadow"; i.e., Col 2:17; Heb 8:5, 10:1). Y'shua is above the physical Temple, as He is the actual image of the invisible YHWH (Col 1:15). Note, however, that after His death His disciples continued to attend the Temple for services and sacrifices.

Nonetheless, Y'shua commanded His disciples to pay the tax for the reason explained below.

17:27 Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them

"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee."

Note that although Y'shua was correct in that His presence initiated a higher level of *Torah* commandment, He deferred to the principle of setting aside His "right" for the benefit of others.

Y'shua the Temple

Y'shua considered that he and his disciples were exempt from the half-shekel Temple tax because he was the Temple, and his disciples were the new spiritual authority; but they paid the tax, anyway, to avoid offense. *Y'shua* is the Temple described at the end of the book of Revelation. There will also be a physical Temple of the Anti-Messiah built by religious and political leaders with the assistance of the conspirators.

The Half-Shekel Tax

During the days of Moses, every Israelite from twenty years old and above was required to pay a half-shekel tax towards the upkeep of the tabernacle. Everybody paid the same amount, whether rich or poor (Exod 30:11-16). The half-shekel tax was levied throughout the history of Israel and was used for the upkeep of the priests and the Temple.

In Matt 17:24-27, *Y'shua* claims that he and his disciples should be exempt from the Temple tax, comparing himself to a king who raises tax from others but not from his sons. The clear implication is that *Y'shua* considers himself to be an authority that is higher than all the priests, and his disciples are his administrators and interpreters of the law. Then he paid the tax, anyway, to avoid causing offense. He told his disciples to go to the lake and catch a fish, and they would find a shekel in its mouth. (The Romans used to cast coins in the sea to make a wish.) This unusual way of paying the tax demonstrates that YHWH owns all the money, anyway. So asking the Messiah to pay the Temple tax was a matter of trivial irrelevance.

END OF Section VI - Teachings and Miracles

SECTION VII

TEACHINGS ON THE KINGDOM

MATTHEW 18:1-35

TEXT:

- (1) "At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
- (2) And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,
- (3) And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.
- (4) Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.
- (5) And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me.
- (6) But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea.
- (7) Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!
- (8) Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire.
- (9) And if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire.
- (10) Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven.
- (11) For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost.
- (12) How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray?
- (13) And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray.
- (14) Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish.
- (15) Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother.

- (16) But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.
- (17) And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican.
- (18) Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.
- (19) Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven.
- (20) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them.
- (21) Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times?
- (22) Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven.
- (23) Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants.
- (24) And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents.
- (25) But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made.
- (26) The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.
- (27) Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt.
- (28) But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest.
- (29) And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all.
- (30) And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt.
- (31) So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done.
- (32) Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me:
- (33) Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee?
- (34) And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him.
- (35) So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

18:1-2 Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?

- "(1) At the same time came the disciples unto Jesus, saying, Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?
 (2) And Jesus called a little child unto him, and set him in the midst of them,"

The disciples obviously liked their new position of importance, and immediately wanted to know which of them would be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven. It is possible that the disciples (who are still in the process of learning the mysteries of the Kingdom from Y'shua) were thinking in terms of "might" or "wisdom" when they asked this. Y'shua turns this question around to show who the "greatest" really are. Y'shua called a child to him and said:

18:3-5 Except ye be converted, and become as little children

- "(3) And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (4) Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven. (5) And whoso shall receive one such little child in my name receiveth me."

What is the spiritual condition of the unborn, infants, and young children? Some believe that because the unborn have never sinned, they will be granted salvation; and that infants and very young children who die are granted salvation because they could not possibly understand what sin is. Others suggest that before a certain age, children are not held accountable for sin. The major problem with these beliefs and assumptions is that no one can find scriptural confirmation to support them.

Some point to Matt 18:3-6 and Mark 10:13-16, which say that one must become as a little child to enter the Kingdom of YHWH. Therefore, infants and young children are granted salvation by virtue of their youth. Notice what Y'shua really said: "(3) And said, Verily I say unto you, Except ye be converted, and become as

little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven. (4) Whosoever therefore shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the kingdom of heaven.” (Matt 18:3-4).

Y’shua did not say that little children will enter the Kingdom of YHWH, nor did he imply that they are granted salvation. In this example, Y’shua noted two things that are necessary in order to enter the Kingdom of YHWH. First, a person must be converted. Second, a person must become child-like in humility. It is very clear that Y’shua was merely using young children as an example of the attitudes and attributes a person should have if they expect to enter the Kingdom of YHWH.

The Age of Accountability

The age a person must be before they are spiritually accountable is impossible for humans to establish with certainty, because this is the Heavenly Father's decision and it is predicated on belief, understanding, and repentance. All three of these are mental conditions and are prerequisites to conversion and baptism. All three are dependent on each other. For a person to have belief, there must be some understanding of what is to be believed.

Y’shua says repent and believe the Gospel: “*Now that after John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel”* (Mark 1:14-15 Para.). To repent, a person must have an understanding of what to repent (literally, re-think) and what the Gospel (Good News) of the Kingdom is. Notice Acts 16:31-33 and Acts 8:27-38. In both Scriptures, the people spoken of understood the circumstances surrounding Y’shua and what he preached. Therefore, they were able to make their decisions based on the facts presented.

A major prerequisite for baptism is repentance: “*Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit”* (Acts 2:38). But, repent of what? Be sorry for what? Desire to change what? In order to repent, a person must first understand something about the plan of YHWH.

It is quite evident that a person cannot have the kind of belief, understanding, and repentance necessary for baptism unless he or she is old enough to have developed the mental capacity to make intelligent decisions based on the information presented. It is also evident that infants and young children have not developed the life experience and emotional stability to make and stand behind decisions of the magnitude that must be made before and after baptism. All of the scriptural examples show only adults (including young adults) being baptised. There are no examples of infants or young children being converted.

The setting of a minimum age requirement for conversion is an impossibility because of the differences in the speed with which each individual grows into mental and emotional maturity. The ability to make decisions concerning conversion depends entirely on a person's maturity level, understanding of the Gospel, and desire to follow YHWH's way of life. (See Luke 3:8)

Common sense dictates that the unborn, the infant, and young children have not had the time or the life experience necessary to understand the requirements of salvation. They are certainly not able to understand the awesome implications or responsibilities of making a covenant with YHWH. Therefore, the spiritual condition of the unborn, the infant, and young children is the same as any unconverted person who has never had the opportunity for salvation.

18:6-7 Whoso shall offend one of these little ones...

“(6) But whoso shall offend one of these little ones which believe in me, it were better for him that a millstone were hanged about his neck, and that he were drowned in the depth of the sea. (7) Woe unto the world because of offences! for it must needs be that offences come; but woe to that man by whom the offence cometh!”

He went on to talk about how they should welcome “*little ones*” (new believers) in his name and should not set traps for them. If someone sets a trap (incorrect doctrines) for a “*little one*”, it is better that a millstone is hung around his neck and he is drowned in the sea.

18:8-10 Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee

“(8) Wherefore if thy hand or thy foot offend thee, cut them off, and cast them from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life halt or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. (9) And

if thine eye offend thee, pluck it out, and cast it from thee: it is better for thee to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire. (10) Take heed that ye despise not one of these little ones; for I say unto you, That in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father which is in heaven."

Then he said if your hand is a trap for you, cut it off; and if your eye is a trap for you, gouge it out; all in the context of their reluctance to welcome "little ones" (new believers).

Here we have a similar teaching to that of the parables in chapter 13, where *Y'shua* compared the Kingdom to a pearl and to a field; in both cases, showing that nothing was of more value. The allegorical reference to "hand or thy foot" could mean many things, including false doctrines. (See also comments to verse 19.)

In heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father

This could be a reference to "guardian angels", a belief that seemed to have been held by *Y'shua's* disciples as seen in Acts 12:15. As discussed in my Verse by Verse Explanation of Revelation book, there also seems to be angels assigned to Israel and to the nations of the world.

18:11-14 The Son of man is come to save that which was lost

"(11) For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost. (12) How think ye? if a man have an hundred sheep, and one of them be gone astray, doth he not leave the ninety and nine, and goeth into the mountains, and seeketh that which is gone astray? (13) And if so be that he find it, verily I say unto you, he rejoiceth more of that sheep, than of the ninety and nine which went not astray. (14) Even so it is not the will of your Father which is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish."

Then he goes into the parable of the lost sheep – obviously, a description of what happens when one of these children falls into a trap that has been set. *Y'shua*, the Good Shepherd, goes and rescues him because he does not want any of them to be lost. (Matt 18:12-14).

18:15-16 If thy brother shall trespass against thee

"(15) Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother. (16) But if he will not hear thee, then take with thee one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established." (Matt 18:15-16)

Then he discusses what to do if someone sins against you. First you talk to him privately; then take one or two others as supporting witnesses; then if he still doesn't listen, you tell it to the whole congregation. The objective is restoration rather than punitive justice, giving the offender every possible opportunity to repent and return to the fold. (Matt 18:15-17).

This discussion has to be seen in the light of *Y'shua's* ministry so far and his relationship with the established religious leaders of Israel. By this time, they had already rejected him and denounced him as a servant of the devil (Matt 9:34, 10:25, 12:24-27). By rejecting the Messiah, they had forfeited their position as the spiritual leaders of Israel and would bring about the eventual destruction of the Temple and the nation. They were continually following *Y'shua* and trying to catch him with trick questions. He never fell for any of them, but always turned their questions back on them. *Y'shua* was clever, articulate and knew the *Torah* perfectly; so nobody could trick him with anything. He was, however, concerned about his followers who were not as articulate as he was. Compared with *Y'shua*, they were like children and could easily fall into traps. He was also concerned that some of his disciples would become proud and follow the example of the Pharisees in setting traps for others.

Clearly, if they had to be like children to enter the Kingdom of Heaven and then they set traps for other children, it would become a self-inflicting wound. They would be stuck in a religious-political system similar to the one that existed already, where everybody tries to out-smart each other and they all fall into hell together.

The full explanation of "being converted" is in verse 4, where *Y'shua* indicates this has to do with humility. As mentioned earlier, Moses is said to be the most humble man to ever live as well as the greatest of the prophets until *Y'shua's* time. (See also comments to verse 19.)

18:17 Let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it unto the church: but if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto thee as an heathen man and a publican."

YHWH is revealed to us in His attributes of both justice and mercy. Justice is seen in this teaching. Compare this to the mercy taught in the parable beginning in verse 23.

18:18-20 If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask...

"(18) Verily I say unto you, Whatsoever ye shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever ye shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (19) Again I say unto you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. (20) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them".

Exactly how is Y'shua "in our midst" if He is presently seated at the right hand of the Father? Does this mean He is simply looking down at us? Or is there a literal presence in the *spiritual realm* that surrounds us here on earth - and if so, how does this all work?

Although Y'shua's statement can in a simple sense be accepted *in faith*, the concept of YHWH's presence within creation is actually a very complex area of Bible study.

The Messianic Sanhedrin

Having dealt with the question of "Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven" and all its implications, Y'shua returns to his original topic about the authority that is given to the disciples. After he has finished telling them how to restore a member of the congregation who had gone astray, he now tells them they can respond to people's questions with the authority to decide what is permitted and what is prohibited.

Matt 18:18-20 is commonly misinterpreted to mean that we can bind demons and then throw them out. It is also sometimes taken to mean that all our intercessory prayers will be answered as long as there are two people who agree. The latter we know must be incorrect because some prayers don't get answered regardless of how many people are in agreement about it.

The real meaning of this passage is that Y'shua wanted his disciples to set up a ruling council that would be able to make decisions on the interpretation of the *Torah*. They were to have their own Messianic Sanhedrin that would replace the corrupted one that had rejected him. The terms *binding* and *loosing* were to do with prohibition and permission. If something was *bound*, it was prohibited on earth; and since the Sanhedrin was representing YHWH, it was also prohibited in heaven. The same is true of *loosing*. Anything that is permitted on earth is also permitted in heaven.

The requirement that "two or three are gathered together in my name" refers to the quorum that is needed to make a decision. It wasn't necessary to have the whole council together to make minor decisions, but there had to be a minimum of two.

This was not the first time Y'shua had spoken about binding and loosing. He had already discussed it in Matt 16:18-19, and on this occasion he told Peter he would give him the "keys of the kingdom of heaven". This is a reference to the authority of the Sanhedrin, and Y'shua was appointing Peter as one of the members. There is only one set of keys; and if the new Messianic Sanhedrin had them, it means the existing corrupted Sanhedrin had lost them. No wonder Y'shua told his disciples to keep quiet about it! (Matt 16:20).

In the days of the early church, they did have a Messianic Sanhedrin based in Jerusalem that was capable of making decisions on behalf of all the assemblies in Israel and in the Diaspora. It is important to understand that this meeting at Jerusalem was a formal council of the apostles and elders who governed the congregations of YHWH. This was not just an informal gathering of a few of the elect; this was a meeting to resolve major issues that affected the entire body of the elect and needed to be resolved by those who were in authority. We see this council in action when Paul and Barnabas went to them to resolve the Judaising Controversy (Acts 15). It consisted of the *apostles and elders* in Jerusalem; and on this occasion as it was a matter of great importance, they appear to have consulted the entire Jerusalem assembly. The ruling was sent out to all the congregations, and they were happy with it.

When Jerusalem was destroyed in A.D. 70, the Jerusalem assembly was scattered and there was no longer a Messianic Sanhedrin. The Roman Catholic Church claims to have taken up the mantle of authority with their doctrine of Apostolic Succession; but they have departed so much from the original Messianic faith that they cannot be taken seriously. The Protestant Church is divided into many denominations; each with their

own administrative authority, so that they are incapable of making any universal decisions that would affect all Christians. The growing Messianic faith is also divided into a number of rival factions with each claiming some degree of authority, but lacking the unity that existed in the early church. Since the Jerusalem Council was scattered, there has never been anything like it; and there probably never will be until Y'shua returns and establishes His authority.

If two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father, which is in heaven

Many critics will point to the countless unanswered prayers of people as evidence that Y'shua's statement isn't true. Many answers are given in response to this challenge; however, the words of Scripture can't be ignored:

- (3) "Ye ask, and receive not, because ye ask amiss, that ye may consume it upon your lusts."
- (4) Ye adulterers and adulteresses, know ye not that the friendship of the world is enmity with God? whosoever therefore will be a friend of the world is the enemy of God.
- (5) Do ye think that the scripture saith in vain, The spirit that dwelleth in us lusteth to envy?
- (6) But he giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble." (James 4:3-6)

The adultery James speaks of as the source of prayer not being answered is spiritual adultery, as seen by his description of it being "*friendship of the world*". As said throughout this study, the way of YHWH is the light of *Torah* – which is Y'shua. Outside of *Torah* is darkness - "the way of the world".

We like to think that we're *out of the dark ages* with regard to receiving spiritual light from YHWH. However, with the overwhelming number of people in the world today rejecting either the written *Torah* (in the case of most of Christianity); or Y'shua, the walking *Torah* (in the case of most of Judaism); is it any wonder that YHWH's blessings are not as prevalent as they should be?

"James" (Jacob) says, "*We ask amiss*" – amiss of what? We are amiss of the will of YHWH, which is revealed through His *Torah*. He reiterates that YHWH's grace (answer to prayer) is given to the humble. Humility comes from denying ourselves and accepting His *Torah*. Spiritual pride/arrogance comes from rejecting *Torah* in favour of some other religious belief that allows for "picking and choosing" from the commandments of YHWH.

Some would here interject, "What about the Holy Spirit? Doesn't the Spirit reveal to us the will of YHWH? The answer is yes - but the will of YHWH that the Spirit will reveal, IS His *Torah*. The Spirit will make clear to us the deeper meaning of the *Torah* and how to apply it to our lives. The true Spirit will never lead anyone against YHWH's *Torah*. If someone "prays in the Spirit" and is told that YHWH's *Torah* is not for today, they are hearing from a spirit that is not of YHWH.

Paul gives the same message as James/Ya'acov: if you consider yourself as not subject to YHWH's *Torah*, then you are of the world and not of the Spirit:

"Because the carnal mind is enmity against God: for it is not subject to the law of God, neither indeed can be." (Rom 8:7)

18:21-22 How oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him?

"(21) Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? (22) Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven."

The Sanhedrin had two main functions: to resolve questions about how to observe the *Torah*, and to resolve disputes between opposing parties. Peter's question was not just a personal one about how many times he would have to forgive someone, but about how he could resolve disputes where someone needed to forgive someone else. The phrase, "*seventy times seven*" is not just a large number. It refers to the Messianic expectation – and this phrase must have been on everybody's lips at the time of Y'shua, because they knew they had reached the end of the "seventy weeks" that were prophesied by Daniel – meaning, seventy weeks of years; or 490 years (Dan 9:24-27). Forgiving someone "*seventy times seven*" means continuing to forgive until Messiah comes.

Also see explanation at the end of verse 35.

18:23-35 Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king...

"(23) Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. (24) And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. (25) But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. (26) The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (27) Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. (28) But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took him by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. (29) And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. (30) And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. (31) So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. (32) Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: (33) Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? (34) And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. (35) So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses."

We are called by YHWH to:

forgive others;
ask forgiveness of others (Matt 5:23-24), and;
be certain not to have unrighteous anger in our hearts (Matt 5:22).

Willful failure in any of these areas places someone in jeopardy with YHWH. The "free gift" of salvation includes obedience to YHWH – not just "believing" in certain facts.

In Matthew 18, Y'shua had a lot to say about our relationships with each other. The Jewish practice of going to someone who has offended you is fully supported by our Saviour:

"Moreover if thy brother shall trespass against thee, go and tell him his fault between thee and him alone: if he shall hear thee, thou hast gained thy brother." (Matt 18:15)
"(21) Then came Peter to him, and said, Lord, how oft shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? till seven times? (22) Jesus saith unto him, I say not unto thee, Until seven times: but, Until seventy times seven." (Matt 18:21-22)

Following this encounter with Peter, Y'shua teaches His disciples the Parable of the Unmerciful Servant. It is the story of the man who owed the king an enormous sum of money. He was arrested and brought before the king. The man pleaded for mercy and was forgiven his debt. Then this same man promptly went out and found a poor man who owed him a little bit of money. The poor man could not pay, so the man who had been forgiven of the large debt had the poor man thrown in prison. Then the king heard about the matter:

"(34) And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors; till he should pay all that was due unto him. (35) So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses." (Matt 18:34-35)

As believers, it is imperative that we learn how to properly forgive. Just because we ask YHWH to forgive us of a sin, it does not follow that He will automatically forgive it:

"(15) For if ye forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you: (16) But if ye forgive not men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses." (Matt 6:14-15)

This adds a whole new dimension to the meaning of the word 'forgiveness'. Not only must we seek forgiveness from YHWH; we must also seek forgiveness from those people we have offended. For some reason, that seems to be a much more difficult thing to do. We get used to talking with YHWH in prayer and we know He already knows all of our sins, faults and weaknesses anyway; so it is fairly easy to admit sin to Him (unless we are blinded to a sin) and to ask forgiveness. It is much more difficult to admit to another human being that we have been anything less than the perfect 'Believer' we want to be.

Even if we are able to get around this problem to admit and ask forgiveness of those people we have offended or against whom we have sinned, now we have another difficult task. If someone has sinned against us or offended us, we must go to them and tell them we were offended in order that we can offer forgiveness and be reconciled. Then we must never bring that offense or sin up to that person again. Very

difficult stuff and one needs to proceed with extreme caution – especially with the latter problem. It is very difficult to go to a person who has offended us without, in turn, offending him. When that happens, then both parties have some word or action that needs forgiving. None of this should be attempted without much prayer and supplication to YHWH for complete guidance. Part of the problem lies in our culture. We are not trained to ask forgiveness, or to confront in a righteous way, those who have offended us. Usually neither party in such an event has the slightest idea how to proceed, how to react, or how to resolve the differences between one another. Instead, often people resort to *lashon hara* (evil tongue) and gossip to others about someone's perceived faults. In doing this, we fail to communicate righteously and fairly with the person in question. This is forbidden by *Torah*. That is why it is imperative to first bring the topic to YHWH in prayer and wait for His leading. We have so much to learn in order to become true 'children of YHWH.'

Repentance can be put into two categories: those sins which are against YHWH and those which are against other people. But the *Torah* also has another breakdown of the 613 commandments that it contains. It sites sins of omission and the sins of commission. The sins of omission are those committed when one fails to perform a positive command. In other words, if YHWH instructs us to take care of the widow and we fail to do that, we commit a sin of omission. We 'omitted' doing a positive (Do or Remember) command. On the other hand, a sin of commission is when we break a negative command. The *Torah* says; "Do not commit murder". If we murder someone, we are 'committing' a sin against a negative (Do Not) command. Remember, 1 John 3:15 says if we hate our brother, we are *MURDERERS*.

Likewise, failing to keep the Sabbath would be a sin of omission against a positive command. "Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy". An act of adultery would be a sin of commission against a negative command. "Do not commit adultery."

In Jewish thought, the subject of repentance is very important. However, the destruction of the Temple has required their method of atonement to change. During Temple times, the sins of the High Priest, his family, and all of Israel were covered by the various sacrifices that were offered on each day. Since the Temple no longer stands, they are no longer able to effect forgiveness by the sacrifice of animals. Since the Orthodox Jews do not recognise *Y'shua* as the promised Messiah, they have built a method of atonement through the acts of repentance and doing good deeds.

As Believers, we know that true forgiveness can only be obtained through the acceptance of the sacrifice of the Messiah, our Passover Lamb. Yet, His sacrifice does not negate the need for repentance in our lives. The New Covenant is full of instruction about our need to repent before YHWH, ask forgiveness of our fellow man and be willing to forgive those who have "trespassed against us". Indeed, there is much that most of us need to learn when it comes to repentance and forgiveness. That is the purpose of this period of *Teshuvah*: so that we can repent completely, return to YHWH in our worship. Also, it is in the way we conduct every aspect of our lives in order to be reconciled with both YHWH and our fellow man. No wonder we need thirty days of *Teshuvah* (30 days before the *Rosh HaShanah* feast) every year, plus the "Days of Awe" between *Rosh HaShanah* (Feast of Trumpets) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement).

Continuing on the question of forgiveness, any Jew listening to this parable told by *Y'shua* about a king who wanted to settle his accounts with his servants (Matt 18:23-35) would immediately associate it with the so-called "days of awe" between *Rosh Hashanah* (New Year) and *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement), when they have to settle their accounts with YHWH. These are the days when YHWH opens a book containing all the deeds and everybody has the opportunity to be reconciled with their brother so anything bad can be erased. At the end of *Yom Kippur*, the book is closed; and if a person hasn't sorted everything out, then he/she has to wait till next year.

Obviously, the sacrificial death and resurrection of *Y'shua* means that we can always come and have our sins forgiven; but this does not give us an excuse to be casual about it. The parable still has to be taken seriously.

The king called his servants together to settle his accounts with them, and one of them begged for patience because he had a huge debt he could not pay. The king had compassion on him and forgave his debt. Then the servant went out and got a hold of one of his fellow servants who owed him a small sum and had him thrown in jail because he could not pay. Then the other servants became distressed and told the king what had happened. The king was angry with the servant whom he had forgiven, and threw him in jail until he paid back everything he owed.

The king appears twice in this story. First, he is the compassionate king who forgives those who repent. Then he is the king who administers justice and punishes those who despise his compassion and forgiveness. So it is with Messiah who came to give us forgiveness of our sins, but will come again to judge

between the righteous and the wicked; i.e., those who have accepted forgiveness and those who have not. In between the two appearances of the king, there is a group of servants who are distressed about an injustice that has occurred, but they have no power of their own to do anything about it. Instead, they have to see the king and get it sorted out. I hope I am not stretching the parable too far by suggesting that this group of powerless servants represents the church throughout most of its history without a Sanhedrin or any united authority that can make decisions on behalf of others. All we can do with our divided and disunited church councils is wait for Messiah to come; and then we can tell him about all the injustices we have seen.

Rebuke and Forgiveness

The first step is to go to the other person privately and state your case, making sure that you carefully explain the problem that needs to be resolved:

"But if your brother sins against you, go and reprove him between you and him alone, if he hears you, you have gained your brother" (Matt 18:15 KJV).

The Living Bible Paraphrased reads,

"If a brother sins against you, go to him privately and confront him with his fault. If he confesses it, you have won back a brother."

(3) *"Take heed to yourselves: If a brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him,*
(4) *And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turns again to you, saying, I repent; you shall forgive him"* (Luke 17:3-4)

"Then Peter came to him and said Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Perhaps seven times? Jesus said to him, I say not just seven times, but seventy times seven" (Matt 18:21-22)

Many assume that the sin noted in these Scriptures is merely some sort of personal affront or a wrong that one person has done to another that can be ignored if the offended party does not want to resolve the issue. However, this matter is far more serious. The Greek word 'hamartano', which is translated in English as 'sin' in the above verses has to do with breaking YHWH's law.

There are two very important things to learn from the verses cited above: First, when you become aware that a brother or sister in the faith is sinning, you are responsible before YHWH to go to the offender in private and confront that person with their sin. There is no option to go or not to go – you are commanded to go. The only exception to this instruction is given in 1.John 5:16-17:

(16) *"If anyone sees a brother commit a sin that will not bring the death penalty, that one shall ask, and the father shall give one life that does not commit a sin worthy of death."*

(17) *There is a sin worthy of death. I'm not saying to pray for that one. All unrighteousness is sin: but there are sins that are not worthy of death."* (Para.)

The second thing to understand is that the reason for confronting the sinning individual is to bring it to their attention in hopes that they will repent; thereby, they can save themselves from the second death in the Lake of Fire. See Rom 6:23.

After you have brought the problem to the attention of the one who is in error and the problem is not resolved, due to the individual's unwillingness to work towards resolving the problem, you are obligated to proceed with the second step in the problem resolution process:

"But if he will not hear you [Greek: 'parakoe'], then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses [Greek: 'martus'] every word may be established" (Matt 18:16).

There are two very important points to understand in verse 16 concerning this step in the process of problem resolution:

The first point is that the individual will not listen to you. The English word 'hear' is translated from the Greek word 'parakoe', which means 'to disregard'. In this case, an individual has been given an opportunity to resolve a problem that he may or may not be aware of; but either refuses to acknowledge the problem exists, or refuses to resolve it.

The second point is that after the errant individual has been made aware of the problem and has refused to resolve it, he must be approached again; but this time with one or two others who are also aware of the problem.

The Greek word 'martus', which is translated as 'witness' in verse 16, means 'being a witness to facts'. This word also occurs in Mark 14:63 where the high priest finds no need of any more witnesses after Y'shua's confession. The usage of the word 'martus' in verse 16 clearly shows that these two or three witnesses must have first-hand knowledge of the sin that has been committed. See also Acts 16:13; 7:58, Heb 10:28 where the demand for more than one witness is cited.

The Witnesses Under the First Covenant

Because of the seriousness of the second and third steps in the process of problem resolution, it is extremely important to clearly understand the need for the witnesses from the perspective of the first covenant with national Israel:

(6) *"At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death."*

(7) *The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put the evil away from among you". (Deut 17:6-7)*

"Whoever kills any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die". (Num 35:30)

"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any lawlessness, or for any sin, in any sin which he sins. At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, a thing shall be established". (Deut 19:15)

"It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true." (John 8:17)

There are two primary reasons for taking along witnesses when trying to resolve interpersonal problems. The first reason is to confirm to the accused that the problem exists and to convince him that it needs to be resolved. The second reason is to establish the fact that the brother has been given a second opportunity to understand the seriousness of his sinful attitude and behaviour and a second opportunity to resolve the problem.

The witnesses have a tremendous responsibility to make sure that what they say during the meeting is the truth because they literally hold the person's life in their hands; and they must follow through with the third step in the problem resolution process if the sinning individual will not hear them.

Perjury

(16) *"If a false witness rise up against any man to testify falsely against him;*

(17) *Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests, and the judges, which shall be in those days.*

(18) *And the judges shall make diligent inquisition: and, behold, if the witness is a false witness, and has testified falsely against his brother;*

(19) *Then you shall do to him, as he had thought to have done to his brother: so shall you put the evil away from among you.*

(20) *And those who remain, shall hear, and fear, and shall from that time commit no more evil among you"* *(Deut 19:16-20 Para.)*

Under Israel's first covenant with YHWH, when a false witness was discovered, he had to be given the same punishment that the accused would have been given if he was convicted. YHWH knows the heart, so any witness had better be truthful; because when a witness lies, they lie to the elect and to YHWH. In the case of Ananias and Sapphria, a lie brought about their deaths at the command of the apostle Peter (Acts 5:1-11).

It is important that you and the witness(es) do not speak of the matter publicly, but go to the individual privately and inform him of the seriousness of the problem and the fact that it needs to be resolved.

If the errant individual will not listen to reason and resolve the problem after you and the witness(es) have gone to him, you and the witness(es) are obligated to proceed with the third step in the problem resolution process:

"And if he shall neglect to hear them, tell it to the church: but if he neglects to hear the church, let him be to you as an heathen man and a publican". (Matt 18:17)

Blatant Sin

- (28) "He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses:
(29) of how much sorcer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite to the spirit of grace?" (Heb 10:28-29)

A person who blatantly sins under the new covenant is just as guilty before YHWH as those who despised his law under his first covenant with national Israel. The only difference is that, instead of a physical death that was to be administered under the first covenant, eternal death is to be administered under the new covenant.

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord". (Rom 6:23)

The third step is the final and last attempt to get the brother to realise the seriousness of his situation and to repent of his sin – this is the court of last resort. This step involves an open hearing to find the truth concerning the situation and resolve the problem or render a judgment.

Tell it to the Church

When Y'shua said, "*tell it to the church*", he spoke prophetically of the congregation(s) of YHWH that would exist after his death. But he referred to the system of problem resolution as it existed under YHWH's first covenant with Israel.

Some assume that 'the church' refers to the whole assembled congregation and that the congregation as a whole should adjudicate the case. However, if the problem solving process is to remain consistent with the law that was given to ancient Israel, the problem must be brought before the constituted authority to judge the matter. This authority in the New Covenant church/synagogue belongs to the eldership or other men who have been delegated this authority within the assembly.

The example of the adjudication process in Israel is one of judges and priests adjudicating matters of the law: the judges dealt with the civil law, and the priest dealt with the spiritual law. At no time in the history of Israel did YHWH appoint the people or the congregations to make decisions concerning his civil or spiritual law. Therefore, the system that YHWH originally gave to Israel is the model that should be used within the congregations of YHWH.

In national Israel's infancy, Moses administered the civil law and Aaron administered the spiritual law. Later, the judges and the priesthood administered both the civil and the spiritual law. During Y'shua's time, the Sanhedrin administered the law; and after the establishment of the early church, elders within the congregations administered the law; but issues that could not be judged on the local level were taken to the council of elders at Jerusalem and Pella for adjudication. See Acts chapter 15.

The Hearing

This is the final step in the process of problem resolution and it involves the one who initiated the problem resolution process, the witnesses, and the accused.

Note:

Because neither the Old or New Covenants give exact details as to how these meetings or hearings should be conducted, it seems adequate for Robert's Rules of Order to be applied to the meeting or hearing. Robert's Rules of Order are available in almost all libraries and bookstores.

Matt 18:17 indicates that the individual who originally brought the accusation, the witnesses, and the accused should present themselves to the constituted authorities of the church/synagogue and present their case.

Because the accused does not acknowledge that there is a problem and has already twice refused to consider a resolution, it is highly unlikely that the accused will present himself at the hearing. Nevertheless, the hearing must proceed with or without the accused, and the constituted authorities must render a decision concerning the matter.

The Decision

The decision of the constituted authority within the church/synagogue is binding upon the accused and the congregation. If the accused is found guiltless, he is acquitted; if he is found guilty and repents, he is forgiven. But if he refuses to repent, he is separated from the assembly:

*"(18) Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. (19) Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. (20) For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them". (Matt 18:19-20 Para.)
"And if he shall neglects to hear them [disregards them], tell it to the church [assembly]: but if he neglects to hear the church [assembly], let him be to you as an heathen man and a publican". (Matt 18:17)*

If the accused is found guilty before the constituted authorities of the Church/Synagogue and he refuses to resolve the problem, the entire church/synagogue must be notified that the person has been separated from fellowship until the problem is resolved and the fruit of repentance is shown by the repentant individual (Matt 3:8).

Accusations against an Elder

Some feel that because an elder occupies a position of authority within the congregation, that there is no recourse against whom they have an interpersonal problem with because of ungodly conduct. However, this is absolutely not the case. The elder is still a part of the Body of Messiah and is not above the law that regulates the behaviour of the elect.

If anyone in the congregation has an interpersonal problem with an elder that does not involve sin, the same rules apply that would apply to anyone in the congregation concerning this kind of problem resolution. However, if the problem involves sin and the elder is not conducting his life according to the faith, he must be confronted according to the rules that govern confronting and disciplining an elder.

Accusations

Making an accusation against an elder is very serious, because of his position of authority and responsibility within the congregation. Therefore, considerable thought and prayer should be made before making an accusation against an elder.

1 Tim 5:19-21:

"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses" (v19).

Y'shua gives the elders special protection against false accusations because they are in a high profile position that is easily subjected to criticism; therefore, any accusations against an elder must be absolutely verified by two or three witnesses and brought to the other elders for investigation and adjudication.

"Them [the elders] that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (v20).

Those who are not of the eldership and who repent of a sin when it is brought to their attention are forgiven and are not to be rebuked publicly; however, the sinning elder must be rebuked publicly, even if he repents. This is done because the elders are charged with the care of the church/synagogue before YHWH; therefore, they have a greater condemnation for sin. The public rebuke of an elder demonstrates to everyone that no one in the church/synagogue is exempt from obedience to the law of YHWH and everyone must respect and obey these laws.

"I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality" (v21).

There is always a tendency to cover up for friends, but the elders are specifically prohibited from this kind of behaviour. YHWH knew that it would be very difficult to be objective when there are problems involving close friendships; therefore, he inspired Paul to make his position very clear concerning an elder who goes astray. When there is a problem involving an elder, personal friendships must be set aside and must not interfere with the problem resolution process. Any situation concerning an elder must be dealt with in a righteous manner without partiality.

Open Rebuke

There are two very valuable examples concerning how the apostle Paul dealt with the eldership concerning problems surrounding elders' behavior.

- (5) "Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?"
- (6) "I have planted, and Apollos has watered; but it is God who gave the increase."
- (7) "So then neither is he that plants or he that waters anything great, because it is God that gives the increase."
- (8) "The one who plants and the one who waters have the same goal, and each will receive a reward for his own work."
- (9) "For we are all laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry, you are God's building". (1 Cor 3:5-9 Para.)

The context of this Scripture is Paul's rebuke to the elders and the rest of the congregation at Corinth for allowing divisions and cliques to exist in their congregation. He also reprimands them for focusing on different personalities in the ministry instead of focusing on YHWH the Father and Y'shua.

- (11) "But when Peter came to Antioch, I confronted him face to face, because he was to be blamed. For before some came from James he ate with the Gentiles."
- (12) "But when they came, he drew back and separated himself, being afraid of those of the circumcision."
- (13) "And the rest of the Jews also separated with him, even Barnabas was lead away with their separation."
- (14) "But when I saw that they did not walk uprightly with the truth of the gospel. I said to Peter before them all, if you being a Jew live as a Gentile, and not as the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to behave as a Jew?" (Gal 2:11-14)

Paul speaks of confronting Peter about his behaviour concerning the Gentile converts when he was around the Jews. Peter was obviously wrong in his attitude and behaviour and was setting a wrong example to the church and the Jews. Therefore, Paul rebuked Peter for his error.

The Scriptures very clearly state that when an elder sins, he must be rebuked. And if no repentance or resolution to his problem is forthcoming, he must be separated from fellowship – just as anyone else who would blatantly disobey the laws and ways of YHWH.

SECTION VII

TEACHINGS ON THE KINGDOM

MATTHEW 19:1-30

TEXT:

- (1) "And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan;
- (2) "And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there."
- (3) "The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause?"
- (4) "And he answered and said unto them, Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,
- (5) "And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh?"
- (6) "Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder."
- (7) "They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorce, and to put her away?"
- (8) "He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."
- (9) "And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery."

- (10) His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry.
 (11) But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given.
 (12) For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it.
 (13) Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them.
 (14) But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.
 (15) And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence.
 (16) And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?
 (17) And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.
 (18) He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness,
 (19) Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
 (20) The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?
 (21) Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me.
 (22) But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions.
 (23) Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven.
 (24) And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God.
 (25) When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved?
 (26) But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible.
 (27) Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?
 (28) And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.
 (29) And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life.
 (30) But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first."

19:1-7 Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female

"(1) And it came to pass, that when Jesus had finished these sayings, he departed from Galilee, and came into the coasts of Judaea beyond Jordan; (2) And great multitudes followed him; and he healed them there. (3) The Pharisees also came unto him, tempting him, and saying unto him, Is it lawful for a man to put away his wife for every cause? (4) And he answered and said unto them, **Have ye not read, that he which made them at the beginning made them male and female,** (5) And said, For this cause shall a man leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife: and they twain shall be one flesh? (6) Wherefore they are no more twain, but one flesh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not man put asunder. (7) They say unto him, Why did Moses then command to give a writing of divorce, and to put her away?"

As mentioned earlier, *mankind* was made in the image of YHWH (who is male and female):

"So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them." (Gen 1:27)

Unity is an important subject in the Scriptures. At this time, creation is not in a state of unity. This will fully return when the Kingdom is established. Until that time, those who follow YHWH are to work toward the *repair (tikkun)* of creation, bringing healing and peace into the lives of all we meet (as well as in their personal relationships with YHWH).

The commandments of YHWH given in the *Torah* are geared toward *tikkun* at both physical and spiritual levels. Divorce goes against this principle of *tikkun*; therefore, it is not the will of YHWH.

19:8 Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so

"(8) He saith unto them, Moses because of the hardness of your hearts suffered you to put away your wives: but from the beginning it was not so."

An interesting subject here: if divorce is wrong in YHWH's sight, why did He allow for divorce in the *Torah* (which is, of course, His revelation to us)? One could also ask, why did YHWH allow for multiple wives? Or why did YHWH allow for slavery? Also, why does he give instructions for soldiers when at war?

Although the *Torah* does not speak in favour of divorce, polygamy, slavery or war, it does set up rules for how to deal with these things. Why is this?

The answer lies in the principle that the *Torah* was given because of sin. The *Torah* is dealing with a sin situation that has been in effect for quite some time. Recognising that man has an evil inclination (called the *yetzer hara* in Hebrew) and is going to sin, the *Torah* at its most basic level keeps man *in check* so that he doesn't go too far from YHWH's ways. This is one reason why *Torah* is still in effect today: it is for our protection by El Shaddai because He cares about our welfare and wants us to walk the right path with Him.

The Talmud says of this:

Kiddushin 21b: "*The Torah is only speaking against the yetzer hara.*"

YHWH, who understands our weaknesses, knows that an outright "No" can provoke our desire to sin; hence, the *Torah* commands regulating certain issues. However, continued study into the deeper meanings of the *Torah* will then teach man that although YHWH allows for these things, they are not reflective of His perfect character.

One of the things Messiah was/is promised to do, as expressed in Messianic Judaism, is to reveal these deeper meanings of the *Torah* so that YHWH's people can better conform themselves to the image of YHWH and work as His partners toward *tikkun*. We saw Y'shua do this in chapters 5 through 7 of this Gospel. Here, He continues to do the same.

19:9-11 Whosoever shall put away his wife

"(9) And I say unto you, Whosoever shall put away his wife, except it be for fornication, and shall marry another, committeth adultery: and whoso marrieth her which is put away doth commit adultery. (10) His disciples say unto him, If the case of the man be so with his wife, it is not good to marry. (11) But he said unto them, All men cannot receive this saying, save they to whom it is given."

There were two main schools of thought regarding divorce at this time. The school of Rabbi Hillel (see Glossary section for more info on him) allowed for multiple reasons that a man could divorce his wife. The school of Rabbi Shammai rules that divorce was only an option in case of fornication. Here, Y'shua sides with Shammai's view. (Both of these rabbis lived a couple generations before Y'shua began teaching.)

19:12 Which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake

"(12) For there are some eunuchs, which were so born from their mother's womb: and there are some eunuchs, which were made eunuchs of men: and there be eunuchs, which have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He that is able to receive it, let him receive it."

More than likely, the term "eunuch" is an incorrect translation. The word for *eunuch* in the Aramaic manuscripts of this passage is *M'HAIMNA*, which can also mean "believer" or "faithful one". This would make better sense.

19:13-19 If thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments

"(13) Then were there brought unto him little children, that he should put his hands on them, and pray: and the disciples rebuked them. (14) But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven. (15) And he laid his hands on them, and departed thence. (16) And, behold, one came and said unto him, Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life? (17) And he said unto him, Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou

wilt enter into life, keep the commandments. (18) He saith unto him, Which? Jesus said, Thou shalt do no murder, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, (19) Honour thy father and thy mother: and, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Many attempts have been made to explain away Y'shua's direct answer. He did not say "accept me into your heart" or some similar statement. He made it clear that obedience to *Torah* was key. However, we know from both the *Tenakh* and the *Brit Chadashah* (New Covenant) that one cannot earn or work their way into heaven by keeping the commandments outside of faith. YHWH wants us to put our entire trust in Him first, then to learn and walk in His ways. The two are inseparable.

The Torah of YHWH

1. Man's Duty:

We live in a world in which the Torah of the Most High is given little or no attention. Sad to say, even in the churches, YHWH's Torah is considered by many to be **obsolete**, a veritable **burden** and of **little practical use to the New Covenant believer**. Is this conclusion the truth? And if so, does the Bible teach it? Listen to these words of wisdom by two of the wisest men that ever walked this earth (Solomon son of David and Y'shua Son of God):

Solomon in Eccl 12:13: "**Fear God and keep His commandments, for this is the whole duty of man.**"
Y'shua in Mat 19:16-17: "*And behold one came and said unto him, 'Good Master, what good thing shall I do, that I may have eternal life?' And he said unto him. 'Why callest thou me good? there is none good but one, that is, God: but if thou wilt enter into life, keep the commandments.'*"

In view of such statements, let all beware of classifying the Almighty's Torah as being obsolete.

2. The Greatest Commandment:

Yes the commandments are important, no matter what people may say: and some commandments are more important than others. In Matt 22:36-39 we discover this fact:

Question: Master, which is the great commandment in the law?

Answer: Jesus said unto him:

Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself."

Let us examine those two important words, '**fear**' and '**love**' as used in these passages of Scripture.

3. Fear YHWH:

English '**fearOr the reverence or awe felt for YHWH.**

Hebrew '**yare'**: to fear, revere, be afraid, stand in awe of, honour, respect.

Greek '**phobos**

When used in connection with man's duty to YHWH, the word '**fear**' means primarily to 'hold YHWH in reverential awe'; to consider Him so great a person that His will must be placed above one's own. To fear YHWH means to be afraid to the extent of abandoning one's own wishes in favour of His – to walk in His ways. It is an expression which begins with holy awe, progresses to respectful admiration and matures to reverential love and worship. And mature love always manifests itself in willing obedience. This process begins a chain of benefits.

Wisdom:

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: and a good understanding have they that do His commandments." (Psalm 111:10)

Fountain of Life:

"In the fear of the Lord is strong confidence: and his children shall have a place of refuge. The fear of the Lord a fountain of life, to depart from the snares of death." (Prov 14:26-27)

"Better is a little with the fear of the Lord than great treasure and trouble therewith." Prov 15:16

"The fear of the Lord tendeth to life: and he that hath it abide satisfied; he shall not be visited with evil." (Prov 19:23)

4. Love YHWH thy Elohim:

The word '**love**' is probably the most misunderstood word in the English language. It means different things to different people. Just say the word '**love**' and into a dozen minds will spring a dozen different ideas. Your

concept of the word 'love' will be somewhat different to others. In view of these differences of opinion, how can we express our 'love' to YHWH? What do we have to do? How can we be sure that our love is the kind of love the Most High is calling for? The Messiah answers these difficult questions for us in these words.

John 14:15, 21,24:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments" (v15).

"He that hath my commandments and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me..." (v21).

"He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me." (v24).

We see here that **obedience is proof of love**; and disobedience is proof that love is absent. Obedience is, in fact, faith and love in action. The Bible says that **obedience is better than praise or sacrifice**; and that in the courts of heaven, it is the most acceptable testimony a Believer can give.

"And Samuel said: Hath the Lord as great a delight in burnt offerings and sacrifices as in obeying the voice of the Lord? Behold, to obey is better than sacrifice and to hearken than the fat of rams." (1 Sam 15:22)

In the final analysis, we will all be judged – not by how much we possess, not by how much we know or understand or even by how much we praise YHWH; but by whether we **obey Him or not**. And though we are not justified (cleared of past sins) by the deeds of obedience (for justification comes through **faith in Y'shua**); we are nevertheless evaluated, graded and rewarded according to the deeds done in this life.

"...God Who will render to every man according to his deeds." (Rom 2:6)

5. How are we to obey?

Question: To what extent is obedience expected of us?

Answer: **"Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, mind and soul."**

This is not just a New Covenant concept or command. It is old: and it was (and still is) possible to keep; as the following examples prove.

"And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thine heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might." (Deut 6:5)

"I have prepared with all my might..." (1 Chron 29:2)

"And like unto him was there no king before him, that turned to the Lord with all his might..." (2 Kings 23:25)

Notice how YHWH wants the whole individual – not to become a slave-like robot incapable of individual thought, who mechanically does what he is told. YHWH wants His followers to respect, love and obey Him with heart and soul. That, according to King Solomon, is the whole duty of mankind; and as the Saviour said, was the entrance to life.

Summary

The wisest men in both the Old and New Covenants (Solomon and Y'shua) teach obedience to YHWH's Torah as a duty and as evidence of living faith and true love.

Reverential awe of the Most High brings in its train – wisdom, confidence and safety. Obedience is in itself a Fountain of Life.

Obedience is love in action. It is proof of living faith and is far better than sacrifice or praise.

Believers are invited to love YHWH, which means to obey Him with total commitment (with every-thing we've got) with all our physical, mental and spiritual powers. It is possible as the examples quoted prove.

19:20-27 All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet?

"(20) The young man saith unto him, All these things have I kept from my youth up: what lack I yet? (21) Jesus said unto him, If thou wilt be perfect, go and sell that thou hast, and give to the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come and follow me. (22) But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions. (23) Then said Jesus unto his disciples, Verily I say unto you, That a rich man shall hardly enter into the kingdom of heaven. (24) And again I say unto you, It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God. (25) When his disciples heard it, they were exceedingly amazed, saying, Who then can be saved? (26) But Jesus beheld them, and said unto them, With men this is impossible; but with God all things are possible. (27) Then answered Peter and said unto him, Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?" (Matt 19:20-27)

Y'shua points out to all that are listening to this discussion, that YHWH is interested in commitment first and challenges this man on the aspect of trust.

No, Y'shua does not mean that we are to have no material possessions. However, the rich young ruler showed by his attitude that he loved his possessions more than he loved YHWH. Believers are not to become so wrapped up in earthly possessions or the things of this world that they let these things interfere with their spiritual lives. Col 3:2 tells us, "Set your affection on things above, not on things on the earth."

The camel and the eye of the needle; various scenarios

For the last two centuries, it has been common teaching that there is a gate in Jerusalem called the eye of the needle through which a camel could not pass unless it stooped and first had all its baggage removed. After dark when the main gates were shut, travellers or merchants would have to use this smaller gate through which the camel could only enter unencumbered and crawling on its knees! This is great sermon material with the parallels of coming to YHWH on our knees without all our baggage.

Another scenario on this theme includes that of ancient inns having small entrances to thwart thieves; or the story of an old mountain pass known as the "eye of the needle", so narrow that merchants would have to dismount from their camels and were thus easier prey for brigands lying in wait.

Mangled Greek, maybe?

There are some differences in the translated Greek. The needle in Matthew and Mark is a *rāfic*. In Luke it is a *belone*. Both are synonyms for needles used in sewing, but Luke's is more likely to be used by a surgeon than a seamstress.

Another possible solution comes from the possibility of a Greek misprint. The suggestion is that the Greek word *kamilos* ('camel') should really be *kamēlos* – meaning 'cable, rope', as some late New Covenant manuscripts actually have here. (Mainly 11th century or later, and in one 9th/10th century manuscript; however, all early manuscripts and quotations in the church fathers from the 3rd through to the 8th centuries have 'camel' not 'rope'.) Hence, it is easier to thread a needle with a rope rather than a strand of cotton than for a rich man to enter the kingdom. A neat but unnecessary solution!

A variation on all of the above is that the needle was a 6 inch carpet needle and the rope was made of camel hair; but this is again, clutching at straws or camel hair and is an unnecessary emendation.

The Aramaic

An alternative linguistic explanation is taken from George M. Lamsa's Syriac-Aramaic Peshitta translation (*The New Testament according to the Eastern Text*, George M. Lamsa, 1940, p.xxiv and note on Matthew 19:24), which has the word 'rope' in the main text but a footnote on Matt 19:24, which states that the Aramaic word *gamla* means rope and camel – possibly because the ropes were made from camel hair. Evidence for this also comes from the 10th century Aramaic lexicographer, Mar Bahlul, who defines it as "a large rope used to bind ships". (cf. <http://www.aramaicnt.org/HTML/LUKE/evidences/Camel.html>)

Some have even suggested a pun in Aramaic between camel and gnat or louse from the Aramaic *kalma* 'vermin, louse'.

Just as the apocryphal *Acts of Peter and Andrew* (see notes on the next page) refers the saying to a literal camel and needle, so we are not meant to reason away the apparent difficulty of getting a camel through a needle's eye. The difficulty is not apparent, but it is real; and will not be solved by textual trickery but by taking the ludicrous language at face value.

What we have instead then, I believe, is a beautiful Hebrew hyperbole, as in the tree sticking out of one's eye whilst one is removing a speck in another's eye! Indeed, Jewish Talmudic literature uses a similar aphorism about an elephant passing through the eye of a needle as a figure of speech, implying the unlikely or impossible:

"They do not show a man a palm tree of gold, nor an elephant going through the eye of a needle"
(Babylonian Talmud, Berakoth, 55b)

This first instance concerned dreams and their interpretation and suggested that men only dream that which is natural or possible, not that which is unlikely ever to have occurred to them.

"...who can make an elephant pass through the eye of a needle." (Babylonian Talmud, *Baba Mezi'a*, 38b)

In this case, the illustration concerns a dispute between two rabbis; one of whom suggests that the other is speaking "things which are impossible".

The camel was the largest animal seen regularly in Israel; whereas in regions where the Babylonian *Talmud* was written, the elephant was the biggest animal. Thus the aphorism is culturally translated from a camel to an elephant in regions outside of Israel.

Therefore, the aim is not to explain away the paradox and make the needle a huge carpet needle; for elsewhere, the Jewish writings use the "eye of the needle" as a picture of a very small place: "A needle's eye is not too narrow for two friends, but the world is not wide enough for two enemies." (Source not traced but cf. *Midrash Rabbah*, Genesis 1.3.) The ludicrous contrast between the small size of the needle's eye and the largest indigenous animal is to be preserved for its very improbability.

Y'shua's hearers believed that wealth and prosperity were a sign of YHWH's blessing (cf. Leviticus and Deuteronomy). So their incredulity is more along the lines that, "if the rich, who must be seen as righteous by YHWH by dint of their evident blessing can't be saved, who can be?" Later Christians have turned this around to portray wealth as a hindrance to salvation, which it can be – but no more so than many other things, when the message is that salvation is impossible for all men; for it comes from YHWH alone.

But beyond impossibility is possibility with YHWH, for elsewhere a Jewish Midrash records:

"The Holy One said, open for me a door as big as a needle's eye and I will open for you a door through which may enter tents and [camels?]" (*Midrash Rabbah*, The Song of Songs, 5.3; cf. *Pesiqta R.*, 15, ed. Friedmann, p.70a; Soncino Zohar, *Vayikra* 3, p95a). In other words, YHWH only needs the sinner to open up just a crack for him; and YHWH will come pouring in and set up room for an oasis. YHWH only needs a 'foot in the door', so to speak.

This is similar to the Talmudic use of two Hebrew letters: one which represents YHWH's holiness ('Q' *Qoph*, as in *qadôsh* 'holy'); and another representing evil ('R' *Resh*, as in *ra* 'evil') in a story told for the purpose of teaching the Hebrew alphabet and Jewish morals. It is said that 'q' has a separated opening in order that, should 'r' repent, he may enter into YHWH's holiness through the small opening.

Here *Y'shua* reflects on how hard it often is for the rich to enter the kingdom of YHWH. The riches are a distraction and hard to share if one is too attached to them. The disciples' incredulity is that, if even the rich cannot be saved, who can? But the verdict is that even the rich (not only the rich) will find it impossible to save themselves – but with YHWH all things are possible.

Notes:

13 There was a rich man named Onesiphorus who said: If I believe, shall I be able to do wonders? Andrew said: Yes, if you forsake your wife and all your possessions. He was angry and put his garment about Andrew's neck and began to beat him, saying: You are a wizard, why should I do so?

14 Peter saw it and told him to leave off. He said: I see you are wiser than he. What do you say? Peter said: I tell you this: it is easier for a camel to go through a needle's eye than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God. Onesiphorus was yet more angry and took his garment off Andrew's neck and cast it on Peter's and haled him along, saying: You are worse than the other. If you show me this sign, the whole city and I will believe but if not you shall be punished.

15 Peter was troubled and stood and prayed: Lord, help us at this hour, for thou hast entrapped us by thy words.

16 The Saviour appeared in the form of a boy of twelve years, wearing a linen garment 'smooth within and without', and said; Fear not: let the needle and the camel be brought. There was a huckster in the town who had been converted by Philip; and he heard of it, and looked for a needle with a large eye, but Peter said: Nothing is impossible with God rather bring a needle with a small eye.

17 When it was brought, Peter saw a camel coming and stuck the needle in the ground and cried: In the name of Jesus Christ crucified under Pontius Pilate I command thee, camel, to go through the eye of the needle. The eye opened like a gate and the camel passed through; and yet again, at Peter's bidding.

18 Onesiphorus said: You are a great sorcerer: but I shall not believe unless I may send for a needle and a camel. And he said secretly to a servant: Bring a camel and a needle, and find a defiled woman and some swine's flesh and bring them too. And Peter heard it in the spirit and said: O slow to believe, bring your camel and woman and needle and flesh.

19 When they were brought Peter stuck the needle in the ground, with the flesh, the woman was on the camel. He commanded it as before, and the camel went through, and back again.

20 Onesiphorus cried out, convinced and said: Listen. I have lands and vineyards and 27 litrae of gold and 50 of silver, and many slaves: I will give my goods to the poor and free my slaves if I may do wonders like you. Peter said: If you believe, you shall.

21 Yet he was afraid he might not be able, because he was not baptised, but a voice came: Let him do what he will. So Onesiphorus stood before the needle and camel and commanded it to go through and it went as far as the neck and stopped. And he asked why. 'Because you are not yet baptised.' He was content, and the apostles went to his house, and 1 000 souls were baptised that night."

(*Acts of Peter and Andrew* vv.14-21, *The Apocryphal New Testament*, M R James, Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1924, p459).

19:28 Ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones

"(28) *And Jesus said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That ye which have followed me, in the regeneration when the Son of man shall sit in the throne of his glory, ye also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.*"

An allusion to the Kingdom in Revelation 21:14.

19:29-30 But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first

"(29) *And every one that hath forsaken houses, or brethren, or sisters, or father, or mother, or wife, or children, or lands, for my name's sake, shall receive an hundredfold, and shall inherit everlasting life (30) But many that are first shall be last; and the last shall be first.*"

This is a Hebrew idiom that has to do with "evening things out", not necessarily reversing the actual order of something. This is seen in the next section of this study (Matt 20:16).

SECTION VII

TEACHINGS ON THE KINGDOM

MATTHEW 20:1-34

TEXT:

(1) "For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard.^{57€575}

(2) And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard.

(3) And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace,

(4) And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way.

(5) Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise.

(6) And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle?

(7) They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive.

(8) So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first.

(9) And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny.

(10) But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny.

(11) And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house,

(12) Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day.

(13) But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny?

(14) Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee.

(15) Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

(16) So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen.

(17) And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them,

- (18) Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death,
- (19) And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again.
- (20) Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.
- (21) And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.
- (22) But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able.
- (23) And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father.
- (24) And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.
- (25) But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them.
- (26) But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;
- (27) And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:
- (28) Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.
- (29) And as they departed from Jericho, a great multitude followed him.
- (30) And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.
- (31) And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.
- (32) And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?
- (33) They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.
- (34) So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him."

20:1-14 For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder

"(1) **For the kingdom of heaven is like unto a man that is an householder**, which went out early in the morning to hire labourers into his vineyard. (2) And when he had agreed with the labourers for a penny a day, he sent them into his vineyard. (3) And he went out about the third hour, and saw others standing idle in the marketplace, (4) And said unto them; Go ye also into the vineyard, and whatsoever is right I will give you. And they went their way. (5) Again he went out about the sixth and ninth hour, and did likewise. (6) And about the eleventh hour he went out, and found others standing idle, and saith unto them, Why stand ye here all the day idle? (7) They say unto him, Because no man hath hired us. He saith unto them, Go ye also into the vineyard; and whatsoever is right, that shall ye receive. (8) So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. (9) And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. (10) But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny. (11) And when they had received it, they murmured against the goodman of the house, (12) Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day. (13) But he answered one of them, and said, Friend, I do thee no wrong: didst not thou agree with me for a penny? (14) Take that thine is, and go thy way: I will give unto this last, even as unto thee."

This parable can be understood on a literal (*p'shat*) level, as well as a *remez* (hint) at something else. On the *p'shat* level, the lesson here is that salvation (represented by the payment the workers receive) is not based on how long you serve YHWH. However, it would be incorrect to draw from this parable the idea that everyone gets the same reward in heaven. YHWH rewards and punishes fairly, based on our works in this life.

The parable does hint (*remez*) at another truth – one of the mysteries that was to make itself known to those whom Y'shua revealed it to. In this case, the workers of the morning (the first called) could be considered the Jewish people. Those who came later in the day represent the lost sheep of the House of Israel (from the gentile nations).

Paul alludes to this in his Ephesians letter, where he says that lost sheep (from the gentile nations) salvation though the Messiah was a mystery revealed:

- (3) "How that by revelation he made known unto me the mystery; (as I wrote afore in few words,
- (4) Whereby, when ye read, ye may understand my knowledge in the mystery of Christ)
- (5) Which in other ages was not made known unto the sons of men, as it is now revealed unto his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit;
- (6) **That the Gentiles should be fellowheirs, and of the same body, and partakers of his promise in Christ by the gospel:**" (Eph 3:3-6)

Please view the *Christian Foundational Teachings* series for detail on this.

20:15 Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?

"(15) *Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? Is thine eye evil, because I am good?*" (Matt 20:15)

We are not the ones to question YHWH:

- (18) "Therefore hath he mercy on whom he will have mercy, and whom he will he hardeneth.
- (19) Thou wilt say then unto me, Why doth he yet find fault? For who hath resisted his will?
- (20) Nay but, O man, who art thou that repliest against God? Shall the thing formed say to him that formed it, Why hast thou made me thus?
- (21) Hath not the potter power over the clay, of the same lump to make one vessel unto honour, and another unto dishonour? (Rom 9:18-21)

The *evil eye* is an idiom for "stinginess" as mentioned in our notes to Matt 6:23.

If this parallel is taken to be that of the Jews and Pagan Gentiles, then the complaint of the Jews would be that they have been YHWH's chosen people (the people of the *Torah*) for far longer than the Pagan Gentiles who came into Torah. The reply to this would be that, although the Jew has an advantage in that they have the *Torah* (Rom 3:2), a great part of this advantage is in knowing that YHWH is no respector of persons; and thus no one has an advantage toward salvation in this sense.

20:16 So the last shall be first, and the first last

"So the last shall be first, and the first last: for many be called, but few chosen."

As mentioned in the previous section, this idiom has to do with equality (as the parable shows), not reversing the order.

Y'shua's command to "*love your enemies*" was revolutionary! No one before him dared to raise such a high standard for the life of faith. Yet, few Christians today realise that Y'shua's ethical charge was a breathtaking culmination of contemporary Jewish thinking. In the difficult days of Roman occupation, the Jewish people found it hard to see evidence of the Old Covenant notion that the righteous are rewarded and the wicked are punished.

Instead, the idea gradually took hold that what appeared at first glance like failure on the part of YHWH to act justly, might in fact be a sign of his profound mercy – extended to the undeserving. Or, as we hear in the conclusion of Y'shua's parable, "*Is it not lawful for me to do what I will with mine own? ... So the last will be first, and the first last*" (verses 15-16).

It is not always easy to distinguish neatly between the deserving and the undeserving in life. All are equal and stand as recipients of YHWH's mercy. As we saw, the ethical considerations that were drawn from this recognition that "*God sends rain upon the just and the unjust*" (Matt 5:45) set the stage for Y'shua's bold challenge to love your enemy. Yet, not everyone in those difficult days saw the events as signs of YHWH's mercy.

YHWH's Labourers

1. The Almighty's Vineyard:

This parable is about:

Salvation and the divine invitation to the Kingdom of Heaven. It is not about the employment problems of any particular nation.

The Employer: YHWH the Almighty Elyon of Israel.

The Workers - True believers in the Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and Israel.

The amount of work remaining to be done. This can be gauged by the fact that the divine Employer started seeking workers at 6 am to ensure that He would take on the keenest workers, who themselves would be up and looking for work at that early hour.

The Timescale: Notice how the employer repeatedly visits the market place through the day. Scarcely has He returned to the vineyard when He realises that more workmen are needed. He can see this at a glance. As He casts His eye over the workmen labouring in the field, He can also see that they have no hope of bringing in the harvest without help. Either because they are too few for so great a harvest, or because they are too slow in their work. But whatever the reason, He goes back to the market to look for more workers.

He went out again at 9 am (third hour).

He went out again at 12 pm (sixth hour).

He went out again at 3 pm (ninth hour).

He went out again at 5 pm (eleventh hour).

2. The eleventh-hour worker:

Consider for a moment this worker's mentality. Who knows, in real life, you may be represented by him. He undoubtedly is a late starter. We know this from the fact that he was not available all through the day, else he would have been employed by the Master earlier. So he is a *late starter*.

He doesn't give up looking for work once he is made aware of the fact that an employer is out there repeatedly coming back to the market place looking for workers. Perhaps the news has finally gotten around to him: "*There is still work to be had, starting at any time!*" Go if you want a job.

He is an extremely good worker once he gets started. It is doubtful if he would have been put first and paid so well if the Master didn't reckon he had done well – because the Master is no fool. He had agreed to the first worker's wages. (verse 2) He also had a fixed policy to pay each man "*whatsoever is right*". (verse 4) So this man is getting a full day's wage because he worked well; albeit for only a short while.

3. The wages:

"(8) So when even was come, the lord of the vineyard saith unto his steward, Call the labourers, and give them their hire, beginning from the last unto the first. (9) And when they came that were hired about the eleventh hour, they received every man a penny. (10) But when the first came, they supposed that they should have received more; and they likewise received every man a penny." (Matt 20:8-10)

Ponder the scene at that amazing payout.

4. The complaint:

"Saying, These last have wrought but one hour, and thou hast made them equal unto us, which have borne the burden and heat of the day." (Mat 20:12)

5. Was the Master being unfair?

Verse 11: The Master is called the "goodman of the house."

Verse 2: He made an agreement, which he is keeping.

Verse 4: He also made subsequent agreements with later workers to give them "*whatsoever was right*." No doubt he is also keeping that agreement. He is paying out what is right.

Was the Master being unfair? I doubt it. He is, in fact, dealing out a generous wage: firstly, because he is a generous employer; and secondly, because this end-time worker is extremely industrious. He had possibly accomplished in one hour what had taken others all day.

6. The last day believer:

You and I have been called into the vineyard in the closing hours of earth's history – at the eleventh hour. This is that hour and you could be that 'eleventh-hour worker'. Think about it! The day will soon be spent and YHWH is still looking for workers in His vineyard. Are you available for work? And if so, what is your attitude towards YHWH's work? The Saviour also told another parable about work (see Matt 21:28-32).

20:17-26 Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons

"(17) And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them, (18) Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be betrayed unto the chief priests and unto the scribes, and they shall condemn him to death, (19) And shall deliver him to the Gentiles to mock, and to scourge, and to crucify him: and the third day he shall rise again. (20) Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him. (21) And he said unto her, What wilt thou? She saith unto him, Grant that these, my two sons may sit, the one on thy right

hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom. (22) But Jesus answered and said, Ye know not what ye ask. Are ye able to drink of the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. (23) And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink indeed of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with: but to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared of my Father. (24) And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren. (25) But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. (26) But it shall not be so among you: but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your minister;"

The mother of James and John asked a question that came from her lack of understanding (Similar to Matt 18:1). Again, Y'shua stresses the aspects of humility and servanthood.

The Zebedee family:

Ya'akov (James) and Yochanan (John) were both called *Ben Zavdai* (son of Zebedee). The father, Zavdai (Zebedee), was a fisherman who owned several boats on the Sea of Galilee and had hired servants in his business (Mark 1:19-20). Some infer additional evidence of their affluence from the fact that *Yochanan* was 'known to the high priest' (John 18:15). Perhaps the family owned property in *Yerushalayim* (Jerusalem) and/or had business connections there. The family also had business associations with *Shimon Kefa* (Simon Peter) (Luke 5:9-10). Their mother, Shalome, may have been a sister of the mother of Y'shua (Matt 27:56; Mark 15:40; John 19:25).

Ya'akov (James) called to discipleship:

Ya'akov seems not to have been with *Kefa* (Peter, Rock) and Andrew in their pilgrimage to Judea where they heard of the 'Lamb of God' and received their first call to discipleship (John 1:35-51). Perhaps *Yochanan* was the other disciple of *Yochanan* the Immerser who was with Andrew (v 40). If so, Yaakov probably stayed home to tend the business; and upon their return to *Galil* (Galilee), the recounting of the events of Judea may have left a deep impression on James. At any rate, he was well prepared for the call later at the sea of *Galil* (Luke 5:2-11).

Notice how the brothers, in obedience, left everything and followed Messiah Y'shua (Matt 4:22). Rather than catching fish, Y'shua wanted the sons of *Zavdai* to become fishers of men (to go and look for the lost sheep of the House od Israel).

Ya'akov's and Yochanan's personalities:

a. Their title:

Y'shua called Ya'akov and Yochanan 'Boanerges', which means 'sons of thunder' (Mark 3:17). The title described their zeal, passion, fervour, ambition and aggressiveness.

b. Their vengeful zeal (Luke 9:51-56):

Not long after the Transfiguration (Matt 17:1-9) and towards the close of His Galilean ministry, Y'shua was leading His disciples through *Shomrom* (Samaria) towards *Yerushalayim*. Messiah Y'shua sent Ya'akov and Yochanan to find group lodging for the night. When they were not welcome, Ya'akov and Yochanan used the precedence of Elijah (2 Kings 1:10); asking permission from the Y'shua to send fire down from Heaven to destroy the *Shomronim* (Samaritans). Here we see Ya'akov's impure zeal was mixed with fumes of pride and anger. More noteworthy is Y'shua's response (v 56). Y'shua reinforced His teaching with His example. He moved on to more receptive soil.

Ya'akov's perception on this issue changed as he was being trained and molded by the Master. Y'shua commanded His *Talmidim* (disciples) to witness unto all men (Acts 1:8) – including areas in *Shomrom*. Scholars believed that Ya'akov likely made trips into the same region and preached the Word.

c. Their excessive ambition (Matt 20:20-28; Mark 10:35-45):

In this incident, we notice the self-seeking attitude of both Ya'akov and Yochanan. Messiah Y'shua directed His reply to the brothers, rather than their mother, as He knew that they were behind the request. They were ambitious and wanted to rise to the position of great privilege in the Kingdom. Y'shua taught them the greater lesson on humility (Matt 20:25-28).

d. Ya'akov's early martyrdom (Acts 12:1-2):

Ya'akov suffered martyrdom about a decade after Pentecost. Why Ya'akov? It seemed that Herod Agrippa, grandson of Herod the Great (who ruled at the birth of Y'shua) wished to increase his popularity with the Jews and thus stabilise his political position. Ya'akov was the obvious choice, probably because as 'son of

thunder' he was a fiery and effective and prominent leader. His zeal marked him for an early arrest, and his aggressiveness may have made him a target.

e. Ya'akov's transformation inferred:

Ya'akov's perception on the earlier issues, such as destroying the *Shomronim* and occupying the position of importance has certainly changed. We have read of his willingness to drink of the Master's cup as being the first apostle to die for the Master. The zeal to preach the Word must be motivated by *Elohim*'s love for people, coupled with much sensitivity and care.

A full discussion of this "cup" and baptism will be presented in chapter 26 of this study.

20:27-28 And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant

"(27) **And whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant:** (28) *Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many.*"

Again, this is referring to the idea of the "mighty in the Kingdom", serving others in humility (with Moses being our best human example).

20:29-34 As they departed from Jericho

"(29) **And as they departed from Jericho,** a great multitude followed him. (30) *And, behold, two blind men sitting by the way side, when they heard that Jesus passed by, cried out, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.* (31) *And the multitude rebuked them, because they should hold their peace: but they cried the more, saying, Have mercy on us, O Lord, thou Son of David.* (32) *And Jesus stood still, and called them, and said, What will ye that I shall do unto you?* (33) *They say unto him, Lord, that our eyes may be opened.* (34) *So Jesus had compassion on them, and touched their eyes: and immediately their eyes received sight, and they followed him.*"

"*And as they departed from Jericho...*" It was about ten parsas (16km) from Jerusalem (through which Y'shua just passed) and where he had met with Zacchaeus – who delivered the parable concerning a nobleman's going into a far country (Luke 19:1-28).

The Syriac and Persic versions render the words, "*when Y'shua departed from Jericho*"; and the Arabic, "*when he went out of Jericho*" – not alone, but "*with his disciples*" as Mark says. Not with them only, for a great multitude followed him out of the city; either to hear him, or be healed by him, or to see him, or behold his miracles, or to accompany him to Jerusalem. They wanted to see if he was going to keep the feast of the Passover and where they might be in some expectation that he would set up his kingdom.

End of Section VII - Teachings on the Kingdom

SECTION VIII

REPROOF AND REBUKE

MATTHEW 21:1-46

TEXT:

- (1) "And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,
- (2) Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me.
- (3) And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them.
- (4) All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying,
- (5) Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass.
- (6) And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them,
- (7) And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon.

- (8) And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way.
- (9) And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest.
- (10) And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this?
- (11) And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee.
- (12) And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves,
- (13) And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves.
- (14) And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them.
- (15) And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,
- (16) And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?
- (17) And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there.
- (18) Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered.
- (19) And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away.
- (20) And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!
- (21) Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done.
- (22) And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive.
- (23) And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority?
- (24) And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things.
- (25) The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him?
- (26) But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet.
- (27) And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things.
- (28) But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard.
- (29) He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went.
- (30) And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not.
- (31) Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you.
- (32) For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him.
- (33) Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country:
- (34) And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it.
- (35) And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another.
- (36) Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise.
- (37) But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son.
- (38) But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance.
- (39) And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him.
- (40) When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen?
- (41) They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons
- (42) Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?
- (43) Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof.
- (44) And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder.
- (45) And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them.

(46) *But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet."*

21:1 Then sent Jesus two disciples

"*And when they drew nigh unto Jerusalem, and were come to Bethphage, unto the mount of Olives, then sent Jesus two disciples,*"

Apart from His sacrificial work on the cross, the most significant thing Y'shua did upon the earth was to make disciples. Y'shua had written no books, He had built no organisation; there were no physical structures or monuments left to commemorate Him. He had placed the future of His earthly work entirely in the hands of His disciples. Had they failed their task, humanly speaking, the church of Y'shua HaMashiach would not exist today.

In the last decade, discipleship has become a popular subject in Christian circles. The great difficulty is that when we use this term, we frequently mean something entirely different from that denoted by the biblical term. For instance, we hear much talk about discipling others or being discipled. Being in close proximity to a great seminary, I have seen many young and enthusiastic theologians come and go. Very frequently, they will go to the pastor/rabbi of their church/synagogue and ask to be discipled, just like Paul 'discipled' Timothy. A good question to ask is: "And just how did Paul disciple Timothy?"

This is precisely the problem. We almost completely fail to grasp the biblical concept of discipleship. What was so important in the life and ministry of Y'shua should be very clear to us today who wish to be known as His disciples.

The Backdrop to New Testament Discipleship

The concept of discipleship was not foreign to men in the days of Y'shua. The terms used in the New Covenant of disciples had through years of use developed shading important for us to comprehend. It is the distinctions between Y'shua's concept of discipleship from those of His contemporaries which are most crucial for us to grasp, for it is here that the great differences arise between Y'shua and His opponents. It is also here that many present day misconceptions find their origin.

In Ancient Greek, the verb *manthano* is used to denote the process by which a person acquired theoretical knowledge. (The two primary terms relative to discipleship are the verb 'to follow' and the noun, 'disciple.' For an excellent study of these terms, cf. Collin Brown, General Editor of *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), I, pp. 480-494.) A disciple was a learner. A man was known as a *mathe'te's* or disciple when he bound himself to another in order to acquire his practical and theoretical knowledge (D. Müller, "Mathe'te's," *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, I, p. 483.) The word was sometimes nearly synonymous with the term *apprentice*. There was never a disciple without a master or teacher. In some Greek circles, the teacher was paid by his disciples.

In the Old Covenant, the concept of discipleship is strikingly absent (K. H. Rengstorf, *Mathe'te's*", *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, Edited by Gerhard Kittel and Gerhard Friedrich (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1967), IV, pp. 426, 427.) Men were, of course, to be learners of the will of YHWH (Deut 6:10-12, etc.); but they were not disciples. In my estimation, the reason is to be found chiefly in the fact that there was no master worthy enough for them to attach themselves to. We know of the relationship between Elijah and Elisha, Moses and Joshua, and so on; but these men were known as servants, not disciples. Moses was, in the final analysis, only a servant of YHWH; one through whom YHWH revealed Himself.

Rabbinical Judaism, unlike the Old Covenant, made much of the concept of discipleship. The advice of a pre-Christian writer was: "*Take to yourself a teacher and acquire a companion.*" (Joshua B. Perachiah, Aboth 1:1,16, as quoted by Rengstorf, TDNT, IV, p. 434.)

As R. T. France has observed, "Every Jewish teacher worth his salt had his circle of 'disciples' who 'followed' him (literally walking behind him as he rode or walked ahead), looked after his daily needs, and soaked up his teaching. Their teacher was the most important person in their Lives." (R. T. France, *I Came to Set the Earth on Fire* (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), p. 50.)

In Judaism, one must learn not only the Old Covenant Scriptures but also the oral traditions; the traditions of the fathers. One would attach himself to a Rabbi, who would serve as a kind of mediator between the student and the Scriptures. One dared not to interpret the Scriptures independently and could only speak with

authority after years of study under a master. (See Notes on next page) Since there were several masters, there sprang up several schools of rabbinical thought; each in competition with the others.

The New Testament Definition of a Disciple

In the New Covenant, the picture of a disciple is not as clear or simplistic as one might wish; for the terms *mathe'te's* (disciple, learner) and *akoloutheo'* (to follow) are used in a variety of ways.

Not only did *Y'shua* have His disciples, but so did *Yochanan* the Immerser (Matt 9:14; 11:2; John 1:35, 37, etc.), the Pharisees (Matt 22:16; Mark 2:18; Luke 5:33), and even Moses (during *Y'shua*'s time – John 9:28).

There is great diversity among those who are identified as the disciples of *Y'shua* in the Scriptures. John (John 6:60,66) uses the term 'disciple' to refer to those who are uncommitted, unbelieving followers of *Y'shua*, motivated mainly by curiosity or impure desires. The masses, who have come to faith and trusted in *Y'shua* as their Messiah were also called disciples (John 8:30, 31). Then, of course, the term was used particularly and most frequently of the twelve disciples (Matt 10:1, etc.); one of whom was His betrayer (John 6:70, 71). Within the circle of the twelve was an inner circle of three: Peter, James and John (Luke 9:28). In the book of Acts, the word 'disciple' seems to be used synonymously with the term 'believer' (cf. Acts 6:1,2,7).

What is a disciple? I suspect that Mark summarises it best in his gospel: "*And He went up to the mountain and summoned those whom He Himself wanted, and they came to Him. And He appointed the twelve, that they might be with Him, and that He might send them out to preach, and to have authority to cast out demons*" (Mark 3:13-15).

Who is a disciple of *Y'shua*? Anyone who is deeply and personally committed to *Y'shua* by faith, who manifests the power and authority of *Y'shua*, and who continues and extends His work.

Distinctives of *Y'shua*'s discipleship

Although the concept of discipleship was common knowledge in the days of *Y'shua*, His teaching on discipleship differed greatly from contemporary thought.

1) *Y'shua* called His disciples: In *Y'shua*'s day, it was the followers who chose their master (D. Müller, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, I, p. 488. (3b).) The students chose their teacher or rabbi. But in *Y'shua* ministry, it was He Who chose them (John 15:16). Some of those who 'volunteered' their services were put off by the Master (Luke 9:57-58, 61-62).

2) The relationship between *Y'shua* and His followers was more personal than academical: (205 D. Müller, p. 488. (3b).) In Judaism, the relationship between a rabbi and his disciple was largely a matter of academics. It was the impartation of knowledge. Granted, on the part of the disciple, there was a very pronounced dependency upon the rabbi; but there was never the sense of intimacy which existed between *Y'shua* and His disciples (John 15:15). Although *Y'shua* taught His disciples, they perceived their commitment as a very personal one. It was only after His death and resurrection that His teaching was fully understood and valued. For example, when *Y'shua* was crucified, the disciples were so taken aback by the loss of His person that His teaching about His death and resurrection never occurred to them.

3) The path of a disciple of *Y'shua* was far different than that of contemporary Judaism. One who chose to be a disciple of a great rabbi looked forward to the time when he, too, would be a great leader in Israel. The path, which a disciple of *Y'shua* chose to walk, was the path of service and self-sacrifice. His disciples must take up their cross (Luke 9:23-24). They must suffer rejection and persecution (John 15:20,21). They, as their Master, must give up their lives in service (Mark 10:45).

4) *Y'shua*'s discipleship was not a burden, but a blessing. It is obvious that the demands of *Y'shua*'s discipleship were great. It is amazing that in the final analysis, it is the disciple of the scribes and legalistic Pharisees who has the real burden: "*And they tie up heavy loads, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves are unwilling to move them with so much as a finger*" (Matt 23:4).

How different is this from that of *Y'shua*: "(28) *Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest. (29) Take My yoke upon you, and learn from Me, for I am gentle and humble in heart; and you shall find rest for your souls. (30) For My yoke is easy, and My load is light*" (Matt 11:28-30).

Notes

"The situation is different in Rab. Judaism. Here the *talmid* is someone whose concern is the whole of Jewish tradition. According to Shamai (*Shabbath* 31a), this was the written Torah (the biblical writings of the OT) and the oral Torah, the *paradoseis to'n presbytero'n* (the traditions of the fathers) which includes the Mishnah, Midrash, Halachah and Haggadah. The *talmid* now, as originally the Gk. *Mathe'te's*, belongs to his teacher,

*to whom he subordinates himself in almost servile fashion. It was the distinct casuistic form of Rab. Theology, built around emphasis on achievement in the religious thought of developed Judaism, which created the pre-requisites for attributing a value of its own to human authority which previously was entirely unknown in Israel and Judaism. Since the Rabbi's knowledge gives him direct access to the Scriptures which facilitates right hearing and right understanding, he becomes a kind of mediator between the talmidim and the Torah. To listen to the Scriptures without the guidance of a teacher is something to be avoided at all costs (cf. B. Berakoth 47b). *la'mad* and *manthano'* still mean to learn, to occupy oneself with the Torah in order to discover God's will in it. But now learning is determined by the authority of the teacher and his interpretation of the Torah—not by a personal and, as far as possible, unbiased study of the Torah. Therefore learning means primarily that the talmid appropriates the knowledge of his teacher and examines it critically by comparing it against the Torah. Only one who had studied and served under a ha'k + a'm (a Jewish scholar) for an extensive period, and had thus concluded his essential study, could later become a ha'k + a'm with authority to teach his own tradition in his own school. The pupil-teacher relationship of Rab. Jud, in contradistinction to the OT, thus became an important institution for detailed study of the Torah"* (D. Müller, *New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology*, I, pp. 485-486.)

21:2-7 Thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass...

"(2) Saying unto them, Go into the village over against you, and straightway ye shall find an ass tied, and a colt with her: loose them, and bring them unto me. (3) And if any man say ought unto you, ye shall say, The Lord hath need of them; and straightway he will send them. (4) All this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, (5) Tell ye the daughter of Sion, Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, meek, and sitting upon an ass, and a colt the foal of an ass. (6) And the disciples went, and did as Jesus commanded them, (7) And brought the ass, and the colt, and put on them their clothes, and they set him thereon."

From the Hebrew Scriptures:

"Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem: behold, thy King cometh unto thee: he is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass." (Zech 9:9)

From the Rabbinic Writings:

"Exult vehemently, O assemblage of Zion, and exult O assemblage of Jerusalem; Behold, thy King cometh unto thee, just himself and a Saviour, humble, riding on an ass, and a foal, and the young of an ass." (Jonathan ben Uzziel)

"This is the Messiah our Righteousness. But is it not written of the Messiah, "Lowly, riding upon an ass?" Yes, but this shows he will come in humility, and not in pride upon horses." (Saadiah Gaon on Daniel 7:17)
"R. Berekiah said in the name of R. Isaac: As the first redeemer was, so shall the latter Redeemer be. What is stated of the former redeemer? And Moses took his wife, and his sons, and set them upon an ass (Ex. 16, 4). Similarly will it be with the latter Redeemer [Messiah], as it is stated, Lowly and riding upon an ass." (Midrash Rabbah, Ecclesiastes 1. 9, 1)

One of the problems posed by the *Tenakh*'s prophecies regarding the Messiah is that He would arrive both on the back of a donkey as well as in the clouds of glory. As it did not seem possible for one person to fulfill both prophecies, there developed a theory that if the people were righteous, Messiah would come on the clouds; if they were not, He would arrive on a donkey:

Talmud, Sanhedrin 98a: *"R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction. It is written, in its time [will the Messiah come], whilst it is also written, I [the Lord] will hasten it! — If they are worthy, I will hasten it: if not, [he will come] at the due time. R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua opposed two verses: it is written, And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven whilst [elsewhere] it is written, [behold, thy king cometh unto thee...] lowly, and riding upon an ass! — If they are meritorious, [he will come] with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon an ass."*

However, even the Talmudists recognised that Scripture did not truly offer an "if-or" option; hence, the idea of two Messiahs came into being. The first, Messiah ben Joseph would be more of the humble, suffering servant. He would, in fact, be killed. The second, Messiah ben David, would come to avenge the death of Messiah ben Joseph and usher in the Millennial Kingdom.

21:8 Others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way

"(8) And a very great multitude spread their garments in the way; others cut down branches from the trees, and strawed them in the way." (Matt 21:8)

The cutting of branches alludes to the feast of *Succoth* (Tabernacles) most closely associated with the coming of the Messianic era (See comments on Matt 17:4).

(39) *"Also in the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when ye have gathered in the fruit of the land, ye shall keep a feast unto the LORD seven days: on the first day shall be a sabbath, and on the eighth day shall be a sabbath.*

(40) *And ye shall take you on the first day the boughs of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and the boughs of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and ye shall rejoice before the LORD your God seven days.*

(41) *And ye shall keep it a feast unto the LORD seven days in the year. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations: ye shall celebrate it in the seventh month.*

(42) *Ye shall dwell in booths seven days; all that are Israelites born shall dwell in booths:"* (Lev 23:39-42)

It is clear from the behaviour of these people that they thought Y'shua was at least a great prophet, if not the Messiah.

21:9-11 Hosanna to the son of David

"(9) And the multitudes that went before, and that followed, cried, saying, Hosanna to the Son of David: Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord; Hosanna in the highest. (10) And when he was come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, Who is this? (11) And the multitude said, This is Jesus the prophet of Nazareth of Galilee."

The term "Hosanna" is *Hosheanu* which means, "save us". The cry of the people (*Hosheana, ben David*) is also tied to Sukkoth. The 7th day of Sukkoth is called, *Hosheana Rabba*; meaning, "the great save us". As mentioned earlier, "son of David" is a Messianic title.

Interestingly, the time of this occasion is the spring and not the fall, (when *Succoth* takes place). Also, even though Y'shua is the final *Yom Kippur* sacrifice (another fall feast), He was killed in the spring on *Pesach* (Passover, the 14th of Abib/Nisan). Suffice it to say, that although the feasts of YHWH seem separate and unique from our point of view in this physical world; spiritually, they convey powerful meaning because of Messiah.

The *Zohar* (a collection of ancient Hebrew texts, much of which are *Sod*-level commentary on the passages of the *Tenach*) says of YHWH's feasts that they are all unified in the great Sabbath to come, the thousand year Millennial Sabbath (referred to as "her" in the text below):

Soncino Zohar, Shemoth, Section 2, Page 133b: *'From all of these we take "the heave offering of the Lord" on each of these special seasons, in order that it may rest upon us: on Passover by means of the paschal lamb, on Tabernacles by means of the tabernacle, and so forth. The six Days [Feasts] are but a preparation for her. As they are united above in "One."*

21:12-15 Ye have made it a den of thieves

"(12) And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, (13) And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves. (14) And the blind and the lame came to him in the temple; and he healed them. (15) And when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that he did, and the children crying in the temple, and saying, Hosanna to the Son of David; they were sore displeased,"

The people were required to make offerings at the Temple. As it was too difficult for those living far away to bring animals with them, they would instead purchase the animal when they arrived at the Temple. Also, it was not permitted to use pagan money to make offerings (or pay the Temple tax), so coins would be evaluated and exchanged for shekels. The men providing this service had found it too easy to cheat people, however, and it is for this dishonesty that Y'shua drives them out.

The verse Y'shua quotes is from both Isaiah 56 and Jeremiah 7. As the prophets state, the Temple of YHWH was to be a house of prayer for all nations; thereby including Gentiles into the faith of Israel. The actions of the money changers were a perversion of justice in taking advantage of people, which is a perversion of the essence of YHWH's *Torah*. By such evil works, the name of the Elohim of Israel would be blasphemed

among the Gentiles. This acted against YHWH's Temple being a house of prayer for them; in fact, keeping salvation from the Gentiles.

As Paul similarly wrote of some of his fellow Jews:

(23) "Thou that makest thy boast of the law, through breaking the law dishonourest thou God?"

(24) "For the name of God is blasphemed among the Gentiles through you, as it is written." (Rom 2:23-24)
The Money changers

It is a tax imposed by the Romans. The tax-gatherers were termed "*publicans*" (Matt 5:46-47, 9:10-11, 19 and 21:31-32) who had their stations at the gates of cities and in the public highways at the place called the "*receipt of custom*" (Mark 2:14). This is where they collected the money that was to be paid on certain goods (Matt 17:25). These publicans were tempted to exact more from the people than was lawful; and as a result of their extortions, they were objects of great hatred. The Pharisees would have no interactions with them (Matt 5:46-47).

Every adult Jew annually paid a tax or tribute of half a shekel for the Temple. It had to be paid in Jewish coin (Matt 22:17-19; Mark 12:14-15). Money-changers were necessary to enable the Jews who came up to Jerusalem at the feasts to exchange their foreign coin for Jewish money; but as it was forbidden by the law to carry on such a traffic for emolument (Negative Law 100 Deut 23:19: Offer not on Altar "hire of harlot" or "price of dog"), Y'shua drove them from the Temple (Matt 21:12; Mark 11:15).

The Messenger of the Covenant

From the Hebrew Scriptures:

"Behold, I will send my messenger, and he shall prepare the way before me: and the Lord, whom ye seek, shall suddenly come to his temple, even the messenger of the covenant, whom ye delight in: behold, he shall come, saith the LORD of hosts." (Mal 3:1)

From the Rabbinic writings:

"The LORD is the King Messiah; He is also the Angel of the Covenant." (Rabbi David Kimchi)

"The LORD is both the Divine majesty and the Angel of the Covenant, for the sentence is doubled." (Rabbi Aben Ezra)

"The LORD may be explained of King Messiah" (Mashimiah Jeshua fol. 76)

"What is to be the manner of Messiah's coming, and where will be the place of his first appearance? He will make his first appearance in the land of Israel, as it is written, 'The Lord whom ye seek will come suddenly to His Temple'." (Rabbi Moses ben Maimon)

From the New Covenant:

"For this is he, of whom it is written, Behold, I send my messenger before thy face, which shall prepare thy way before thee." (Matt 11:10)

"(12) And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast out all them that sold and bought in the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, (13) And said unto them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but ye have made it a den of thieves." (Matt 21:12-13)

21:16-18 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise?

"(16) And said unto him, Hearest thou what these say? And Jesus saith unto them, Yea; have ye never read, Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings thou hast perfected praise? (17) And he left them, and went out of the city into Bethany; and he lodged there. (18) Now in the morning as he returned into the city, he hungered." (Matt 21:16-18)

Y'shua quotes Psalm 8, which is highly Messianic in its nature; thus, offering the people a "hint" as to who He was:

(1) "O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! who hast set thy glory above the heavens.

(2) "Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

- (3) When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
- (4) What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him?
- (5) For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.
- (6) Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:
- (7) All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;
- (8) The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.
- (9) O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!" (Psalm 8:1-9)

21:19-20 And when he saw a fig tree in the way

"(19) And when he saw a fig tree in the way, he came to it, and found nothing thereon, but leaves only, and said unto it, Let no fruit grow on thee henceforward for ever. And presently the fig tree withered away. (20) And when the disciples saw it, they marvelled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away!"

The verses concerning the fig tree (and others tied to these) are very mysterious, and have been greatly misused to teach that YHWH has done away with Israel and its *Torah*-based faith (as represented by the fig tree) and replaced her with a new religion, as based on verse 43. However, at no place in the "New Testament" do we see *Y'shua* or His disciples repudiating the *Torah* (i.e., Matt 5:17-21, Rom 3:31).

As we see in chapters 21 through 23, *Y'shua* directed most of his criticism at the religious leaders (legalistic Pharisees) of the day, who "shut up the kingdom of heaven" for themselves and others due to their voiding the commandments of YHWH (*Torah*) through man-made doctrines. Still, the people as a whole were not without blame; and as seen later in this chapter and at the end of this sermon (23:37), where He extends His reproof to the people as a whole (see comments to verse 43 below).

21:21-22 If ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed ... whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive

"(21) Jesus answered and said unto them, Verily I say unto you, If ye have faith, and doubt not, ye shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if ye shall say unto this mountain, Be thou removed, and be thou cast into the sea; it shall be done. (22) And all things, whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing, ye shall receive."

As YHWH would not want all of us hurling huge mountains about, it is easy to see that there are deeper meanings to these verses.

First, taking these verses at a more literal (*p'shat*) level (even considering the allegorical terms of "mountains" and "seas"), it would seem that great miracles should be "commonplace" among those who are righteous in YHWH's sight. As this is not the case today, one has to ask what the problem is.

The answer may be found in another statement made by *Y'shua*:

"...Nevertheless when the Son of man cometh, shall he find faith on the earth?" (Luke 18:8)

As "faith" is defined by YHWH in terms of a relationship with Him based on His instruction – His *Torah*, (i.e., Deut chapter 6; Luke 18:18-22) and the majority of those claiming to follow His Messiah today preach that they are "*not under the Law*" (i.e., not submissive to His *Torah*), then Messiah's words are indeed a frightening prophecy. (See notes to Matthew chapters 5 through 7 on *Torah* as part of faith.)

There is a deeper meaning to these verses, however, that is actually applicable to their immediate context. The question must first be asked, What is the purpose of Messiah's teachings in these surrounding chapters (21-23)? As we are seeing, *Y'shua* is both:

- 1) rooting out the false teachings (leaven) of the religious leadership, and
- 2) presenting the offer of the Kingdom to His people. (See Isaiah 61 as well.)

The metaphorical terms, "mountains" and "seas" have to do with leaders and the spiritual abyss. As *Y'shua* points out in these chapters, the legalistic Pharisees were actually keeping people away from the Kingdom of YHWH through their teachings (though the people were at fault as well for allowing them to do this). *Y'shua* is thus instructing His disciples that with faith, not only can the falsehood of the legalistic Pharisees be overcome (the mountain being tossed into the sea), but the Kingdom itself can be ushered in (where "miracles" will be commonplace; i.e., "whatever you ask you will receive").

21:23-42 The baptism of John, whence was it, from heaven, or of men?

“(23) And when he was come into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people came unto him as he was teaching, and said, By what authority doest thou these things? and who gave thee this authority? (24) And Jesus answered and said unto them, I also will ask you one thing, which if ye tell me, I in like wise will tell you by what authority I do these things. (25) The baptism of John, whence was it? from heaven, or of men? And they reasoned with themselves, saying, If we shall say, From heaven; he will say unto us, Why did ye not then believe him? (26) But if we shall say, Of men; we fear the people; for all hold John as a prophet. (27) And they answered Jesus, and said, We cannot tell. And he said unto them, Neither tell I you by what authority I do these things. (28) But what think ye? A certain man had two sons; and he came to the first, and said, Son, go work to day in my vineyard. (29) He answered and said, I will not: but afterward he repented, and went. (30) And he came to the second, and said likewise. And he answered and said, I go, sir: and went not. (31) Whether of them twain did the will of his father? They say unto him, The first. Jesus saith unto them, Verily I say unto you, That the publicans and the harlots go into the kingdom of God before you. (32) For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him. (33) Hear another parable: There was a certain householder, which planted a vineyard, and hedged it round about, and digged a winepress in it, and built a tower, and let it out to husbandmen, and went into a far country: (34) And when the time of the fruit drew near, he sent his servants to the husbandmen, that they might receive the fruits of it. (35) And the husbandmen took his servants, and beat one, and killed another, and stoned another. (36) Again, he sent other servants more than the first: and they did unto them likewise. (37) But last of all he sent unto them his son, saying, They will reverence my son. (38) But when the husbandmen saw the son, they said among themselves, This is the heir; come, let us kill him, and let us seize on his inheritance. (39) And they caught him, and cast him out of the vineyard, and slew him. (40) When the lord therefore of the vineyard cometh, what will he do unto those husbandmen? (41) They say unto him, He will miserably destroy those wicked men, and will let out his vineyard unto other husbandmen, which shall render him the fruits in their seasons. (42) Jesus saith unto them, Did ye never read in the scriptures, The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner: this is the Lord's doing, and it is marvellous in our eyes?” (Matt 21:23-42)

Here Y’shua begins to reveal the character of the legalistic Pharisees to the people. Much of what He states in His parables is directed to them, though the people who tolerated their leadership are not without accountability.

The Authority for Yochanan’s Baptism

Y’shua affirmed in verse 32 that Yochanan the Immerser had come to the people in the way of righteousness. He also demonstrated by the parable he had spoken against the chief Kohanim (chief priests) and the Zakenim (elders) of the people that Yochanan had indeed been sent by the Mighty One; thus proving that his baptism came from heaven and did not originate in Yochanan’s own head. In other words, Yochanan performed his works according to the word of YHWH and not according to his own thoughts.

The Vineyard

Two Types of Vineyards:

There are several parables in the Bible about vines and vineyards – each symbolically portraying aspects of Israel’s or an individual believer’s spiritual life.

The Corporate Vineyard:

- (1) “Now will I sing to my wellbeloved a song of my beloved touching his vineyard. My wellbeloved hath a vineyard in a very fruitful hill:
- (2) And he fenced it, and gathered out the stones thereof, and planted it with the choicest vine, and built a tower in the midst of it, and also made a winepress therein: and he looked that it should bring forth grapes, and it brought forth wild grapes.
- (3) And now, O inhabitants of Jerusalem, and men of Judah, judge, I pray you, betwixt me and my vineyard.
- (4) What could have been done more to my vineyard, that I have not done in it? wherefore, when I looked that it should bring forth grapes, brought it forth wild grapes?
- (5) And now go to; I will tell you what I will do to my vineyard: I will take away the hedge thereof, and it shall be eaten up; and break down the wall thereof, and it shall be trodden down:

(6) *And I will lay it waste: it shall not be pruned, nor digged; but there shall come up briers and thorns: I will also command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it.*

(7) *For the vineyard of the LORD of hosts is the house of Israel, and the men of Judah his pleasant plant: and he looked for judgment, but behold oppression; for righteousness, but behold a cry.”* (Isaiah 5:1-7)

The Individual Vineyard:

- (30) *“I went by the field of the slothful, and by the vineyard of the man void of understanding;*
(31) *And, lo, it was all grown over with thorns, and nettles had covered the face thereof, and the stone wall thereof was broken down.*
(32) *Then I saw, and considered it well: I looked upon it, and received instruction.*
(33) *Yet a little sleep, a little slumber, a little folding of the hands to sleep:*
(34) *So shall thy poverty come as one that travelleth; and thy want as an armed man.”* (Prov 24:30-34)

Who/What is a Jew?

The passages above tell of the Almighty's vineyard and the results He expects of His people Israel.

He is the owner of the spiritual vineyard called the House of Israel. In fact, the Most High calls Himself the El Elyon of Israel and His Son is called the King of the Jews! (Luke 23:36-38). But, some will ask *“Who is an Israelite?” “Who/What is a Jew?”* Many people these days claim to be Jews, or members of the *Lost Ten Tribes of Israel*. They come in all colours: black, brown and white. Are they all Jews or the descendants of the ancient Israelites?

According to the dictionary, a Jew is:

A member of the tribe of Judah.

An Israelite.

One whose religion is Judaism.

In the Old Covenant, the term *Jew* initially meant a member of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin; who together comprised the southern kingdom of Judah. After the 70-year captivity, the terms *Jew* and *Israelite* became fused as many captive Israelites, dispersed many years before, returned to Israel with the Babylonian exiles. According to the *Halakha*, the body of religious law generally accepted by Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed Jews, a *Jew* is someone who has a Jewish mother. But this definition would exclude King David's grandfather Obed, whose mother was Ruth the Moabitess; and possibly even King Solomon, whose mother, Bath-Sheba, was the former wife of Uriah the Hittite.

In June 1970, the Israeli Supreme Court ruled that the child of a Jewish father and a non-Jewish mother may be registered as Jewish by nationality. But orthodox Jews dispute this ruling even to this day. David ben-Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, even suggested that *anyone who wished to be considered a Jew should be accepted as such*. Many other definitions have been suggested and even applied; but the question still remains unanswered for many.

21:43-46 The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation

“(43) Therefore say I unto you, The kingdom of God shall be taken from you, and given to a nation bringing forth the fruits thereof. (44) And whosoever shall fall on this stone shall be broken: but on whomsoever it shall fall, it will grind him to powder. (45) And when the chief priests and Pharisees had heard his parables, they perceived that he spake of them. (46) But when they sought to lay hands on him, they feared the multitude, because they took him for a prophet.”

Verse 43, in conjunction with verse 19 (the fig tree), is often used to teach that YHWH changed His mind and did away with the faith of Israel (as given in the *Torah*) and began something new (i.e., "the Christian Church"), about the time of Acts chapter 2.

The reality is that YHWH did not do away with His *Torah* (i.e., Matt 5:17-21, Rom 3:31); but the offer of the Kingdom along with the task of spreading the news of Messiah, did indeed "pass from" Israel to the nations (via the faithful Jewish remnant in the Diaspora) after Y'shua's death – only for a certain period and though not for long. (Much of chapters 9-11 of Paul's Romans letter address this.)

The offer of the Kingdom through Messiah was indeed intended for Israel and not the Gentiles:

"(5) These twelve Jesus sent forth, and commanded them, saying, Go not into the way of the Gentiles, and into any city of the Samaritans enter ye not: (6) But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. (7) And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt 10:5-7)

"(22) And, behold, a woman of Canaan came out of the same coasts, and cried unto him, saying, Have mercy on me, O Lord, thou Son of David; my daughter is grievously vexed with a devil. (23) But he answered her not a word. And his disciples came and besought him, saying, Send her away; for she crieth after us. (24) But he answered and said, I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel." (Matt 15:22-24)

The seeds for what was to come indeed began in Acts 2, but not as the Christian church depicts. Here we find Jews (not "Christians") gathered in Jerusalem for the feast of *Shavuot* (Pentecost). The *Ruach haKodesh* (Holy Spirit) descends on these Jewish followers of Messiah as an indication that YHWH's will and intent was being served through those who trusted in *Y'shua*. (This experience was similar to that of Mount Sinai. These Jews then returned to their homes throughout the Roman Empire, continuing in their *Torah*-based faith; with a knowledge of Messiah in *Y'shua* and empowerment of the His *Ruach*.

We know that the Kingdom offer had not been taken away from Israel at the time of the events in Acts 2; for we see Peter extending this to His Jewish brethren, following the events of that *Shavuot* (Pentecost) in the very next chapter:

(12) "And when Peter saw it, he answered unto the people, Ye men of Israel, why marvel ye at this? or why look ye so earnestly on us, as though by our own power or holiness we had made this man to walk?"

(13) "The God of Abraham, and of Isaac, and of Jacob, the God of our fathers, hath glorified his Son Jesus; whom ye delivered up, and denied him in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let him go."

(14) "But ye denied the Holy One and the Just, and desired a murderer to be granted unto you;

(15) "And killed the Prince of life, whom God hath raised from the dead; whereof we are witnesses.

(16) "And his name through faith in his name hath made this man strong, whom ye see and know: yea, the faith which is by him hath given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all.

(17) "And now, brethren, I know that through ignorance ye did it, as did also your rulers.

(18) "But those things, which God before had shewed by the mouth of all his prophets, that Christ should suffer, he hath so fulfilled.

(19) "Repent ye therefore, and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, when the times of refreshing shall come from the presence of the Lord;

(20) "And he shall send Jesus Christ, which before was preached unto you.

(21) "Whom the heaven must receive until the times of restitution of all things, which God hath spoken by the mouth of all his holy prophets since the world began.

(22) "For Moses truly said unto the fathers, A prophet shall the Lord your God raise up unto you of your brethren, like unto me; him shall ye hear in all things whatsoever he shall say unto you.

(23) "And it shall come to pass, that every soul, which will not hear that prophet, shall be destroyed from among the people.

(24) "Yea, and all the prophets from Samuel and those that follow after, as many as have spoken, have likewise foretold of these days.

(25) "Ye are the children of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying unto Abraham, And in thy seed shall all the kindreds of the earth be blessed.

(26) "Unto you first God, having raised up his Son Jesus, sent him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from his iniquities." (Acts 3:12-26)

We also see Paul continue to teach that this offer of salvation/Kingdom was for the Jew first:

"For I am not ashamed of the gospel of Christ: for it is the power of God unto salvation to every one that believeth; to the Jew first, and also to the Greek." (Rom 1:16)

Israel did not heed the warnings, however. The destruction of the Temple in A.D. 70 and subsequent Roman war of A.D. 132 followed this. During this approximately 100-year time period, a process began whereby the baton of *Torah*-based Messianic faith was passed along to the remaining faithful remnant of Israel in the Diaspora, and those Gentiles who congregated with them (i.e. Romans, chapters 9-11). It was in this manner that nations other than Israel were "given" the Kingdom offer to take to the world.

It was not long, however, before Babylonian paganism crept in and took the place of the faith of *Y'shua* and His disciples; resulting in the formation of Gentile Christianity. By the time of Constantine (early 4th Century), anyone continuing to follow the original (authentic) *Torah*-based Hebraic faith in *Y'shua* was considered a

heretic. It probably remains true to this day, because *Torah*-based faith is so widely misunderstood and held in suspicion by both Jews and Gentiles.

Conversely, some would argue that the phrase “*a nation*” here still refers to Israel, but a different generation. This argument is made, no doubt with the intention to combat the aforementioned false teaching that YHWH deserted the *Torah*-based faith of Israel in favour of Christianity.

It would seem, however, that the context (from the cursing of the fig tree on *Y'shua*'s way into Jerusalem, to His words as He left the Temple in verses 33, 37-39) indicates a rebuke of Israel (other than the faithful remnant). This has nothing to do with YHWH's faithfulness to Israel (i.e., as seen in Jeremiah 31 and Romans chapters 9 through 11); only to their role of bringing the truth of YHWH's Kingdom as it will be established through *Y'shua* to the nations.

In short, although the main body of Israel did not carry out its mission of the Kingdom (and has never accepted *Y'shua* or taught others about Him since that time), neither did the Gentiles when given the chance. Imagine if history could have been re-written!

SECTION VIII

REPROOF AND REBUKE

MATTHEW 22:1-46

TEXT:

- (1) “And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,
- (2) The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son,
- (3) And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come.
- (4) Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage.
- (5) But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise:
- (6) And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them.
- (7) But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city.
- (8) Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy.
- (9) Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage.
- (10) So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests.
- (11) And when the king came in to see the guests, he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:
- (12) And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless.
- (13) Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (14) For many are called, but few are chosen.
- (15) Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk.
- (16) And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men.
- (17) Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not?
- (18) But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites?
- (19) Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny.
- (20) And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription?
- (21) They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's.
- (22) When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way.
- (23) The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,
- (24) Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, his brother shall marry his wife, and raise up seed unto his brother.
- (25) Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother:
- (26) Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh.
- (27) And last of all the woman died also.

- (28) Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her.
 (29) Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God.
 (30) For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are as the angels of God in heaven.
 (31) But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying,
 (32) I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living.
 (33) And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine.
 (34) But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together.
 (35) Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying,
 (36) Master, which is the great commandment in the law?
 (37) Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.
 (38) This is the first and great commandment.
 (39) And the second is like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.
 (40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets.
 (41) While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them,
 (42) Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David.
 (43) He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying,
 (44) The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool?
 (45) If David then call him Lord, how is he his son?
 (46) And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions."

22:1 And Jesus answered

"And Jesus answered and spake unto them again by parables, and said,"

Chapter divisions were obviously not present in the original documents. It was brought into the Holy Scriptures for convenience' sake and was not inspired by the Holy Spirit. Y'shua's comments are a continuation from the discussion in chapter 21.

22:2-10 The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king

"(2) The kingdom of heaven is like unto a certain king, which made a marriage for his son, (3) And sent forth his servants to call them that were bidden to the wedding: and they would not come. (4) Again, he sent forth other servants, saying, Tell them which are bidden, Behold, I have prepared my dinner: my oxen and my fatlings are killed, and all things are ready: come unto the marriage. (5) But they made light of it, and went their ways, one to his farm, another to his merchandise: (6) And the remnant took his servants, and entreated them spitefully, and slew them. (7) But when the king heard thereof, he was wroth: and he sent forth his armies, and destroyed those murderers, and burned up their city. (8) Then saith he to his servants, The wedding is ready, but they which were bidden were not worthy. (9) Go ye therefore into the highways, and as many as ye shall find, bid to the marriage. (10) So those servants went out into the highways, and gathered together all as many as they found, both bad and good: and the wedding was furnished with guests."

See the previous comments on the Kingdom parables. As He mentioned in chapter 21, the Kingdom offer, meant exclusively for Israel, was slipping from their hands.

22:11-13 He saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment

"(11) And when the king came in to see the guests, **he saw there a man which had not on a wedding garment:** (12) And he saith unto him, Friend, how camest thou in hither not having a wedding garment? And he was speechless. (13) Then said the king to the servants, Bind him hand and foot, and take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

See the previous study on this particular parable.

22:14 For many are called, but few are chosen

"For many are called, but few are chosen."

This would allude to His parable of the sower as discussed in chapter 13. Many hear the *Torah* preached, but few truly adhere to it. See also Matt 7:13-14.

The "call" of YHWH can be traced to the *Shema* (Deuteronomy 6) which is a call to enter the Kingdom (see comments on verse 37 below). The *Shema* can be considered YHWH's "plan of salvation", as it gives instruction to place our trust in the One true YHWH Elohim; and to seek Him and be conformed to His image by being both hearers and doers of His *Torah*. All of these principles are reinforced in the various "New Testament" letters.

22:15-22 They sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians

"(15) Then went the Pharisees, and took counsel how they might entangle him in his talk. (16) And they sent out unto him their disciples with the Herodians, saying, Master, we know that thou art true, and teachest the way of God in truth, neither carest thou for any man: for thou regardest not the person of men. (17) Tell us therefore, What thinkest thou? Is it lawful to give tribute unto Caesar, or not? (18) But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, Why tempt ye me, ye hypocrites? (19) Shew me the tribute money. And they brought unto him a penny. (20) And he saith unto them, Whose is this image and superscription? (21) They say unto him, Caesar's. Then saith he unto them, Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's. (22) When they had heard these words, they marvelled, and left him, and went their way."

Y'shua's enemies now play their "secular card", bringing in the ruling family with ties to Rome prior to asking Him a question about loyalty to Caesar.

Render Unto Caesar

(Read also Mark 12:13-17 and Luke 20:19-26.)

From War 2.8.1 118 (Antiquities 18.1.1 3): "*Under his administration a certain Galilean named Judas prevailed with his countrymen to revolt; and said they were cowards if they would endure to pay a tax to the Romans and submit to mortal men as their lords. This man was a teacher of a peculiar sect of his own that was not at all like the others. For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews..."*

It was seen above that an important part of the political background in Y'shua's time was the Fourth Philosophy of Judas the Galilean. In the present passage is the clearest indication that Y'shua was seen by some of his contemporaries as involved with that group. The originating tenet of the Fourth Philosophy was that one should not pay taxes to Rome, as this was interpreted as a turning away from YHWH. When the people in the cited passage ask Y'shua if it is "lawful to pay taxes to the Emperor, or not", they are referring to the Fourth Philosophy's reading of the Law of Moses. The questioners, even if they were hostile to them, can't be seen as setting a devious trap – they were trying to pin Y'shua's philosophy down by asking him his opinion on the central question of the times.

In his answer, Y'shua clearly states he is not a member of the Fourth Philosophy. Instead, he graphically advocates the separation of the Believers Body and state. This answer clearly was not what his questioners expected. It is possible they did not believe him, and the authorities continued to regard him as a revolutionary until Pilate swept him up during the arrests of rebels. (For more details on the Fourth Philosophy, see The Causes of the War with Rome at <http://members.aol.com/FLJOSEPHUS/causesOfWar.htm>)

22:23 The same day came to him the Sadducees

"The same day came to him the Sadducees, which say that there is no resurrection, and asked him,"

We have very little information on the teachings of the Sadducees. The Talmud and subsequent Jewish texts reflect the Pharisaic position on issues, as they came to complete power (and the Sadducees to extinction) not long after Y'shua's time with the destruction of the Temple. One thing we do know is that the Sadducees did not share the same views about the afterlife as their Pharisaic opponents, as explained below.

Sadducees

(Also see Mark 12:18, Luke 20:27; see also Acts 5:17, Acts 23:8)

Some Sadducees (those who say there is no resurrection) came to him and asked him a question.

From Antiquities 18.2.4 16-17 (see also War2.8.14 162-166): "But the doctrine of the Sadducees is that souls die with the bodies. Nor do they perform any observance other than what the Law enjoins them. They think it virtuous to dispute with the teachers of the wisdom they pursue. This doctrine is accepted but by a few, but those are of the highest standing. But they are able to accomplish almost nothing, for when they hold office they are unwillingly and by force obliged to submit to the teachings of the Pharisees, because the multitude would not otherwise tolerate them."

The quoted passages agree that the Sadducees do not believe in a resurrection. Otherwise, the Gospels have little to say about them other than mixing them in with the Pharisees; which perhaps indicates how little impact they had on daily life as Josephus explains. In Acts, however, Sadducees are somewhat more active. Paul takes advantage of the disagreement on the resurrection after his arrest (Acts 23:6-10) by siding with the Pharisees and creating a debate among the council, thus distracting everyone from the charge against him.

22:24-29 His brother shall marry his wife

"(24) Saying, Master, Moses said, If a man die, having no children, **his brother shall marry his wife**, and raise up seed unto his brother. (25) Now there were with us seven brethren: and the first, when he had married a wife, deceased, and, having no issue, left his wife unto his brother: (26) Likewise the second also, and the third, unto the seventh. (27) And last of all the woman died also. (28) Therefore in the resurrection whose wife shall she be of the seven? for they all had her. (29) Jesus answered and said unto them, Ye do err, not knowing the scriptures, nor the power of God."

The Sadducees are referring to the laws of Levirate marriage (Deut 25:5-10), which say that a man should marry his brother's widow in order to care for her and her children.

22:30-33 For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage

"(30) **For in the resurrection they neither marry, nor are given in marriage**, but are as the angels of God in heaven. (31) But as touching the resurrection of the dead, have ye not read that which was spoken unto you by God, saying, (32) I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living. (33) And when the multitude heard this, they were astonished at his doctrine."

Y'shua supports a Pharisaic teaching from the Talmud:

Talmud Ma'asrot 4:5-6: "There will be no marital union in the world to come."

22:34-38 Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind

"(34) But when the Pharisees had heard that he had put the Sadducees to silence, they were gathered together. (35) Then one of them, which was a lawyer, asked him a question, tempting him, and saying, (36) Master, which is the great commandment in the law?" (37) Jesus said unto him, **Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind**. (38) This is the first and great commandment."

Y'shua is quoting from the Shema (Deut 6:4), the fundamental "statement of faith" of Judaism. Note the means that YHWH gives for **how** we are to love Him, as found in the verses surrounding Shema.

Love for YHWH is not based on emotions, but on following His Torah:

What is the Shema?

"And Jesus answered him, The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord." (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 your God, ... you shall have no other gods before Me." (Exod 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) recognised 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”. *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 YHWH, (the LORD) the Elohim 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 Elohim. Once again, 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 legalistic 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 YHWH. In that respect, *Y'shua* was the teacher of the **true religion** which YHWH had revealed to the children of Israel after He brought them out of the land of Egypt and which had become corrupted by the additions 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 studies 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 of the Ten Commandments and the *Shema* by the priests. 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 sham kvod malkhuto l’olam va-ed.*” (Blessed is the name of His Glorious Kingdom forever and ever.)

After the Temple was destroyed in A.D. 70, 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 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 each group 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 parties) 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 our God, the Lord is One.*
Blessed is the name of His Glorious Kingdom forever and ever.”

The first sentence of the *Shema* is a direct quote from Deut 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 (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 *amein* (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 YHWH our God, YHWH is one!" Blessed is the Name of His Glorious Kingdom forever and ever.

"You shall love YHWH 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, also in Deut. 11:13-21 and Num. 15:37-41)

The Message of the Shema

* The Oneness of Elohim *

The first and foremost understanding that we should receive from this beautiful statement of faith is that YHWH is our Elohim and YHWH is one (echad). Today, western society is very familiar with the concept of monotheism; that there is only one Elohim 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 YHWH Elohim was, in the opinion of the pagans, a very foolish thing to do. What if that Elohim was unable to effect a desired change for the worshipper? They thought it far better to have a whole lot 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 Elohim, they really thought it was wacko.

The First Century Greeks, being more highly educated than many of their neighbours, 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".

(22) *"Then Paul stood in the midst of Mars' hill, and said, Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious.*

(23) *For as I passed by, and beheld your devotions, I found an altar with this inscription, TO THE UNKNOWN GOD. Whom therefore ye ignorantly worship, him declare I unto you.*

(24) *God that made the world and all things therein, seeing that he is Lord of heaven and earth, dwelleth not in temples made with hands;*

(25) *Neither is worshipped with men's hands, as though he needed any thing, seeing he giveth to all life, and breath, and all things;*

(26) *And hath made of one blood all nations of men for to dwell on all the face of the earth, and hath determined the times before appointed, and the bounds of their habitation;*

(27) *That they should seek the Lord, if haply they might feel after him, and find him, though he be not far from every one of us:*

(28) ***For in him we live, and move, and have our being;*** as certain also of your own poets have said, For we are also his offspring.

(29) *Forasmuch then as we are the offspring of God, we ought not to think that the Godhead is like unto gold, or silver, or stone, graven by art and man's device.*

(30) *And the times of this ignorance God winked at; but now commandeth all men every where to repent:*

(31) *Because he hath appointed a day, in the which he will judge the world in righteousness by that man whom he hath ordained; whereof he hath given assurance unto all men, in that he hath raised him from the dead."* (Acts 17:22-31)

This "Unknown God" that Paul proclaimed to the Greeks was the YHWH Elohim of the Israelite patriarchs. He was not a multitude of gods; rather He was One Elohim. 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 that great Elohim had sent His only begotten Son (the Man) to die for the sins of the world and was 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 YHWH *

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

“(28) And one of the scribes came, and having heard them reasoning together, and perceiving that he had answered them well, asked him, Which is the first commandment of all?

(29) And Jesus answered him, *The first of all the commandments is, Hear, O Israel; The Lord our God is one Lord:*

(30) ***And thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind, and with all thy strength: this is the first commandment.*** (Mark 12:28-30)

Believers are to have a deep abiding love for YHWH that surpasses their love for anyone or anything else. YHWH must be put first and foremost in all things. But just how does one express their love for YHWH? 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 YHWH must have instructed His children on the proper way in which to express their love for Him.

The text from the *Shema* says that YHWH’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 YHWH 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 YHWH 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 YHWH 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 YHWH. One way to do this is to spend as much time as possible learning about the things of YHWH. 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 YHWH edifies.

Strength. All of one’s actions must be directed toward YHWH and His way of life. Man is to serve YHWH with all of his being and all of his strength.

Man’s love for YHWH must be absolutely unconditional. We must learn to love YHWH 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 characterised by one great quality: the willingness of a person to sacrifice for the good of another. In terms of loving YHWH, this manifests itself through one’s willingness to sanctify the name of YHWH 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 YHWH 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 YHWH to others. We must do everything in our power to honour YHWH as 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 YHWH 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 YHWH to others?

(15) “But sanctify the Lord God in your hearts: and be ready always to give an answer to every man that asketh you a reason of the hope that is in you with meekness and fear:

(16) Having a good conscience; that, whereas they speak evil of you, as of evildoers, they may be ashamed that falsely accuse your good conversation in Christ.” (1 Peter 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 when for the time ye ought to be teachers, ye have need that one teach you again which be the first principles of the oracles of God; and are become such as have need of milk, and not of strong meat.” (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 YHWH (the *Torah*).

* YHWH’s Blessings *

The second paragraph of the *Shema* promises the blessings that will flow from YHWH 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 YHWH rather than the traditions of men. There are also negative results that will accrue to those who choose to disobey YHWH’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.

“(13) Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereto: (14) Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that 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 YHWH 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 aids them to stand firm in the way that leads to life. It is the same as hanging a big Bible around your neck.

A Righteous Addition

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

“And the second is like, namely this, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself. There is none other commandment greater than these.” (Mark 12:31)

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

“Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself: I am the LORD.” (Lev. 19:18)

One cannot truly love YHWH unless they first learn how to love their neighbour.

(20) “If a man say, I love God, and hateth his brother, he is a liar: for he that loveth not his brother whom he hath seen, how can he love God whom he hath not seen?”

(21) *And this commandment have we from him, That he who loveth God love his brother also.”* (1 John 4:20-21)

This is the final test as to whether one truly loves YHWH or if he is just paying lip service to Him. It is easy to love YHWH when one's life is going along fairly well, but it is very difficult to love one's brother in a complete 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 that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.

(2) *But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate 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 ones 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 ‘spiritualising’ 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 with 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 YHWH 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?

(22) *“Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.*

(23) *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew 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 YHWH, teaching our children (and others) to obey the *Torah*, and loving our neighbors are the real goals that YHWH 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 YHWH 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 YHWH and His way of life? What is wrong with carrying something on our person that causes us to have the instruction (*Torah*) of YHWH 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 YHWH 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".

Nothing in Jewish life is more hallowed than the saying of these words.

YHWH's name

"The reverence of the Jewish people for the name of God is well known. Most English Bible's today translate "Yahweh", the Tetragrammaton, as "Lord" (the Hebrew word "Adonai") in conformance with Rabbinical custom. To the Jewish people, God's name is holy and sanctified - to even crumple a piece of paper with God's name written on it is desecration."

With the Shema the Jew sanctifies God's name. It has become his inspiration and last fervent confession. This one sentence, selected out of the 4875 verses of the Torah has become Judaism's greatest contribution to the religious thought of mankind, and its eternal confession of faith." (The Jewish Shema By David M. Williams (davidmwilliams@geocities.com))

We should call YHWH by His name, period! There is overwhelming Scripture proving this.

"SHEMA Israel YHWH elohaynu YHWH echad"
"Hear, O Israel: YHWH our God is one YHWH"

22:39 Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself

"And the second is like unto it, **Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.**"

As said in the explanation in verse 38, the entire Torah presents itself in commandments toward YHWH and toward fellow man. The latter are of almost equal importance as our fellow man is made in the image of YHWH.

22:40-46 On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets

"(40) On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets. (41) While the Pharisees were gathered together, Jesus asked them, (42) Saying, What think ye of Christ? whose son is he? They say unto him, The Son of David. (43) He saith unto them, How then doth David in spirit call him Lord, saying, (44) The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand, till I make thine enemies thy footstool? (45) If David then call him Lord, how is he his son? (46) And no man was able to answer him a word, neither durst any man from that day forth ask him any more questions."

This teaching (verses 37-40) is reflective of the thought of Rabbi Hillel as well as Paul (see Glossary section for more info on Rabbi Hillel):

Talmud, Mas. Shabbath 31a: "What is hateful to you, do not to your neighbour: that is the whole Torah, while the rest is the commentary thereof; go and learn it."

(8) "Owe no man any thing, but to love one another: for he that loveth another hath fulfilled the law.

(9) For this, Thou shalt not commit adultery, Thou shalt not kill, Thou shalt not steal, Thou shalt not bear false witness, Thou shalt not covet; and if there be any other commandment, it is briefly comprehended in this saying, namely, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

(10) Love worketh no ill to his neighbour: therefore love is the fulfilling of the law." (Rom 13:8-10)

Y'shua, Hillel, and Paul never taught that the Law of Moses is "done away with" and replaced by some emotional concept of "love". However, much of Christianity, in the name of the Messiah, says that the Law of Moses is thrown out and all we need now is this kind of "love". Puny! What happened to our rich heritage that YHWH intended for us?

As previously mentioned in our study of the sermon of Matthew chapters 5-7, there will be those who did great things, even miracles, in Messiah's name; yet He will not recognise them as they did not have proper regard for the will of the Father (Torah, the "Law of Moses"). The book of Revelation also makes it clear that those who follow the commandments (Torah, the "Law of Moses") are the ones who enter New Jerusalem.

SECTION VIII

REPROVE AND REBUKE

MATTHEW 23:1-39

TEXT:

- (1) "Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples,
- (2) Saying, The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:
- (3) All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say, and do not.
- (4) For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers.
- (5) But all their works they do for to be seen of men: they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments,
- (6) And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,
- (7) And greetings in the markets, and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi.
- (8) But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren.
- (9) And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.
- (10) Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ.
- (11) But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant.
- (12) And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted.
- (13) But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in.
- (14) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation.
- (15) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.
- (16) Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!
- (17) Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gold, or the temple that sanctifieth the gold?
- (18) And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty.
- (19) Ye fools and blind: for whether is greater, the gift, or the altar that sanctifieth the gift?
- (20) Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon.
- (21) And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein.
- (22) And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon.
- (23) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.
- (24) Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel.
- (25) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess.
- (26) Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also.
- (27) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness.
- (28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity.
- (29) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,
- (30) And say, If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers with them in the blood of the prophets.
- (31) Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets.
- (32) Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers.
- (33) Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

- (34) Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:
- (35) That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.
- (36) Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation.
- (37) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!
- (38) Behold, your house is left unto you desolate.
- (39) For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

23:1-2 The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat

"(1) Then spake Jesus to the multitude, and to his disciples, (2) Saying, **The scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat:**"

By using the phrase "seat of Moses", Y'shua indeed designates that authority is with the Pharisees.

23:3-4 All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do, but do not ye after their works

"(3) **All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, that observe and do; but do not ye after their works:** for they say, and do not. (4) For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers."

It would appear that Y'shua is telling the people to obey the Pharisees, while at the same time telling them not to follow them. In order to understand this passage, it is important to recall that much of Y'shua's criticism of the Pharisees was because they taught commandments of men that made void the commandments of YHWH (Matt 15:13). Hence, the problem is not with the Pharisees teaching Torah; but with anything that contradicts Torah.

The human ordinances of the Pharisees placed emphasis on outside observance and not on what would change the inner man (see verses 24-28 below). Y'shua considered these teachings to be as "leaven" (Matt 16:11-12), which if left unchallenged would corrupt all the people.

Certain manuscripts of the Hebrew Shem Tob book of Matthew offer a different translation to this section, making a distinction between what Moses said and what the Pharisees taught:

"Upon the seat of Moses the Pharisees and Sages sit, and now, all which **he** (Moses) will say unto you-keep and do; but their ordinances and deeds do not do, because they say and do not." (There are several versions of the Shem Tob. The majority follows the common interpretation of "they" in this verse, but two manuscripts have the singular "he".)

The key thing to note here is that even though the Pharisees were teaching Torah, they were also promoting "lawlessness"; as their teachings were not based in a humble faith in YHWH but in self-righteousness that misused the Torah and often negated it.

Y'shua and the Torah

As said previously, Torah is not a matter of laws and commandments; but rather instructions from YHWH to man for living a life of blessing and joy. We also explained that Torah consists of two elements – one written and one oral. In this section, we will look at a series of areas dealing with Y'shua's observance of the Oral Torah.

Y'shua apparently attached great importance to the Oral Torah (unwritten in his day), and it seems he considered it to be authoritative. When He admonished His disciples to "do and observe everything they [the scribes and Pharisees] command you", He was referring to the Pharisees' oral traditions and interpretations of the Written Torah. The Written Torah itself could not have been in question; for it was accepted by all sects of Judaism and Y'shua himself said, "Heaven and earth would sooner disappear than one yod (the

smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet) or even one kots (thorn, the long, thorn-like decorative stroke that First Century scribes added to the yod) from the Torah" (Matt 5:18).

Many rabbinic statements express similar ideas, such as: "Should all the nations of the world unite to uproot one word of the Torah, they would be unable to do it" (Leviticus Rabbah 19:2).

Evidence of Y'shua's Observance

To what extent did Y'shua observe the practices of the Oral Torah? Y'shua was never charged with breaking any part of it; and although his disciples occasionally were accused of disobeying aspects of the Oral Torah (Luke 6:1-2), only one such accusation was made against Y'shua - that he broke the Sabbath by healing the sick (Luke 14:1-4). However, even his Sabbath healings were permitted by rabbinic ruling, as Hebrew University professor and Jerusalem School scholar Shmuel Safrai notes in "Religion in Everyday Life" (The Jewish People in the First Century, 2:805).

It may seem that there is a shortage of hard evidence in the New Covenant concerning Y'shua's religious observance, but one must remember that Jews wrote the New Covenant for Jewish readers. The normal Jewish religious practices were so well known and followed both by the writers and first readers of the New Covenant, that it would have been considered superfluous to discuss them. Nonetheless, one is able to gather enough evidence from the Gospels (as we have already seen during this study) to conclude that Y'shua observed the biblical commandments as they were interpreted in the Oral Torah.

23:5-6 They make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments

"(5) But all their works they do for to be seen of men: **they make broad their phylacteries, and enlarge the borders of their garments**, (6) And love the uppermost rooms at feasts, and the chief seats in the synagogues,"

Y'shua makes an interesting statement in verse 5: "Everything they do is done for men to see: they make their phylacteries wide and the tassels of their prayer shawls long."

We get the idea that somehow the people Y'shua is talking about are less than upright in their actions. The details elude us, for this is unfamiliar activity.

Deut 6:8 tells us, "You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes." This Scripture is referring to the phylacteries worn during prayers. The word "phylactery" is derived from the Greek phylakterion, and literally means a protecting charm or amulet. "Phylacteries" is an unfortunate translation, as there is little if any evidence to suggest that they were regarded as amulets in Y'shua's day. The Hebrew word is te·fi·LIN (the plural of te·fi·LAH, prayer) for leather boxes bound by a leather strap. Tefillin refers to either of the two small leather capsules containing tiny slips of parchment inscribed with the scriptural passages recorded in Exod 13:1–10, Exod 13:11–16, Deut 6:4–9, and Deut 11:13–21. These verses deal with the mitzvah (commandment) of tefillin.

Today the tefillin are strapped on the forehead and the arm, as in Y'shua's day. The arm tefillin (shel yad) consists of one compartment containing a parchment on which all four passages are written; while the head tefillin (shel rosh) is divided into four compartments, each of which contains a parchment with one of the four passages written on it. The parchments are hand-lettered and may be executed only by an approved scribe.

The shel yad is placed on the left inside arm so as to allow the box to rest against the heart when the arms are folded. The shel rosh is worn on the forehead, between the eyes to rest on the cerebrum – meaning our attention is directed to our head, heart and hand; we are taught to dedicate ourselves to serving YHWH in all we think, feel or do. Tefillin are worn on week days only; on the Sabbath or festivals, the tefillin are not to be put on. When worn, they are for both morning and evening prayers when the Shema is recited. (See Matt 22:34 – What is the Shema.)

There are two thoughts today, if Y'shua wore the tefillin:

Wearing tefillin was an observance of the commandment to bind YHWH's commandments "as a sign on your arm and as a symbol on your forehead" (Deut 6:4-9).

It might be argued that this is metaphorical language and simply means "remember well".

For example, the same expression is used in Exod 13:16.

There, following the commandment to sacrifice every firstborn male animal and redeem every firstborn male child, the Israelites are informed that "it will be a sign on your arm and a symbol on your forehead".

Obviously, this observance could not be attached to one's body. However, by at least the Second Century B.C., the biblical instructions to bind the commandments of YHWH to one's arm and forehead were interpreted literally (Shmuel Safrai, *The Jewish People in the First Century*, 2:799).

The literal understanding of this commandment is an interpretation.

The word te-fi-LIN itself is not even found in the Bible.

Contemporaries of Y'shua viewed the wearing of tefillin as a biblical commandment, and Y'shua did not reject the commandment as seen in Matt 23:5.

In the First Century, tefillin were part of ordinary and everyday Jewish dress.

Putting on tefillin only during morning weekday prayers, as normally practised today by observant Jews, is a later custom.

In Y'shua's time, they were worn throughout the day; and removed only when working or when entering a place that was ritually unclean (Safrai, 2:798).

Fragments of tefillin dating from the time of Y'shua have been found in the Judean Desert in caves near the Dead Sea.

The most dramatic find, head tefillin dating from the first half of the First Century A.D. (with three of the four parchment slips still folded and securely tied in their original compartments) was published by Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin in *Tefillin from Qumran* (Israel Exploration Society, 1969).

The head tefillin, including the strap, was quite modest and would not have drawn attention to itself.

The capsule found at Qumran is rectangular and extremely small, approximately one-half by three-fourths of an inch (13 by 20 mm.).

A small postage stamp would easily cover it.

In Matt 23:5, Y'shua criticised those who "make their phylacteries wide".

As with His criticism of the public display of almsgiving (Matt 6:2), one must not view Y'shua's words as a general condemnation of wearing tefillin.

Rather, Y'shua was condemning religious hypocrisy that led to enlarging tefillin as a demonstration of "higher spirituality".

Just as Y'shua's faulted the ostentatious wearing of tzitzit (tassels) which He himself wore, He probably also was wearing tefillin while criticising those who wore them hypocritically.

Had He not worn tefillin, it is unlikely that His criticism would have been directed only at the excesses.

Criticising the way they were worn implies Y'shua's acceptance of the practice and the sages' literal interpretation of this biblical command.

Later rabbis also criticised the exaggerating of these for ostentatious exhibitionism.

If Y'shua did not wear the tefillin, He would have been guilty of breaking one of the 613 laws.

We know He did not break any of the laws, because He was sinless.

The other aspect mentioned in verse 5 is the tassels of the prayer shawl. The prayer shawl is called tallit in Hebrew. The tassels are tzitzit or fringes. The tallit is comprised of two parts - the tzitzit and the garment. The tassels were attached to the four corners of one's robe as commanded in Num 15:37–41 and Deut 22:12. The lengths and colours will vary with individual tastes and custom. It is to be worn well and consciously.

Tallit are worn by married men in Orthodox congregations and by all males past the age of Bar Mitzvah in Conservative and Reform Synagogues. Originally, women were not forbidden to wear the tallit, but were exempt due to the duties of managing the household and raising the children. Over time, it became understood they would not wear the tallit.

There was no fixed maximum length for the tzitzit, as the two major rabbinic schools in the half-century before Y'shua agreed:

"The elders of the School of Shammai and the School of Hillel gathered in the upper chambers of Jonathan ben Bathra and reached the decision that there is no prescribed length for the tsit-TSIT." (Sifre Numbers 115, to 15:38)

It seems there were some who, in an attempt to observe this commandment more fully, wore very long tzitzit. Shmuel Safrai has noted the wealthy Jerusalem resident mentioned in the Talmud in Gittin 56a, who received his nickname, Ben Tzitzit Hakeset, because of his long tassels (*The Jewish People in the First Century*, p. 798, note 3). He was remembered as being so devout that his tzitzit literally trailed behind him on the ground. Naturally, there also were imitators, who wished to appear more pious than they were by wearing longer-than-normal tzitzit. Y'shua condemned those who pretended to be pious by wearing long tzitzit.

It is reasonable to interpret the references in Matt 6:6 (closet) and Acts 18:3 (tent) as euphemisms for tallit. Wrapping yourself in a prayer shawl creates a barrier to outside distractions much like a closet. This also creates a tent of meeting between the individual and YHWH.

Y'shua's observance of this commandment is dramatically illustrated by the story as found in Matt 6:20-21, of the woman who suffered from a hemorrhage for twelve years. She was healed when she came up behind Y'shua and touched what the King James Version of the Bible refers to as "hem of his garment". The New Covenant makes it clear that Y'shua, like all observant Jews of the First Century, wore tzitzit.

In fact, Y'shua wore two garments: ha-LUK (tunic) and ta-LIT (mantle). The lower garment (the tunic) was a lighter robe – usually made of linen. The upper garment (the mantle) which was draped over the tunic was a heavy garment – usually woven from wool.

The ta-LIT was a rectangular piece of cloth. It was the equivalent of the Roman pallium or the Greek himation, which were rectangular – not the Roman toga, which was semi-circular.

The heavier outer garment was the norm for public occasions. It was considered somewhat immodest in Jewish society to go out in public attired only in the under-robe, even though it extended to just above the ankles. The ha-LUK alone could be worn around the house (unless guests arrived), or when one engaged in physical labour where the over-robe would be too cumbersome.

Everyday Dress

Some modern translators have understood that the ta-LIT was a shawl-like covering draped over the upper part of a man's body during prayer. For instance, in Matt 23:5, the New International Version translates "They make...the tassels of their **prayer shawls** long".

This is misleading, since in the time of Y'shua, the ta-LIT was part of everyday dress and not a religious article. It is true that out of modesty one would not pray publicly in his ha-LUK, but the ta-LIT was not itself a holy garment. This clarification of the double robes worn in Y'shua's time helps us understand his statement recorded in Matt 5:40, "If someone wants to sue you for your ha-LUK, let him also have your ta-LIT".

In the privacy of one's home, the ha-LUK could be worn without the ta-LIT; but it was embarrassing to go out in public dressed in it alone. However, if necessary, the ta-LIT could serve as one's only garment. Therefore, the ta-LIT rather than the ha-LUK was indispensable. If someone tries to confiscate your tunic in a dispute, Y'shua said, you should for the sake of peace also offer him your mantle.

23:7-14 And to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi

"(7) And greetings in the markets, **and to be called of men, Rabbi, Rabbi**. (8) But be not ye called Rabbi: for one is your Master, even Christ; and all ye are brethren. (9) And call no man your father upon the earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven. (10) Neither be ye called masters: for one is your Master, even Christ. (11) But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. (12) And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted. (13) But woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for ye neither go in yourselves, neither suffer ye them that are entering to go in. (14) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye devour widows' houses, and for a pretence make long prayer: therefore ye shall receive the greater damnation."

The key to this section is verse 12: "And whosoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted."

Y'shua is teaching not to seek leadership (as many are often too eager to do), as this places a person under greater responsibility. As He points out in verse 14, there is a "greater condemnation" for such leaders who err. This is consistent with the teachings of "James":

James 3:1: "My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation."

And also the Talmud:

Talmud, Avot 1:10: "Despise the position of Rabbi."

The error of the legalistic scribes and Pharisees was that they had exalted themselves to a position higher than that of Moses (verse 2). They had boasted to the man born blind that they were disciples of Moses (John 9:28). Such was not really the case, however. To have been a disciple of Moses would mean that they would have placed themselves under the authority of his teaching and doctrine. In effect, they had ousted Moses (that is the five books of Moses) by making the interpretation and application of these sacred writings subject to their own traditions and interpretations (Matt 15:1-9).

These scribes and Pharisees usurped the authority to subject men under them as disciples. In so doing, they commanded men to follow the clever system they had created by codifying the Law of Moses into 365 prohibitions and 250 commandments:

"The Pharisees had devised a system in which they had codified the Mosaic Law into some 365 prohibitions and 250 commandments. They required those who followed them to submit to their interpretations of this Law. Because the Pharisees considered themselves the official interpreters of the Law, they promoted themselves to a position of authority in Israel. In Matthew 23:2, Christ referred to the Scribes and the Pharisees as men who "sit in Moses' seat." Claiming the authority of Moses as interpreters and teachers of the Law, they demanded that all in Israel who submitted to Moses also submit themselves to them. They demanded that men by submission become disciples of the Pharisees, and that individuals in Israel recognize themselves not only as disciples of Moses but also as disciples of the Pharisees. This is seen in a passage such as Mark 2:18 where Christ is asked the question, "The disciples of John and of the Pharisees used to fast: and they come and say unto him, Why do the disciples of John and of the Pharisees fast, but thy disciples fast not?" This shows us that those who submitted themselves to the Pharisees were disciples of the Pharisees. They became disciples by voluntarily submitting themselves to the rule of the Pharisees over them." J. Dwight Pentecost, Design for Discipleship (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1971), p. 24.

The effect was to place upon unsuspecting Israelites a burden which no one could bear and which they did nothing to lighten (verse 4). While they ingeniously devised ways to circumvent their own regulations, the masses were buried under them. It is no wonder that Y'shua said to His hearers: "My yoke is easy, and my burden is light" (Matt 11:30, KJV).

The motives of these scribes and Pharisees were at the heart of their sin. They were proud and puffed up, just as Satan was when he fell (Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezek 28:2, 17). These men desired disciples because they basked in the glory and adulation of men. They desired the seats of prominence and greetings which puffed up their pride (verses 5-7).

Verses 8-12 are some of the heaviest words of the Word of YHWH for church leaders. Here is described in the plainest of words the great danger of Christian leadership: We wish men to become our disciples. We aspire to have authority over others who become our disciples.

Essential to discipleship is a master, or teacher to whom the disciple submits. The sinfulness of Jewish religious 'establishment' is beautifully contrasted against the humility of Y'shua in this matter of discipleship. They gloried in the limelight, while He came to be overlooked and rejected by the nation as a whole. He came to give His life as a ransom for many (Mark 10:45); they lived only for the praise and adulation their position gave them.

Y'shua cautioned His own disciples and the crowds that the favourite titles of the scribes and Pharisees were not to be part of their religious vocabulary. The three titles: Rabbi, Father, and Leader, were never to be taken by men; nor were men to bestow them on mere mortals. There is only one authoritative teacher or Rabbi – Y'shua Himself. No one dare usurp His title (as did these legalistic rabbis). Moreover, there is to be no hierarchy among men in Messiah, for we are all brothers (verse 8). The title 'Father', respectfully applied to Jewish men of prominence, belongs only to Aviad. He alone is our Father. To take His title is to usurp His authority (verse 9).

"Father is used as a title of honour for a priest (Jdg. 17:10; 18:19), and for a prophet (2 Ki. 6:21; 13:14). In 2 Ki. 2:12, on the lips of the prophet's disciple, it also expresses spiritual relationship. In Rab. Judaism, where the title of father was frequently used of respected scribes (SB I 918 f.), the metaphor of father and child is occasionally applied to the relationship between a teacher of the Torah and his pupil (SB III 340 f.)." O. Hofius, "Father," New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology, I, p. 617.

Neither should we assume the title of leader nor guide, since Y'shua alone is our guide and leader (verse 10). Greatness in the kingdom of YHWH is not measured, as the rabbis supposed, by determining how many disciples they had under their authority. It was rather to be measured in terms of service. It is the number whom we **serve** that reflects our measure of greatness in YHWH's sight (verses 11-12).

23:15-16 Ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves

"(15) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, **ye make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves.** (16) Woe unto you, ye blind guides, which say, Whosoever shall swear by the temple, it is nothing; but whosoever shall swear by the gold of the temple, he is a debtor!"

The Pharisees were not shy about evangelising. However, as Y'shua points out, many of them interpreted the Scriptures in their own (self-righteous) manner that was not in accordance to the truth of Torah. Not much has changed to this day with countless church denominations sending "missionaries" all around the world teaching people to follow a Messiah who tells them that "they are not under the Law" - a message alien to the true Gospel message. Is it any wonder why the Jews REJECT this teaching, and this "Messiah"? What a travesty and assault on mission of the true Messiah!

23:17-22 Whether is greater, the gold, or the temple ... Whether is greater, the gift, or the altar...

"(17) Ye fools and blind: for **whether is greater, the gold, or the temple** that sanctifieth the gold? (18) And, Whosoever shall swear by the altar, it is nothing; but whosoever sweareth by the gift that is upon it, he is guilty. (19) Ye fools and blind: for **whether is greater, the gift, or the altar** that sanctifieth the gift? (20) Whoso therefore shall swear by the altar, sweareth by it, and by all things thereon. (21) And whoso shall swear by the temple, sweareth by it, and by him that dwelleth therein. (22) And he that shall swear by heaven, sweareth by the throne of God, and by him that sitteth thereon."

This is a continuation of the rebuke of the Pharisees who had their priorities out of order, following the traditions of men over the Torah of YHWH.

23:23-29 These ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone

"(23) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: **these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone.** (24) Ye blind guides, which strain at a gnat, and swallow a camel. (25) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye make clean the outside of the cup and of the platter, but within they are full of extortion and excess. (26) Thou blind Pharisee, cleanse first that which is within the cup and platter, that the outside of them may be clean also. (27) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whitened sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. (28) Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity. (29) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! because ye build the tombs of the prophets, and garnish the sepulchres of the righteous,"

Again, Y'shua throws His support behind Torah; in this case, telling the Pharisees that they should have continued giving the tithes they chose to give; but not at the expense of judgment, mercy and faith; which are the "three pillars" of the godhead that the Torah directs us toward. (See explanation in verses 30-34.)

In tithing, fasting and almsgiving, Y'shua was totally Jewish. He opposed excessive worrying about the *minutiae* of tithing "mint, anise and cummin" (small plants grown in gardens and used for spices). Only very religious people would be careful enough to give a tenth of these plants. He still argued that the crowds and His disciples should do as the scribes and Pharisees said (Matt 23:3; "but not as they do"). In fact, the law only specified tithing of grain, wine, oil and livestock.

Y'shua rebuked the Pharisees for majoring in minors and neglecting the weightier matters of Torah. "You blind guides," He said, "which strain at a gnat and swallow a camel" (verse 24). The Pharisees strained their wine to make sure they did not inadvertently swallow any un-kosher insects like gnats. Y'shua was not condemning the straining of gnats; but His statement does imply that if a gnat is inadvertently swallowed, it is really not a big deal. Even Orthodox rabbis, as picky as they are, realise that kosher food may occasionally contain a small insect or two.

23:30-34 If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers

"(30) And say, **If we had been in the days of our fathers, we would not have been partakers** with them in the blood of the prophets. (31) Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the prophets. (32) Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. (33) Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell? (34) Wherefore, behold, I send unto you prophets, and

wise men, and scribes: and some of them ye shall kill and crucify; and some of them shall ye scourge in your synagogues, and persecute them from city to city:"

Here are yet other verses with a worrisome lesson for today. These religious leaders were condemned as future generations would be for not having a proper regard for YHWH's Torah. If these legalistic Pharisees had been following Torah in its proper context, they would have recognised Y'shua as the Messiah.

Judgment, Mercy, and Faith

Those of us who claim that Y'shua is our Master yearn to live as He desires. We study to show ourselves approved, reach out to those who are lost, pray for the sick, and freely give to the needy. Our lives, according to the world's standards, seem upright and holy. But what does He truly desire from us? What are His standards? How do we know when He is well pleased with our walk?

There were those during the First Century who attempted to live lives of purity and holiness. Over time, however, their hearts became more focused on the outward appearance rather than on the inward attitude. Today, this same group of people are scorned from the pulpit and ridiculed from the pew. The Pharisees could indeed use a new public relations agency. Try as they may, the standard that our Messiah was seeking was different than they were attaining. They had built their own little towers of Babel, attempting to please YHWH and man with their actions rather than their attitude. They missed the boat. They came up short. Yet today, many of the same people who malign the Pharisees suffer from the same attitudinal shortcomings.

When Y'shua addressed these gentlemen in Matthew 23, we see He began by telling His disciples that the Pharisees "sit in Moses' seat". Thereby, He placed them in a great position of honour. He further instructed the people to do all that the Pharisees instructed them to do. So, here was our Messiah placing great authority and responsibility on the position that the Pharisees held. One problem, though: that hypocrisy thing. Y'shua hates hypocrisy. Perhaps that is one reason why He led such a public ministry during His time on earth. Many people got to witness His actions at very close range. Day after day He walked among all the people from the rulers to the lepers. There indeed is no hypocrisy in Y'shua, but the religious rulers of the day were filled with it.

But what was the cornerstone of the problem? Was it hypocrisy or misplaced priorities? "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cumin, and have omitted the weightier matters of the law, **judgment, mercy, and faith**: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone" (Matt 23:23). The "omission" is the problem. This word (aphiemi) can be defined further by substituting the words abandon, leave, disregard or keep no longer. So we see that they not only "omitted", but also disregarded or abandoned these "weightier matters". To disregard or abandon implies that you are familiar with these "matters" and knowingly or unknowingly turn away from them. Yet at the same time, they chose to continue in the paying of tithes down to the smallest detail. Perhaps that action brought them more public acclaim. Or maybe it was just easier. Our human flesh likes "easy". The Pharisees were all too human.

Judgment, mercy and faith – the "weightier matters", are much more private and therefore much more difficult to obey. These deal with your heart attitude. These are what Y'shua seeks in His followers. However, with these three you see one interesting point. They are not singular but rather linked to each other in a plurality of attitude (an echad [unity] of attitude, if you will). Let us examine each one individually and then see how they are linked together and applied in the lives of His people today... right in their home.

According to Scholars, who has completed an extensive reconstruction of the Book of Matthew from the DuTillet Hebrew version for his Semitic New Covenant Project, these three "weightier matters" are the Hebrew words, mishpat, khesed, and emunah. Mishpat means judgement or justice. Khesed is defined as loving-kindness, mercy or grace. Emunah translates as the English concept of trusting faithfulness. Trimm further states, "The Hebrew word for weightiest is khomerim, the plural of khomer (heavy, strict). Khomer was a technical halachic term, which Hillel used, in the First Rule of Hillel. The first rule of Hillel is kol v'khomer (light and heavy). This concept in Judaism recognizes for example that some mitzvot (commandments) hold greater weight than others. This is important because at times two commandments conflict and we must determine which one has priority."

Judgment is a word that is typically shied away from these days. "Judge not, that ye be not judged" (Matt 7:1). Who wants to "judge" when the tables will be turned one day? Furthermore, how can we properly "judge" when we no longer have any standards? When the foundation of Torah is removed, how do we define sin? So you see when we talk about judging, we are indeed in murky waters. Then why did our Messiah say that judgment was a "weightier matter" – even to the point of putting judgment on a parallel with faith. We must consider the audience. Remember that the legalistic Pharisees sat in Moses' seat. This was

indeed a seat that involved judgment (remember the first set of tablets?). The Pharisees, like Moses, sat in a seat of authority. The audience in Matthew 7 are the disciples. They had no earthly authority. Furthermore, Y'shua was teaching His students in Matthew 7 about how to live as one of His followers with each other on this earth. They had no authority to judge, the Pharisees did.

Judgment without mercy is legalism. It becomes condemnation and breeds an attitude of superiority. Merciful judgment is righteous judgment. Judgment without mercy is totalitarianism. The mercy of the Scriptures is one of clemency, ultimately found in the merciful gift of eternal life that Y'shua's death and resurrection provided for all who believe on Him. Mercy is not ignorance. Mercy is not allowance for wanton disobedience. Mercy is not a get out of jail free card, for the very act that placed one in jail undoubtedly had some price for others. Mercy is the very essence of our Messiah. One who was merciful enough to sit and teach His disciples for long periods of time following the Torah teaching method, "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up" (Deut 6:7). This kind of teaching takes dedication, patience and love. These same qualities can be found in true Scriptural mercy. Mercy should never be taken for granted or abused. Mercy should be cherished. Mercy must be honoured; and just like judgment, mercy is not a solo act. To come to the place where mercy is needed, one must first apply judgment; otherwise, there is no need for mercy. A prisoner has no use for clemency without first having received judgment. Judgment and mercy go hand-in-hand.

"Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen" (Heb 11:1). The third part of this equation is faith. For what good is our mercy without faith? Why do a merciful act if we do not have the faith that it will produce good fruit? Furthermore, why judge someone without the hope that the act of judgment will lead to true repentance. Your faith acts as the link between judgment and mercy. You cannot separate the three entities because they are dependent upon each other for their true fulfillment. We are all familiar with the verse, "faith without works is dead"; the works here are indeed judgment and mercy. These are works of the Mighty One of Israel. YHWH issues the judgment, we see the merciful sacrifice of Y'shua; and the thing that makes them both real to us is our faith – just like the empowering element of the echad is the Ruach haKodesh [Holy Spirit]. Indeed, in the "weightier matters" of judgment, mercy and faith, we can see a picture of the Father, Son and Spirit. Take one away and you diminish the other two, for they are inseparable.

The Death of the Prophets

"(29) Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites. (31) Wherefore ye be witnesses unto yourselves, that ye are the children of them which killed the Prophets. (32) Fill ye up then the measure of your fathers. (33) Ye serpents, ye generation of vipers, how can ye escape the damnation of hell?

As our gentle Saviour addressed the Pharisees here in Matthew 23, it was very apparent that He had no tolerance for the prideful sin that consumed the Jewish leaders. Most of us may find it difficult to concede that these same sins are rooted in our own lives. After all, most of us have never broadened our phylacteries or enlarged the borders of our garments (Matt 23:5). Most of us are not called "Rabbi" (Matt 23:7) and most of us don't have problems getting our dishes clean (Matt 23:25-26). Very few of you can say that someone in your recent lineage has killed a Prophet...or have they?

In reality, the sinful pride of the Pharisees in Matthew 23 dwells in the majority of us. But can it also be said that we are the children of them that killed the Prophets? Or to take it one step (generation) further, will it be said to our children that they are the children of those that killed the Prophets? Throughout history, it has been proven that it is easier to follow an evil world into hell than follow one righteous man into Heaven. Such was the time of Isaiah. Isaiah 8:11 says, "For YHWH spake thus to me with a strong hand, and instructed me that I should not walk in the way of this people..." "This people" "caused the inhabitants of the earth to be defiled, because they transgressed the Laws, changed the ordinances, and broke the everlasting covenant" (Isaiah 24:5). "This people" hated YHWH's precepts and would not listen to the warnings of the Prophets. Still today, "this people" transgress, change, and break the everlasting covenant: the ordinances of a holy Law. "This people" "killed" the pleading words of the Prophets who dedicated their lives to bringing repentance to an unrighteous people. The very words of our Father in heaven were spoken through the voices of the Prophets, but "this people" are not listening.

For those who have ears to hear, listen to the voice of YHWH as Jeremiah weeps for his people, "*Hear, O earth: behold, I will bring evil upon this people, even the fruit of their thoughts, because they have not hearkened unto My words, nor to My Law, but rejected it*" (Jer 6:19). In arrogance, the prideful but eloquent pastor preaches grace without repentance while the submissive Prophet is saying, "*They are not humbled even unto this day, neither have they feared, nor walked in My Law, nor in My statutes, that I set before you and before your fathers*" (Jer 44:10). Jeremiah was, in the people's words, a man "*worthy to die*" (Jer 26:11).

They hated his constant offering of reproof and rebuke. Can we, today, stand with Jeremiah when he says, "Surely our fathers have inherited lies, vanity, and things wherein there is no profit" (Jer 16:19)? Or will we stand with "this people" and say, this man is "worthy to die"?

There is no doubt that our world embraces the Babylonian culture that was prominent in Ezekiel's time; but do we have Prophets like Ezekiel who can speak to the pastors of our day and say, "*Her priests have violated My Law, and have profaned Mine holy things: they have put no difference between the holy and profane, neither have they shewed difference between the unclean and the clean, and have hid their eyes from My Sabbaths, and I am profaned among them*" (Ezek 22:26)? Still, many of you reading this Scripture cannot and will not recognise it as YHWH's Word spoken through a holy Prophet. Or you may say it is YHWH's Word, but spoken for another time and another people. "*For I am YHWH, I change not*" were the words of YHWH spoken through Malachi. YHWH told Ezekiel, "*I will make thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, that thou shalt be dumb, and shalt not be to them a reprobate: for they are a rebellious house*" (Ezek 3:26). It's as if the written words of the Prophets have been made dumb. They cannot reprove us because we are not listening! The words of Ezekiel will always be dead to a people who are in rebellion to His ways.

Ezekiel and the rest of YHWH's Prophets would not make the top ten list of choices for the pastor search committee. YHWH spoke through Isaiah saying, "(9) *That this is a rebellious people, lying children, children that will not hear the Law of YHWH: (10) Which say to the seers, See not; and to the Prophets, prophesy not unto us right things, speak unto us smooth things, prophesy deceits*" (Isaiah 30:9-10). This worldly flesh we have will fight to the end before it will succumb to the "right things" which will bring us to repentance. We enjoy the "smooth things" that make us feel good about who we are and where we are going. The "smooth things" teach us that once we have recited the "four spiritual laws", we are saved and at that moment we gain eternal security in heaven with a holy and righteous Elohim; and any abominable thing we do after that is covered by "the blood". As the spiritual leaders of this world "prophesy deceits", the Holy Prophets of YHWH are still crying out from the pages of the Scriptures, "*O that thou hadst hearkened to My commandments! Then had thy peace been as a river, and thy righteousness as the waves of the sea*" (Isaiah 48:18).

Can we stand before the judgment seat of YHWH and say, "We were ignorant of Your warnings!" YHWH said through Hosea, "*My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge: because thou hast rejected knowledge, I will also reject thee, that thou shalt be no priest to Me: seeing thou hast forgotten the Law of thy Elohim, I will also forget thy children*" (Hos 4:6). Many of our leaders have chosen to reject the Law of YHWH and say that it has been abolished and done away with. If you choose to stand with your priest, pastor, rabbi, family or friend and reject the word of the Prophets, you will also be destroyed.

The Word of YHWH came to Zechariah as he said, "*Yea, they (the priests) made their hearts as an adamant stone, lest they should hear the Law, and the words which YHWH hath sent in His Spirit by the former Prophets: therefore came a great wrath from YHWH*" (Zech 7:12). We have heard the false teachings from the pulpit and our religious periodicals for so long that our hearts have become as an adamant stone. When we see the truth of the Prophets next to the lies of the priest, we choose the lies because we cannot "hear the Law". When you come into agreement with these lies, you have "*made a covenant with death, and with hell*" and "*when the overflowing scourge (judgment) shall pass through*", you will say, "*it shall not come to us: for we have made lies our refuge, and under falsehood have we hid ourselves*" (Isaiah 28:15). The false teachings of the harlot church will cause many "good" people to knowingly and unknowingly make a covenant with death and hell; and just as it did from the beginning of time, it started with a lie. Shaul (Paul) said, "*With all deceivableness of unrighteousness in them that perish; because they received not the love of the truth, that they might be saved*" (2 Thes 2:10). If we do not love the truth, we cannot hear the truth; and if we do not love the truth, how can we be saved?

The voice of Isaiah was finally stopped when King Manasseh brutally put him to death. Tradition says he was sawed in half. Many of the Prophets died unmercifully in the hands of those that would not listen to their harsh reproofs any longer. When we do not heed the words of the Prophets, are we not participating in the death of those Prophets? Listen again as YHWH speaks through the unyielding Prophet, "*So shall My Word be that goeth forth out of My mouth: it shall not return unto Me void, but it shall accomplish that which I please, and it shall prosper in the thing whereto I sent it*" (Isaiah 55:11). Many pastors have used this verse to validate their own teachings, but please hear me: the Scripture says YHWH's Word, not man's words, will not return void.

Y'shua said, "*Think not that I am come to destroy the Law, or the Prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill*" (Matt 5:17). Many in the Messianic faith have held on to this verse to validate our understanding of the need to be obedient to YHWH's Torah. Our Messiah also established in this verse the importance of the Prophets. The key to understanding the Messiah lies in the words of the Torah and the Prophets. The

Prophets and Y'shua were sent to provoke us to love His ways through repentance (Ezek 4:16, Acts 3:19), to establish YHWH's Holy precepts in our hearts (Jer 31:33, Mark 4:14), to redeem us from a "perverse and crooked generation" (Deut 32:5, Luke 12:45), and to bring us back to the Holy land of Israel (Zech 14:17, Matt 10:6).

Y'shua said, "*There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when ye shall see Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, and all the Prophets, in the kingdom of Elohim, and you yourselves thrust out*" (Luke 13:28). If we continue to disregard the words of the Prophets and make "lies our refuge", there will be weeping when we see the Prophets – but then it will be too late. The grace that "man" preached about is gone; but the unbending, uncompromising stares of the Prophets will be a horrible sight as Y'shua says, "*I never knew you. Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity*" (Luke 13:27). "*How can ye escape the damnation of hell?*" (Matt 23:33).

Daniel prayed with fasting, sackcloth, and ashes for himself and his people. As I read this prayer, I realised that this plea for YHWH's mercy must also be our plea. It cannot be prayed in prideful arrogance, but with the humble, submissive attitude of the Prophet. Can we make Daniel's prayer our prayer – or have we killed yet another Prophet of YHWH? Come let us listen, and then agree with Daniel as he prays:

"O YHWH, the great and dreadful Elohim, keeping the covenant and mercy to them that love Him, and to them that keep His commandments; We have sinned, and have committed iniquity, and have done wickedly, and have rebelled, even by departing from Thy precepts and from thy judgments: Neither have we hearkened unto Thy servants the Prophets, which spake in Thy Name to our kings, our princes, and our fathers, and to all the people of the land. O YHWH, righteousness belongeth unto Thee, but unto us confusion of faces, as at this day; to the men of Judah, and to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and unto all Israel, that are near, and that are far off, through all the countries whither Thou hast driven them, because of their trespass that they have trespassed against Thee. O YHWH, to us belongeth confusion of face, to our kings, to our princes, and to our fathers, because we have sinned against Thee. To YHWH our Elohim belong mercies and forgivenesses, though we have rebelled against Him; Neither have we obeyed the voice of YHWH our Elohim, to walk in His Laws, which He set before us by His servants the Prophets. Yea, all Israel have transgressed Thy Law, even by departing, that they might not obey Thy voice; therefore the curse is poured upon us, and the oath that is written in the Law of Moses the servant of Elohim, because we have sinned against Him. And He hath confirmed His words, which He spake against us, and against our judges that judged us, by bringing upon us a great evil: for under the whole heaven hath not been done as hath been done upon Jerusalem. As it is written in the Law of Moses, all this evil is come upon us: yet made we not our prayer before YHWH our Elohim, that we might turn from our iniquities, and understand Thy truth. Therefore hath YHWH watched upon the evil, and brought it upon us: for YHWH our Elohim is righteous in all His works which He doeth: for we obeyed not His voice. And now, O YHWH our Elohim, that hast brought Thy people forth out of the land of Egypt with a mighty hand and hast gotten Thee renown, as at this day; we have sinned, we have done wickedly. O YHWH, according to all Thy righteousness, I beseech Thee, let Thine anger and Thy fury be turned away from Thy city Jerusalem, Thy holy mountain: because for our sins, and for the iniquities of our fathers, Jerusalem and Thy people are become a reproach to all that are about us. Now therefore, O our Elohim, hear the prayer of Thy servant, and his supplications, and cause Thy face to shine upon Thy sanctuary that is desolate, for YHWH's sake. O my Elohim, incline Thine ear, and hear; open Thine eyes, and behold our desolations, and the city which is called by Thy name: for we do not present our supplications before Thee for our righteousness, but for Thy great mercies. O YHWH, hear; O YHWH, forgive; O YHWH, hearken and do; defer not, for Thine own sake, O my Elohim: for Thy city and Thy people are called by Thy Name" (Dan 9:4-19)

23:35-36 Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar

*"(35) That upon you may come all the righteous blood shed upon the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel unto the blood of **Zacharias son of Barachias, whom ye slew between the temple and the altar.** (36) Verily I say unto you, All these things shall come upon this generation."*

Here is one of those cases that causes a problem for those who insist that the "New Testament" texts, as we have them, are absolutely free from any scribal error. According to 2 Chron 24:20-21, it was another Zechariah, the son of Jehoiada that was slain as such, not Zacharias the son of Barchias. (See the comments on this verse in the, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, by David Stern, for possible reasons for this error.)

Others say Abel and Zechariah (son of Barachias – Zech 1:1) in the Hebrew Tenach (OT), the first and last men to be murdered?

23:37 Even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings

"(37) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, thou that killest the prophets, and stonest them which are sent unto thee, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings, and ye would not!"

It is easy to overlook the fact that Y'shua uses a feminine analogy here. The "feminine" aspect of YHWH is something we discuss in Matt 28:19. Y'shua's sad words relate back to the previous parables, which though spoken more directly to the Pharisees, were also a condemnation of the people who blindly followed them.

It is interesting to note that Y'shua, who says he broods like a hen in this verse, was instrumental in creation. (John 1:3). The language of the Genesis account similarly states that the Spirit of Elohim also "brooded" over the waters at creation. Bringing these two together is the *Talmud* that says this Spirit of Elohim is the spirit of Messiah:

Midrash Rabbah, Genesis II:4: "*AND THE SPIRIT OF GOD HOVERED: this alludes to the spirit of Messiah, as you read, And the spirit of the Lord shall rest upon him (Isa. XI, 2).*"

23:38-39 Behold, your house is left unto you desolate

"(38) Behold, your house is left unto you desolate. (39) For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord."

A final rebuke, tying back to the metaphor of the fig tree in Matt 21:19.

End of Section VIII - Reprove and Rebuke

SECTION IX

TEACHING ON THE END TIMES

MATTHEW 24:1-51

TEXT:

- (1) "And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple.
- (2) And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down.
- (3) And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?
- (4) And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you.
- (5) For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many.
- (6) And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet.
- (7) For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places.
- (8) All these are the beginning of sorrows.
- (9) Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake.
- (10) And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another.
- (11) And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many.
- (12) And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold.
- (13) But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.
- (14) And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.
- (15) When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand:)
- (16) Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains:
- (17) Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house:
- (18) Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes.

- (19) And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!
- (20) But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the sabbath day:
- (21) For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.
- (22) And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened.
- (23) Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.
- (24) For there shall arise false Christs, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect.
- (25) Behold, I have told you before.
- (26) Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not.
- (27) For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
- (28) For wheresoever the carcase is, there will the eagles be gathered together.
- (29) Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken:
- (30) And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.
- (31) And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.
- (32) Now learn a parable of the fig tree; When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh.
- (33) So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors.
- (34) Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.
- (35) Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.
- (36) But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only.
- (37) But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
- (38) For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark,
- (39) And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be.
- (40) Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.
- (41) Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.
- (42) Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.
- (43) But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.
- (44) Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.
- (45) Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?
- (46) Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.
- (47) Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.
- (48) But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;
- (49) And shall begin to smite his fellowservants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;
- (50) The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,
- (51) And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

I will make a comparison between Matthew and the book of Revelation to prove that what Matthew wrote about what Y'shua said here in chapter 24 is exactly the same as what John the Revelator saw on the island of Patmos.

Please note that verse and chapter numbers were never inspired by the Holy Spirit, and were only introduced in the 1500's for reference and convenience' sake. During this section, you will notice that verses are divided (broken up) to keep the correct sequence.

24:1-2 There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down

"(1) And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple: and his disciples came to him for to shew him the buildings of the temple. (2) And Jesus said unto them, See ye not all these things? verily I say unto you, There shall not be left here one stone upon another, that shall not be thrown down."

It sounds strange to us that the disciples should come to *Y'shua* at this time and point out to him the beauty of the Temple buildings. He had often seen the Temple and the disciples had frequently been with Him as He taught in its courts. Why, then, this sudden interest in the buildings? It all grew out of the astonishment of these disciples at the recent actions of *Y'shua*. The chapter opens with the pregnant phrase, "*And Jesus went out, and departed from the temple.*" When He left the Temple on this occasion He never entered it again. He left it after having pronounced upon it a sentence of judgment, recorded in the closing words of chapter 23:

"(37) O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, killing the prophets and stoning those who are sent to you! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not! (38) Behold, your house [the Temple] is forsaken and desolate. (39) For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'" (Matt 23:37-39)

All of this comes at the close of the most blistering sermon He ever delivered. It was addressed to the legalistic scribes and the Pharisees, and consisted of a series of "woes" pronounced upon the hypocrisy of these religious leaders. They were supposed to be the teachers of the people but were actually hindering them from knowing the truth of YHWH. *Y'shua* began his ministry with a series of eight blessings (the Beatitudes, Matthew 5), and he ended it with a series of eight woes.

Cleansing the Temple

Y'shua cleansed the Temple of the money-changers for the second time after having completed this sermon. John recorded the first occasion (John 2:13-21), which occurred at the beginning of the Lord's ministry. Many do not realise that He did this twice; but Mark records that when He came to Jerusalem for the last week, He went into the Temple and began to drive out those who bought and sold. Further, Mark records a most significant action of *Y'shua*'s. Mark says, "*he would not allow anyone to carry anything through the temple*" (Mark 11:16).

This strongly suggests that he stopped the priests who bore vessels through the Temple in order to bring the blood of the sacrifices offered in the outer court into the holy place where it was to be sprinkled before the altar. *Y'shua* arrested this procession. He brought to a close, for the first time since the days of the Maccabees, the offerings of Israel! They were later resumed, but without meaning or divine sanction. When *Y'shua* Himself became upon the crucifixion stake "*the Lamb of God which takes away the sins of the world*", He thereby declared all other sacrifices as no longer of any meaning or value.

Then, having stopped the sacrifices, the next day *Y'shua* stood in quiet dignity and pronounced the official sentence of rejection.

"Behold, your house is forsaken and desolate. For I tell you, you will not see me again, until you say, 'Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.'"

Having said this, He left the Temple and the disciples went with him. Silently, they walked down through the valley of Kidron and up the other side to the Mount of Olives. There, *Y'shua* took His seat upon one of the rocks that overlooked the city and the Temple area. The disciples were troubled and confused. They could not understand His actions or His words concerning the Temple. The Temple was the center of the nation's life and they regarded it with holy awe as the very dwelling place of YHWH among His people. Its beauty was famous throughout the earth and they could not believe that YHWH would allow any harm to come to it. So they began to point out to *Y'shua* the strength and beauty of the Temple.

To this he responds with words which distress them even further:

"Truly I say to you, there will not be left here one stone upon another, that will not be thrown down."

They cannot believe that this will happen. They knew, of course, that the nation was under the bondage of Rome. They had no final authority in their own city or land. But it was well known that the Romans were lovers of temples. It was their boast that they preserved, if at all possible, the temples and monuments of any country they conquered. They had been in power in Palestine for many years and they had not destroyed the Temple. There seemed no good reason, therefore, why this Temple should ever be destroyed. But *Y'shua* solemnly assures them that there would not be one stone left standing upon the other.

In Luke 21:20, we have other details of this predicted overthrow of the city and the Temple. There *Y'shua* adds, "*But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its desolation has come near.*" Forty years later, the Roman armies under Titus came in and fulfilled the prediction to the very letter. With

Titus was a Jewish historian named Josephus who recorded the terrible story in minute detail. It was one of the most ghastly sieges in all of history. When the Romans came, the city was divided among three warring factions of Jews who were at each others' throats so much that they paid no heed to the approach of the Romans. Thus, Titus came up and surrounded the city while it was distracted by its own internece warfare. The Romans assaulted the walls again and again, and gave every opportunity to the Jews to surrender and save their capital from destruction.

During the long siege, a terrible famine raged in the city and the bodies of the inhabitants of the city were literally stacked like cordwood in the streets. Mothers ate their own children to preserve their own strength. The toll of Jewish suffering was horrible, but they would not surrender the city. Again and again, they attempted to trick the Romans through cunning and treachery. When at last the walls were breached, Titus tried to preserve the Temple by giving orders to his soldiers not to destroy or burn it. But the anger of the soldiers against the Jews was so intense that, maddened by the resistance they encountered, they disobeyed the order of their general and set fire to the Temple. There were great quantities of gold and silver which had been placed in the Temple for safekeeping. This melted and ran down between the rocks and into the cracks of the stones that formed the Temple and the wall around it. When the Roman soldiers finally took the city, in their greed to obtain this gold and silver they took long bars and pried apart these massive stones. Thus, quite literally, not one stone was left standing upon another. The Temple itself was totally destroyed; though the wall supporting the area upon which the Temple was built was left partially intact and a portion of it remains to this day, called the Western Wall.

In this remarkable fulfillment confirmed so strongly by secular history, is convincing proof that YHWH will fulfill every other part of this amazing message fully and literally. As Y'shua himself said later in the discourse, "*Heaven and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away.*" With the certainty of its fulfillment underscored so strongly, let us now note the clue to the structure of the discourse as given in these opening verses.

24:3 Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?

"And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying, Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world?"

There are actually three questions which the disciples ask Y'shua. The first is, "*Tell us, when will this be,*"

They mean, of course, the destruction of the Temple. As we have already seen, the answer is recorded by Luke. It would be when they saw Jerusalem surrounded by armies. A number of them were still living when Titus fulfilled the prediction.

The second question is, "*What will be the sign of your coming?*" The third is "[What will be the sign] of the close of the age?" These questions are perfectly natural in view of the instruction of Moses to ask for a sign when prediction is attempted. Without a doubt, there is a great deal of difference between what the disciples had in mind when they asked these questions and what we are thinking of when we read them. They asked out of confusion. There were many things they could not see or would not believe, and so their questions were difficult to answer. They were much like the little boy who asked his father: "Daddy, why does the sun shine in the daytime when we don't need it, and not at night when we do?" That kind of question is difficult to answer; not because the answer is so hard, but because the question is so wrong. To some degree, that was the problem here.

In many ways we can understand much better than they what their questions meant, for we have the history of twenty centuries to look back upon. Also, we accept the importance of Y'shua's death and resurrection, against which they were in revolt. Therefore, they could not understand all that he said to them. He had been puzzling them for months and they were now quite out of harmony with Him. He had told them plainly of His coming death and resurrection, but they refused to give heed. Since they would not allow themselves to face the terrible specter of his death, they could not have any clear idea of what He meant when He said He was coming again.

Thus, when they asked Him here about His coming, they did not have in mind a Second Advent. They did not picture a descent from heaven to earth, nor anything at all of what we mean when we speak of Y'shua's Second Coming. They had in mind a political revolution and the crowning of Y'shua as King and his subsequent presence among the nations as its acknowledged King and Messiah. They used a very interesting word for coming. It is the Greek word, "*parousia*." This word appears four times in this passage, in verses 3, 27, 37, and 39. It is not the usual word for coming. It means more than the mere arrival of some

person; it also implies his continuing presence after he arrives. This is important, for much of the understanding of this discourse will revolve around the meaning of this word. The English word "coming" appears other times in the message, but it is not the same Greek word and has a different meaning.

Even after the resurrection, these disciples were still asking Y'shua questions that reflected a political concept of his coming. In Acts 1:6 they asked, "*Lord, will you at this time restore the kingdom to Israel?*" They were obviously still thinking of a political rule over the nations of the earth. He did not deny that this will eventually occur, but simply reminded them that the times and seasons are the Father's prerogative to determine. Thus, when they asked him on the Mount of Olives, "*What will be the sign of your coming?*" it is not a question about His coming again, but of His presence in the nation as its king. But, as we shall see in Y'shua's answer, he treats it as a legitimate inquiry concerning his second advent.

The Close of the Age

They also ask for a second sign concerning the close of the age. It is not, as in the King James Version, "*the end of the world*". It has nothing to do with the end of the world. The world will go on for a long time after the events of the Olivet Discourse are fulfilled, but the age will end with those events. In this matter they were much more clearly informed, though they unquestionably felt that it was a time that lay immediately ahead. They were sure that they were living in days approaching the end of the age and that they were about to enter the events that would mark the close of the age.

We must remember that these men were well acquainted with the Old Covenant. They also had heard Y'shua teaching the parables of the kingdom (Matthew 13) and had heard him speak of a close of the age when he would send his angels throughout the earth to gather men to judgment. They knew the Old Covenant predictions of Messiah's rule and reign over the earth. Doubtless they knew, too, of Daniel's remarkable prophecy (Daniel 9) that there would be a period of 490 years, (seventy weeks of years, or 490 years), from the rebuilding of Jerusalem after the Babylonian captivity until the time of Messiah the Prince. From the prophecy they may well have known that the 490 years were almost completely expired, and it was little wonder that they expected the close of the age to be very near.

What they could not see and could not be expected to see was that there would occur a wide valley of time between the hour in which they asked their question and the close of the age in the far distant future. We cannot blame them for this, for it is difficult to distinguish the two comings of Y'shua in the Old Covenant prophecies. Peter wrote that the prophets foresaw "the sufferings of Christ and the subsequent glory". But to them it seemed as if they were one great event. What looked to them to be one great mountain range of fulfillment, were actually two widely separated ranges with a great valley of time in between.

For instance, in Isaiah 9 there is a well known prediction of a coming child. "*For to us a child is born, to us a son is given.*" That is a prophecy of Y'shua's First Advent as a baby in Bethlehem. But the rest of the verse says, "...and the government will be upon his shoulder, and his name will be called 'Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace.'"
That is clearly referring to his reign in the days of the kingdom which would cover the earth. It will not be fulfilled until Y'shua returns to earth again, but these two events are brought together into one verse with no hint of any intervening time.

Can you now understand why Y'shua did not mention the rapture of the Believers here in the beginning of chapter four? Many people therefore say there is no rapture of the church before the Tribulation period starts. I will explain with more reasons why it was not mentioned in the rest of the verses to follow.

Y'shua now takes their questions, and in answering them reverses the order. They asked about the sign of His presence and the sign of the end of the age. He answers the last one first. The sign of the close of the age is found in verse 15, "*the desolating sacrilege...standing in the holy place.*" We shall examine that much more fully later on. The sign of his coming is given in verse 30, "*then will appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven.*" This, too, we shall examine in detail in due course; but throughout this whole passage, Y'shua takes pains to make clear to His disciples that the end of the age lay far in the distant future.

Notice that Y'shua speaks to these men as though they would live to see all the events he predicts. Obviously, therefore, He is speaking to them as representative men. Some of them saw the destruction of Jerusalem as He had foretold it; but none would live to see the close of the age and none would pass through the Great Tribulation. They were uniquely representative men. They were representatives both of Israel and the church. At the time He spoke to them, they were Jewish believers – men of Israel, all of them. As such, they represented the nation and YHWH's dealings with that remarkable people. But after the crucifixion and Pentecost, they were Believers in Messiah, both Jew and non-Jew. They would then belong to a unique body which has a task to fulfill throughout the intervening centuries before the end times. Thus

the message includes truth for the church in its relationship to the present age, and also truth for Israel in its time of trouble to come at the end of the age. These disciples are representatives of both groups, and Y'shua speaks to them as such.

As Y'shua sits looking out over the city, he is facing the darkest hour of his life. He knows the scheming of His enemies and the opposition that even then is sharpening against Him from almost every quarter. He knows what Judas is planning. His enemies think they are doing their evil deeds in secret, but He knows it all. He knows the frailty of His friends and that He can never depend upon them. These very disciples who cluster around Him on the mountain will in a few hours forsake Him and flee. One of them will even deny Him with curses. He knows all that. He sees the darkness of the coming centuries, but He looks through them to the light beyond. When all around Him seems utterly hopeless, He quietly declares what the end will be without the slightest uncertainty or doubt.

All things, He says; all events will find their significance and meaning in relationship to Him. Any event which is not related to His purpose in the age is worthless and useless, without real meaning or significance.

24:4-5 Take heed that no man deceive you

"(4) And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. (5) For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." (Matt 24:4-5)

It is important to place this verse (as with all of the "New Testament") back into its Hebrew context. Y'shua is saying that many will come in His name.

John's "Antichrist"

The apostle John wrote at the close of the First Century, "For many [antichrists] have gone out into the world." As said, the term "antichrist" or "antimessiah" does not indicate someone who is openly against Messiah, such as an atheist or a pagan. Rather, it is one who appears instead of Messiah; and in this sense opposes the true Believers. It is a counterfeit Messiah.

Of course, it includes the originators or propagators of all the false cults which have arisen throughout the course of the age – beginning with the First Century. We have witnessed the rise of many in the last few decades, especially those with the label "Made in America" like Jehovah's Witnesses, Mormonism, Christian Science and others. These are outwardly "Christian" in language and activity; but their basic message is false, rejecting the true Messiah. Any person or organisation which purports to be godly in its outward aspects, but whose message is actually opposed to the true biblical faith is an "antichrist." It is the rise of these groups Y'shua predicts. What a peril to faith they have proved to be.

But by no means are these the most deceptive of the false voices. Perhaps Y'shua is thinking of even subtler expressions. We will miss the full meaning of His words if we look only for those who actually say, "I am the Messiah", or "We have the true Biblical message." Are they not more dangerous who claim to do what only Y'shua alone can really do? *"I am the Way"* says that lonely Man who died forsaken upon the crucifixion stake. *"We are the way"* say all the many voices that attract today: politics, patriotism, social work, literacy crusades, and churches with false doctrines and rejecting the *Torah*. Their claim is false, and many are deceived throughout the course of the age. They offer to lead men into peace without forgiveness, and thus are really evil masquerading as angels of light. How many are being misled by these siren voices which neglect the narrow way by which an individual is confronted with the person of Y'shua the Messiah – the one way to redemption and cleansing and forgiveness of sin?

The final "anti-Messiah" will also not come in opposition to Y'shua, but will be a counterfeit who will deceive almost everyone. Why must people take heed to not be deceived? The answer is in Rev 6:1-2:

- (1) *"And I saw when the Lamb opened one of the seals, and I heard, as it were the noise of thunder, one of the four beasts saying, Come and see."*
- (2) *"And I saw, and behold a white horse: and he that sat on him had a bow; and a crown was given unto him: and he went forth conquering, and to conquer."*

The final Antichrist person will make his debut at the beginning of the seven years of tribulation, immediately after the rapture of the Believers. Y'shua also said the same thing in John 5:43: *"I am come in my Father's name, and ye receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him ye will receive."*

The Antichrist will come very deceitfully through peace but, he will be the world's most brutal dictator ever! That is the reason why Y'shua warns us not to be deceived.

The Orthodox Jews are expecting their Messiah at any moment. (See explanation on "6 reasons why the Orthodox Jews will accept the Antichrist as their Messiah" in my book, '*Verse by Verse Explanation of the Revelation*').

According to the Orthodox Jews, the Messiah will have to fulfill Isaiah 11 (must be God-fearing) and Jer 23:5 (must come from the Tribe of Judah).

The Antichrist will show the world he has got all the power and ability:

The fact that there are no arrows (Rev 6:2) indicates that he will come in peace just as the Jews await the Messiah

The Antichrist will overwhelm mankind because he will:

"Be different from the first ones" (Dan 7:24);

"Have a mouth speaking pompous words" (Dan 7:8, 20, 25);

"Intend to change times and laws" (Dan 7:25);

"Understand sinister schemes" (Dan 8:23);

"His power shall be mighty, but not by his own power" (Dan 8:24);

"He shall destroy fearfully ... and the mighty and also the holy people" (Dan 8:24);

"He shall prosper and thrive" (Dan 8:24);

Shall "through his cunning cause deceit to prosper" (Dan 8:25);

Arrange extensive peace initiatives (1 Thes 5:3-4).

The crown (Rev 6:2) refers to great political power.

Now remember, this is immediately after the Rapture of the Church – there will be absolute chaos on earth at this point in time.

The world will be crying out for a man, a superman, a Messiah to restore order under a one-world-government.

This is the reason why the world drives with an unrestrained effort, towards a:

One-world-government (United Nations, the European Union and the Club of Rome).

One-world-religion (Parliament of World Religions).

One-world-monetary system (cash-less society, the Smart card/Debit card system; and finally the Microchip implant).

These are the reasons why Y'shua warned not to be deceived.

24:6-7a For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom

"(6) And ye shall hear of wars and rumours of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. (7a) For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom."

And from Revelation:

(3) *And when he had opened the second seal, I heard the second beast say, Come and see.*

(4) *And there went out another horse that was red: and power was given to him that sat thereon to take peace from the earth, and that they should kill one another: and there was given unto him a great sword.*"
(Rev 6:3-4)

24:7b And there shall be famines

"and there shall be famines",

And from Revelation:

(5) *"And when he had opened the third seal, I heard the third beast say, Come and see. And I beheld, and lo a black horse; and he that sat on him had a pair of balances in his hand.*

(6) *And I heard a voice in the midst of the four beasts say, A measure of wheat for a penny, and three measures of barley for a penny; and see thou hurt not the oil and the wine."* (Rev 6:5-6)

A major nuclear war (red horse), which kills millions of people in a short space of time, will have a devastating effect on the food chain. Secondly, if you do not accept the mark of the Beast (Rev 13:18), you will not be able buy or sell any food.

24:7c And pestilences,

"and pestilences", (Matt 24:7c)

And from Revelation:

- (7) "And when he had opened the fourth seal, I heard the voice of the fourth beast say, Come and see.
(8) And I looked, and behold a pale horse: and his name that sat on him was Death, and Hell followed with him. And power was given unto them over the fourth part of the earth, to kill with sword, and with hunger, and with death, and with the beasts of the earth." (Rev 6:7-8)

Sudden death of 25% of the world's population through war, famine and beasts will cause pestilences! Dead bodies of ±1.5 billion people will cause major pestilences and sicknesses to break out in a very short space of time.

24:7d-10 Earthquakes, beginning of sorrows, they deliver you up to be afflicted, hate one another

"(7d) and earthquakes, in divers places. (8) All these are the beginning of sorrows (in the beginning of the great tribulation at the midpoint). (9) Then shall they deliver you up to be afflicted, and shall kill you: and ye shall be hated of all nations for my name's sake. (10) And then shall many be offended, and shall betray one another, and shall hate one another."

And from Revelation:

- (9) "And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar (in heaven) the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held:
(10) And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?
(11) And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled." (Rev 6:9-10)
"And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them: and I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or in their hands..." (Rev 20:4)

Persecution on earth from the midpoint onwards (Great Tribulation) causes souls in heaven under the altar. These souls in heaven must wait till the full harvest comes out of the tribulation – they must wait for 3½ years.

Jewish literature is replete with examples of what will proceed the coming of the Messiah. These events are known as the "Footsteps of Messiah".

Talmud - Mas. Sotah 49b: "*In the footsteps of the messiah insolence will increase and honour dwindle. The vine will yield its fruit [abundantly] but wine will be dear. The government will turn to heresy and there will be none [to offer them] reproof. The meeting-place [of scholars] will be used for immorality. Galilee will be destroyed, Gablan desolated, and the dwellers on the frontier will go about [begging] from place to place without anyone to take pity on them. The wisdom of the learned will degenerate, fearers of sin will be despised, and the truth will be lacking. Youths will put old men to shame, the old will stand up in the presence of the young, a son will revile his father, a daughter will rise against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. The face of the generation will be like the face of a dog, a son will not feel ashamed before his father. So upon whom is it for us to rely? Upon our father who is in heaven.*"

Midrash Rabbah - The Song of Songs II:33: "The Rabbis say: In the generation in which the scion of David will come, the wise men of the generation will die and the rest will waste away with grief and sorrow and much trouble will come upon the community and cruel decrees will be promulgated, one coming on top of another. R. Nehorai said: 'In the generation in which the scion of David will come, the young will insult their elders and the old will rise before the young, as it says, The daughter riseth up against her mother, the daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; a man's enemies are the men of his own house (Micah VII, 6), and a son will feel no shame before his father'. R. Nehemiah said: 'Before the days of the Messiah there will be great poverty and scarcity, and the vine will cast its fruit and the wine will turn bad and the whole of the government will be converted to minuth and there will be no reproof'. R. Abba b. Kahana said: 'The scion of David will come only in a generation which is brazen-faced like a dog'. R. Levi said: 'The scion of David will come only in a generation which is full of impudence and deserves to be exterminated'. R. Jannai said: 'If you see one generation after another cursing and blaspheming, look out for the coming of the Messiah, as it

says, Wherewith Thine enemies have taunted, O Lord, wherewith Thine enemies he taunted the footsteps of Thine anointed (Ps. LXXXIX: 52), and immediately afterwards it is written, Blessed be the Lord for evermore, Amen and Amen'."

After the fifth seal is opened, the next seal is opened and speaks of a devastating earthquake. Verse 7 in Matthew 24 also mentions earthquakes.

- (12) And I beheld when he had opened the sixth seal, and, lo, there was **a great earthquake**; and the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood;
(13) And the stars of heaven fell unto the earth, even as a fig tree casteth her untimely figs, when she is shaken of a mighty wind.
(14) And the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together; and **every mountain and island were moved out of their places.**" (Rev 6:12-14)

Cosmic disturbances and earthquakes on earth will be the order of the day when this seal is opened.

24:11 And shall deceive many

"And many false prophets shall rise, and **shall deceive many.**"

Deception will be the order of the day! The rise of the False Prophet – he will be very active in the second half of the tribulation; his character is in the following verse in Rev 13:

"**And he doeth great wonders**, so that **he maketh fire come down from heaven** on the earth in the sight of men," (Rev 13:13)

But the build-up for the deception has already started in our day as well: When people come to a faith in Y'shua based in Torah, some of their worst enemies may be their friends and family – including those who think that they are the ones with the "truth" and that the Torah-observant person is even doing Satan's will (by supposedly bringing them under the "bondage of law").

For more information on how this is actually becoming a reality, see commentary in Signs of the Times - Growing Christian anti-Torah Hostility, in the Opinions Section of YashaNet.

24:12-13 But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved

"(12) And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold. (13) But **he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved.**"

Iniquity may be considered the same as sin, which is defined according to one standard – YHWH's Torah:

"Whosoever **committeth sin transgresseth also the law** [Torah]: for **sin is the transgression of the law** [Torah]." (1 John 3:4)

Torah is what we are to use as our criteria to know if we are following YHWH:

"But whoso looketh into the **perfect law** [Torah] of liberty, and continueth therein, he being not a forgetful hearer, **but a doer of the work** [Torah], this man shall be blessed in his deed". (James 1:25)

Those who missed the rapture and endure to the end of the 7 years of tribulation in faith of Y'shua and be doers of the Torah will be saved. That is, if you run the race to the end and if you do not accept the 666 mark.

Y'shua places a stipulation which we are to endure. The idea of some "guaranteed salvation" based on simply "what you believe" is foreign to the Hebrew Scriptures.

Paul did not even make such a claim for himself:

- (11) "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection of the dead.
(12) Not as though I had already attained, either were already perfect: but I follow after, if that I may apprehend that for which also I am apprehended of Y'shua Jesus.
(13) Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before,

(14) I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Y'shua Jesus." (Phil 3:11-14)

24:14 This gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come."

The 144,000 virgin Jewish men are sanctified and sealed personally by YHWH at the midpoint before the Great Tribulation period starts. They then spread the Gospel in a dark world during the last 3½ years of the tribulation period, i.o.w. the Great Tribulation. They will minister throughout the Great Tribulation period until Y'shua comes at the end of the Tribulation Period at the Battle of Armageddon to put an end to everything.

Rev 7:1-8 – The sealing of the 144,000 to start their work.

Rev 14:1-5 – At the completion of their work, at the end of the Great Tribulation period they are raptured into heaven.

Y'shua makes it clear that the Gospel message does not reach the ends of the earth until the very last days before He returns. This is the Torah-based Gospel that He and the original community of believers preached.

The false Messiah (Antichrist), being a man of "lawlessness" (2 Thes 2:3) and his followers will preach a Torah-less "Gospel" in the name of "God".

Matt 24:3-14 then, gives us an overview of the entire 7-years of tribulation. From verse 15 through to 31, Y'shua describes the 'Great Tribulation' in more detail!

24:15 When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation

"When ye therefore shall see the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, stand in the holy place, (whoso readeth, let him understand)".

No book of the Old Covenant has been so unfavourably dealt with by the critics as the Book of Daniel. The validity of its authorship by Daniel has been scorned and it has been ascribed to some unknown writer who lived no more than a 100 to 160 years before Y'shua; its prophetic content has been flatly denied; and in many ways it has been more violently attacked than any other book in the Bible. Yet it is sheer, presumptive arrogance for any alleged disciple of Y'shua to take a view of Scripture that contradicts the view of the Master. Y'shua here clearly regards the Book of Daniel as a valid prophecy inspired by the Holy Spirit and accurate in detail.

The sign YHWH refers to is mentioned in Daniel at least three times. It is the sign of a man, a man who offers himself to the Jews to be worshipped as YHWH. The disciples clearly understood that He was referring to the predictions in Daniel of the coming of a man who would take away the continual burnt-offering of the Jews and instead offer himself as "the abomination which makes desolate" or the desolating blasphemy. That man is described in Dan 8:23-26:

(23) "And at the latter end of their rule, [that is, the rule of certain kings who will come upon the world's scene in the Middle East], when the transgressors have reached their full measure, [that marks the time when evil has come to its full expression], a **king of bold countenance, one who understands riddles, shall arise.**

(24) His power shall be great, and he shall cause fearful destruction, and shall succeed in what he does, and destroy mighty men and the people of the saints.

(25) By his cunning he shall make deceit prosper under his hand, and in his own mind he shall magnify himself. Without warning he shall destroy many; and he shall even rise up against the Prince of Princes; but, by no human hand, he shall be broken.

(26) The vision of the evenings and the mornings which has been told is true; but seal up the vision, **for it pertains to many days hence.**" (RSV)

Note that Daniel was told that the vision was not concerning his own days but "pertains to many days hence". Many critics insist that this was fulfilled in the turbulent days of the Maccabees in 168-165 B.C., when a Syrian king (Antiochus Epiphanes) did indeed desecrate the Temple in Jerusalem, offered a sow upon the altar and erect a statue of Jupiter to be worshipped. But though that was undoubtedly a historic foreview of the final "abomination of desolation", it could not have been the fulfillment of Daniel's prophecy.

Otherwise, Y'shua would not have said in more than 165 years after Antiochus that men could yet expect to see "**the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet**, stand in the holy place".

Another reference in Daniel to this profanity is found in chapter 9. It is in the midst of the tremendous prophecy that is called the "the vision of the seventy weeks". This was an announcement to Daniel by the angel Gabriel that YHWH had marked off a period of 490 years (seventy weeks of years) which would begin when the Persian king, Artaxerxes, issued a commandment to rebuild the walls of Jerusalem (fulfilled in 445 B.C.). It would terminate with a period of terrible trouble, during which a coming prince would cause the Temple sacrifice and offering to cease; and would thus establish the abomination which makes desolate.

The angel said that first seven and then sixty-two of those weeks (a total of 483 years) would end just before the Messiah would be "cut off". A period of indeterminate length would then intervene before the 70th or final week (seven years). The angel said that first seven and then sixty-two begin. During that indeterminate period, the city of Jerusalem would be destroyed and the Jews would endure wars and desolations until the end. The actual words are these in Dan 9:26-27:

(26) **"And after the sixty-two weeks, an anointed one [literally, Messiah] shall be cut off, and shall have nothing; [that is clearly the crucifixion] and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.** [This was fulfilled forty years after the crucifixion]. **Its end shall come with a flood, and to the end there shall be war; desolations are decreed.**

(27) **And he [the prince who is to come] shall make a strong covenant with many for one week; and for half of the week he shall cause sacrifice and offering to cease; and upon the wing of abominations shall come one who makes desolate,** [the abomination of desolation], **until the decreed end is poured out on the desolator.**" (RSV)

One further glimpse of this remarkable "prince who is to come" is given in Dan 11:36-39. There he is called simply "the king".

(36) **"And the king** shall do according to his will; he shall exalt himself and magnify himself above every god, and shall speak astonishing things against the God of gods. He shall prosper till the indignation [the great Tribulation] is accomplished; for what is determined shall be done.

(37) **He shall give no heed to the gods of his fathers, or to the one beloved by women;** he shall not give heed to any other god, for he shall magnify himself above all.

(38) **He shall honor the god of fortresses instead of these;** a god whom his fathers did not know he shall honor with gold and silver, with precious stones and costly gifts.

(39) **He shall deal with the strongest fortresses by the help of a foreign god;** those who acknowledge him he shall magnify with honor. He shall make rulers over many and shall divide the land for a price." (RSV)

All of these passages in Daniel agree concerning the coming of a man who shall be the fulfillment of YHWH's prediction and shall be the sign of the end of the age. Y'shua confirms what Daniel prophesied about the defiling of the Temple in the last days (Daniel chapter 9), at the midpoint of the Tribulation period when the Antichrist breaks the seven year peace-pact (Dan 9:27). All this happens because of a war that takes in the spiritual realm in heaven.

Rev 12:7-13 – At the midpoint of the Tribulation period, Satan is thrown out of heaven, he incarnates the body of the Antichrist and starts to persecute Israel and Believers severely.

Rev 13:14-18 – The false prophet makes an image of the Antichrist in the Temple, introduces the 666-system, and forces the people to worship the Antichrist.

(1) **"Now concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our assembling to meet him, we beg you, brethren,**

(2) **not to be quickly shaken in mind or excited, either by spirit or by word, or by letter purporting to be from us, to the effect that the day of the Lord has come.**

(3) **Let no one deceive you in any way; for that day will not come, unless the rebellion comes first, and the man of lawlessness is revealed,** the son of perdition,

(4) **who opposes and exalts himself against every so-called god or object of worship, so that he takes his seat in the temple of God, proclaiming himself to be God.**

(5) **Do you not remember that when I was still with you I told you this?" (2 Thes 2:1-4 - RSV)**

The Antichrist comes as the Messiah in the beginning of the seven year Tribulation period, but at the midpoint of the seven years he elevates himself to that of YHWH and demands to be worshipped as YHWH! He then changes from a global peacemaker to brutal vicious dictator. Why?

As said previously, because of a war that takes place in the spiritual realm in heaven where Satan is defeated and thrown out of heaven forever. He is now routed to earth and all his focus is on the people of the earth. That activates the Great Tribulation period.

Let us now examine Dan 9:27 in detail:

The 'week' of Dan 9:27

The word 'week' is shabuwa in Hebrew and hebdomas in Greek, which means a period of '7 years' in Jewish language – in the same sense when we say 'decade' for 10 years in English.

First, where will the Antichrist come from?

The answer is in Dan 9:26: ".....and the **people** of the prince that shall come **shall destroy the city and the sanctuary**"

"The people" that destroyed Jerusalem and the Temple in Y'shua's time was the Roman Empire. This, then, means "the prince that shall come" (the Antichrist) must also come from the same geographical area as of the old Roman Empire – which is the E.U. of today. (See my detailed explanation on the important role that the E.U. plays, in my book 'Verse by Verse Explanation of the Revelation').

Let us now move on to verse 27 of Daniel chapter 9 and look at what "...the prince that shall come..." (from verse 26 - the Antichrist) will do during the seven years of tribulation:

"(27) he shall **confirm** (reinforce not make - this is proof that the peace pact must be signed before the Antichrist makes his début) the **covenant** (peace pact) with **many** (many nations) for **one week** (7 years): and **in the midst of the week** (3½ years later) **he shall cause the sacrifice and the oblation to cease** (stop all Jewish morning and afternoon animal sacrifices in the Temple - this is solid proof that the Temple will be rebuilt, as the Jews will not sacrifice unless they have a Temple!), and **for the overspreading of abominations he shall make it desolate** (he will defile the Temple when he declares himself God in the Temple and demands worship - 2 Thes 2:4)"

That day is fast approaching us. Personally, I believe that what is happening in our world today is preparing the way to the "abomination that causes desolation".

Once the Third Temple is dedicated, there is no way that the Levitical Priesthood will allow anyone or anything to enter it that is not specifically authorised in the book of the law; in fact, not even a Gentile is allowed to enter the Jewish courts of the Temple. Anyone attempting to do this will bring about a major confrontation between themselves, the guards of the Temple, the worshipers, and the priesthood. The Antichrist will do this by brute force.

24:16-19 Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains

"(16) **Then let them which be in Judea flee into the mountains:** (17) Let him which is on the housetop not come down to take any thing out of his house: (18) Neither let him which is in the field return back to take his clothes. (19) And woe unto them that are with child, and to them that give suck in those days!"

Who are they who must flee so urgently? Who dare not hesitate long enough even to go back into the house to pick up belongings, but must immediately head for the hills? There is no need to wonder, for YHWH says plainly, "those who are in Judea." Now Judea is a geographical part of the land of Israel – ancient Palestine. It comprises the hill country surrounding the city of Jerusalem and includes the city as well. It is to the residents of Jerusalem and Judea that this warning is addressed.

Furthermore, Y'shua's mention of the Sabbath (verse 20) establishes the fact that these residents of Judea are Jews. He urges them to pray that their flight will not be in the winter with its distress of cold, or on the Sabbath with its travel limitations; for Jews are allowed to travel only a short distance on a Sabbath day (see verse 20). Later in this passage these Jews are called "the elect" ("for the sake of the elect those days will be shortened"), and this makes it clear they are believing Jews; that is, men and women of faith who know and love Y'shua as Lord and are prepared to live or die for Him.

They are not Believers in the usual sense of that term, referring to those who are members of the church, for we are told that in the church there is neither Jew nor non-Jew, bond nor free. Jews are not to be distinguished from non-Jews within the "assemble". These distinctions, we are precisely told by the apostle

Paul, have been invalidated in the "body". The "middle wall of partition" has been eliminated; there are no distinctions of background, race or religious training that are recognised within the body of Believers of Y'shua, because they follow the "one and same" covenant.

Here, then, will be a class of people who cannot be identified with the present day "body". They will be Jewish believers in Y'shua who will be converted after the removal of the "bride" at the time when the Great Tribulation starts, when the Antichrist elevates himself from Messiah to that of YHWH and demands to be worshipped as YHWH. That will open the Orthodox Jews' eyes when the Antichrist disregards Isaiah chapter 11.

Why must they flee so suddenly? Because of the sudden enforcement of the 666 system, and the fact that they will be beheaded if they do not take the mark (Rev 20:4). People will be fleeing without taking any belongings!

Rev 12:14-17 – Detail of Israel's flight into the wilderness for a time (=1), times (=2), and half a time (=½), meaning the last 3½ years.

Daniel gives us more detail of Israel's flight into the wilderness, into Jordan:

"He (Antichrist) shall come into the glorious land (Israel). And tens of thousands shall fall, **but these shall be delivered out of his hand: Edom** (south-western Jordan) and **Moab** (central-western Jordan) and **the main part of the Ammonites** (northern-western Jordan)". (Dan 11:41)

24:20 But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day

"**But pray ye that your flight be not in the winter, neither on the Sabbath day:**" (Matt 24:20)

The Jews are currently busy with arrangements to reform the Sanhedrin as it was in Y'shua's time. An advert was placed in the leading newspapers of the world for the seventy top rabbis to reform the Sanhedrin.

One of the 613 laws is that you are not allowed to travel more than ± a thousand paces on any Sabbath. Because of this law, the Jews will flee for only a thousand paces and then stop and be killed. The verses also mention winter – the winter in Jerusalem also gets extremely cold with snow at times.

24:21-22 For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be

"(21) **For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.** (22) And except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved: but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened."

This is speaking of the last 3½ years of the Tribulation period – the Great Tribulation. This is the time from when the Antichrist breaks the 7-year peace-pact (when war breaks out at the midpoint - possibly the second seal – red horse), until Y'shua comes back for the Battle of Armageddon (Rev 19).

This is the time when all hell literally breaks loose on earth. Y'shua reveals the truth. He says it will be different at the end of the age. Then evil will reign in triumphant, malicious glee. All bonds will be broken, restraints will be cast aside, and lawlessness will fill the earth. YHWH will move in judgment and terrible catastrophes will sweep the earth, but still man will not repent. Fear will not drive men to prayer but to further defiance. They will not wish to be delivered but only to be destroyed. They will take no delight in good, but will be happy at the triumph of evil.

It is easy to document this by three very vivid pictures from the book of Revelation. The larger part of that book traces the course of events in the Great Tribulation. It especially reveals the condition of human hearts during the time of worldwide crisis. They may not be very far removed in time as we are drawing nearer to them all the time; but we have not yet reached the point of such blatant, unblushing and worldwide delight in evil.

24:23-24 Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not

"(23) **Then if any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or there; believe it not.** (24) For there shall arise false Christ's, and false prophets, and shall shew great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect."

The Antichrist and False Prophet will do major deception – the False Prophet will deceive the people to such extent by calling fire down from heaven (the details are in Rev 13.)

Those whose faith is grounded in Torah will be less likely to be deceived, as Torah is YHWH's truth. Any concept of "faith" that is independent of YHWH's Torah is a lie. YHWH will allow those rejecting this truth to be deceived:

"And for this cause **God shall send them strong delusion, that they should believe a lie:** That they all might be damned **who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness.**" (2 Thes 2:11-12)

"Unrighteousness" is defined solely by YHWH's Torah.

But do not miss the timely word with which Y'shua opens this section, "Then if any man shall say unto you," etc. "Then" clearly refers to the time of the Great Tribulation which Y'shua has briefly but terribly described with the words, "if those days had not been shortened, no human being would be saved." As we have seen, this is the last three and one-half years of Daniel's predicted seventieth week. The 144,000 will be very active in their world-wide ministry, and perhaps also to that "great multitude" of Gentile believers (the lost sheep of the house of Israel) who will come out of the Great Tribulation.

As a result of this rather unusual state of affairs, rumours will apparently spread like wildfire that Y'shua is somewhere around.

In John 7:11, 32-36 Y'shua himself predicted a situation like this that would occur during the forty-day period after his resurrection:

- (11) "The Jews were looking for him at the feast, and saying, "**Where is he?**" [There's the question again! A little further on John says:]
(32) The Pharisees heard the crowd thus muttering about him, and the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to arrest him.
(33) Jesus then said, 'I shall be with you a little longer, and then I go to him who sent me;
(34) you will seek me and you will not find me; where I am you cannot come.'
(35) The Jews said to one another, 'Where does this man intend to go that we shall not find him? Does he intend to go to the Dispersion among the Greeks and teach the Greeks?
(36) What does he mean by saying, 'You will seek me and you will not find me,' and, "where I am you cannot come'?"

To these Jews, Y'shua was nothing but a rabble-rousing, troublemaker from Nazareth and they intended to put him to death as quickly as possible. Y'shua knew this and knew that they would succeed in their plans. But now He puzzled them completely by telling them that after they had done their worst, they would look for him but would not be able to find him. That could have only been true during His forty-day post-resurrection ministry. After He ascended into the heavens, they did not look for Him because the disciples were then declaring throughout Jerusalem that He had gone to the Father. But during that forty-day period, there must have been many disquieting rumours which came to the authorities' ears that Y'shua was still somewhere around.

When the soldiers came from the grave of Y'shua with the report that he had risen from the dead, they had to be bribed to say that his disciples had come and stolen his body away and thus to quiet that rumour. But soon other rumours were buzzing. Mysterious appearances of Y'shua to his disciples were reported and the authorities must have sent other search parties to try to locate him. But as Y'shua had predicted, they searched for him but they could not find him. They could never understand the reason, but it was exactly as he had said, "Where I am going you cannot come". It was impossible for them to intrude in the new relationship to his own into which he had entered.

During that forty-day period, the disciples of Y'shua were what we might call "Pre-church Believers". They believed in Y'shua but they were not yet members of the "church", for the "church" was not formed until the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was poured out. During the close of the age, the disciples (or as Y'shua calls them, "the elect") will be what we might call "Post-church Believers". The "church" has been removed from the world – at least from any visible participation in world affairs. Since we know that Believers will be given glorified bodies like Y'shua's (and Paul says that, once removed from this life, the Believers will be forever "with the Lord"), the church Believers will join Y'shua in heaven behind the scenes during the tribulation. Rumors of His presence will continually be spread abroad because of their desire to meet Him, so

that men will be saying in that day as they said during the forty-day period, "Where is he?" Authorities will search for Him and will not be able to find Him, but false prophets will claim to know where He is.

Masters of Deceit

Part of the tribulation of the end times will be a fresh and powerful campaign of deceit which will break out against any who are tempted to believe in Y'shua. Just as Y'shua foresaw and described the great forces of deceit which would be at work until the close of the age arrived, so he also described the Great Tribulation. Their first element will be the presence of authoritative personalities. "False Christs and false prophets will arise" (Matt 24:24). No program of falsehood among men ever existed without a masterful or powerful leader. The human heart inveterately loves a good showman. Men tend to easily follow those who speak with authority and who manifest drive and dash in his personality. And there is no road to error quite so compelling as a religious one. History confirms the idea that more people are misled religiously than any other way. Let a blatant atheist utter an attack against Christianity and no one is greatly disturbed or changed. But let a bishop of the church, dressed in religious garb and using pious language say the same thing and immediately it is discussed and openly or secretly admired all over the world.

So "false Christs shall arise" taking full advantage of the superstitious expectancy of the times; for as Y'shua said in another place, "Men [will be] fainting with fear and with foreboding of what is coming in the world". They will come with a display of signs and wonders, misleading many and playing ultimately into the hand of the Lawless One.

Not only will there be "false Christs" but also "false prophets". We have already seen that this can be in a secular sense; the pace-setters of thought, the philosophers, professors, scientists; clever men of great intelligence who are listened to when they talk. While the "church" is yet on earth, it acts as salt in pervading every section of life; and there are men of true faith found among the prophets of the world everywhere today. But in that day there will no longer be room for the Gospel of the supernatural; there will be no place among intellectuals for what Paul calls a "secret and hidden wisdom of God" which none of the princes of this world knew; for had they known it, they would never "have crucified the Lord of Glory" (1 Cor 2:7, 8).

Since there will no longer be a place among the leaders of the world for those who live by faith, there will arise men of tremendous intellectual capacity and ability who will become the instruments of error (false prophets) who will convince millions that the lie of the Antichrist is the only reasonable basis for life.

In addition to the pull of masterful personalities will be the power of persuasive propaganda in the last days. As we have already noted, powerful rumours of the mysterious presence of Y'shua will sweep the nations. There will be many who will claim to have authoritative information as to where He may be found. They will offer themselves as privileged companions of Y'shua, claiming that they alone may be trusted to lead the seeker to him.

False prophets will reveal their offer to various longings of the heart. To some who have grown tired of the rat race of life and are especially fed up with city living, they will say: "Lo, he is in the wilderness". They will suggest that the nature of the Messiah's message is a call to return to nature, to simplify life and get back to the primitive struggle of wrestling with the elements.

Others will make an appeal to the lust for knowledge. They will say that the Y'shua can only be found in the race to unlock the mysteries of the universe. The answer will be found in the inner rooms of knowledge. When we know what we are and who we are and how we operate, then we will be able to find the mysterious presence of the Messiah. "He is in the inner rooms, if anywhere at all".

Does this sound familiar? At the end of the age, it will not be necessary to invent any new ideas. It will only be necessary to boost the ones that are already current in life.

24:25-26 Behold, I have told you before

"(25) **Behold, I have told you before.** (26) Wherefore if they shall say unto you, Behold, he is in the desert; go not forth: behold, he is in the secret chambers; believe it not."

Be warned of the global peacemaker who will brutally kill everybody not accepting the mark, or his name, or the number!!!

24:27 For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west

"For as the lightning cometh out of the east, and shineth even unto the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be."

All the hosts of heaven will accompany him. The brightness of his glory would have put the sun to shame had it been shining on the earth. It will be dark from the cloud shroud around the earth. Then all of a sudden something happens that lightens the entire globe!!! From out of the northern hemisphere...approaching the battleground...Y'shua pierces the black sky in all His glory!!! Dark clouds will open, an inexplicable bright light (seven times brighter than the sun) will burst through and Y'shua, the saints and the holy angels will be seen.

Y'shua leads the saints on the cobblestones of glory towards Jerusalem. Our Saviour returns descending with power and great glory. All mankind will see His coming. (I believe not through the world's television networks, as some commentators would have us believe; but rather through sheer Divine power and revelation, as explained later in my book "The End by God".) Words fail me in attempting to describe this glorious event; perhaps someone could suggest a piece of music that could more appropriately describe the awe and wonder that this inspires in all of us. Psalm 97:6: "The heavens declare his righteousness, and all the people **see his glory.**" Enoch and Moses prophesied that Y'shua would return with millions of his saints – they saw the Bride of Y'shua!!! Jude 14: "And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, **the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints** (the Bride),"

"And he said, The LORD **came from Sinai**, and **rose up from Seir** (south-eastern approached) **unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran**, and he came with **ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went a fiery law for them.**" (Deut 33:2)

"(4) **His lightnings enlightened the world: the earth saw**, and trembled. (6) The heavens declare his righteousness, **and all the people see his glory.**" (Psalm 97:4, 6)

"And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and **all flesh shall see it together:** for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it." (Isaiah 40:5)

"So shall they fear the name of the LORD **from the west**, and **his glory from the rising of the sun** (east). When the enemy shall come in like a flood, the Spirit of the LORD shall lift up a standard against him." (Isaiah 59:19)

"And, behold, **the glory of the God of Israel came from the way of the east**: and his voice was like a noise of many waters: and **the earth shined with his glory.**" (Ezek 43:2)

"And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and **the LORD my God shall come, and all the saints with thee.**" (Zech 14:5)

"And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and **they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.**" (Matt 24:30)

"**When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him**, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:" (Matt 25:31)

"When Christ, who is our life, shall appear, **then shall ye** (the bride of Y'shua) **also appear with him in glory.**" (Col 3:4)

"To the end he may stablish your hearts unblameable in holiness before God, even our Father, **at the coming** ("parousia" – coming where every eye will see Him) **of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints** ("saint" or "holy ones" as some Bibles put it, is "hagios" in Greek, which is (as Paul describes it) believers in Y'shua – the Bride). (1 Thes 3:13)

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and **he** (Y'shua) that sat upon him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he doth judge and make war." (Rev 19:11)

"**And the armies which were in heaven followed him** upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean." (Rev 19:14)

It is interesting to note that Y'shua will come from the same area as from where Moses came into the Promised Land:

"For my sword shall be bathed in heaven: behold, **it shall come down upon Idumea** (south western Jordan), and upon the people of my curse, **to judgment.**" (Isaiah 34:5)

This is when Y'shua returns at the end of the seven years of tribulation for the Battle of Armageddon to judge the nations! This is also the fulfilment of the Lord's Prayer, "Let your kingdom come, let your will be done on earth as is in heaven."

24:28 There will the eagles be gathered together

"For wheresoever the carcase is, **there will the eagles be gathered together.**" (Matt 24:28)
Birds will feast on the flesh of the wicked at the Battle of Armageddon! Rev 19:17-19 gives us the same detail:

- (17) "And I saw an angel standing in the sun; and he cried with a loud voice, **saying to all the fowls that fly in the midst of heaven, Come and gather yourselves together unto the supper of the great God;**
(18) That ye may eat the flesh of kings, and the flesh of captains, and the flesh of mighty men, and the flesh of horses, and of them that sit on them, and the flesh of all men, both free and bond, both small and great.
(19) And I saw the beast, and the kings of the earth, and their armies, gathered together to make war against him that sat on the horse, and against his army." (Rev 19:17-19)

It is no surprise that flesh-eating birds are currently increasing at an unnatural tempo in Israel

24:29 The sun be darkened

"Immediately after the tribulation of those days shall **the sun be darkened**, and the moon shall not give her light, and the stars shall fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens shall be shaken."

The sun will be darkened at the end of the tribulation period. We also see it at the fifth vial judgment, which is at the end of the Tribulation period (Rev 16:10-11).

Massive earthquakes will now devastate the world – islands and mountains will simply disappear.

- (17) "And the seventh angel poured out his vial into the air; and there came a great voice out of the temple of heaven, from the throne, saying, It is done.
(18) And there were voices, and thunders, and lightnings; and **there was a great earthquake, such as was not since men were upon the earth, so mighty an earthquake, and so great.**
(19) And the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell: and great Babylon came in remembrance before God, to give unto her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of his wrath.
(20) And **every island fled away, and the mountains were not found.**
(21) And there fell upon men a great hail out of heaven, every stone about the weight of a talent: and men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail; for the plague thereof was exceeding great." Rev 16:17-21

24:30 And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven

"**And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven:** and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory."

In Rev 19 we also see Y'shua coming back to earth to destroy the Antichrist and False Prophet. Y'shua will then put his feet on the Mount of Olives (Zech 14:1-7).

The term: "tribes of the earth" is an incorrect translation. Y'shua is speaking of a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy. The correct translation is tribes of "the land" (of Israel):

- (10) "And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourneth for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn.
(11) In that day shall there be a great mourning in Jerusalem, as the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon.
(12) And the land shall mourn, every family apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Nathan apart, and their wives apart;" (Zech 12:10-12)

The twelve tribes who repented will be waiting at the Eastern Gate because they will know that the Scripture says that the Messiah will come through the Eastern Gate (Ezek 43:1-2). They will be waiting here at this gate whilst crying out for him:

"(39) For I say unto you, Ye shall not see me henceforth, **till ye shall say, Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the Lord.**" (Matt 23:39)

Also see verse 27's explanation.

24:31 They shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other

"And he shall send his angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and **they shall gather together his elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other.**"

The "gathering of the elect" is a fulfillment of Zechariah's prophecy (above). YHWH will re-gather all of Israel to their Messiah and to the land of Israel. The "trumpet" is representative of the Shofar, which is found throughout Hebrew literature that is concerned with Messiah and the "end times".

The wicked people and the elect will be gathered. Then the wicked will be destroyed in the Valley of Jehosaphat – also called the Valley of Decision (Joel 3:1-14).

The blood will be flowing up to the horse's bridles during this one day battle (Rev 14:20). The enthroned Messiah carries out judgment on nations with angelic support: this is the Battle of Armageddon. Many parables speak of the same judgment.

Good seeds were sown, but the enemy came and sowed tares amongst the wheat (Matt 13:24-30, 36-43). The Master said to leave the wheat and the tares till harvest time when the reapers will be directed to collect the tares first, and then the wheat will be taken into his barn.

Y'shua was referring to the sheep and goat nations during the Tribulation period that will be separated at the Battle of Armageddon and where only the goat nations will be destroyed (Matt 25:31-36)

Goat nations are those against Israel during the Tribulation period.

Sheep nations are those supporting Israel during the Tribulation period.

A common Jewish belief was that all people would die before YHWH instituted His Kingdom and the World to Come (Olam Haba). This is not the case – some would enter the Kingdom of YHWH without dying first.

Now what about the Rapture of the Believers?

Because Y'shua did not mention the rapture in the beginning of chapter 24, many people say there is no rapture of the Believers before the Tribulation period starts. Let me give you the reason why it was not mentioned.

When Y'shua gave His disciples the signs of the end times, it was yet before his crucifixion. The Olivet Discourse was given to the disciples by Y'shua days or even weeks before His death on the crucifixion stake. The disciples had no idea who and what the church would be at that stage. The NT church began only fifty days after Y'shua's death.

How could Y'shua explain the church to them – something which they at that stage would not understand; and on top of that, that the church will be raptured into heaven in a split second.

The disciples could not even understand what Y'shua tried to explain to them, when he said he will 'rebuild the Temple within three days' (speaking of his resurrection).

Only later after Y'shua gave all the end time signs did he give some clues on the rapture – let's see:

In Matt 24:36, Y'shua states clearly that nobody will know the day or hour when he returns:

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matt 24:36)

Further on in verse 40, Y'shua starts giving remarkable clues: "two shall be in the field, **one shall be taken and one stay behind.**" Speaking of the different time zones as well that "one shall be taken" while the other one shall "stay behind". "In the field" in this verse refers to the **morning**, when the Jews in biblical times worked in the field.

Also in verse 40, it says: "two shall be grinding **at the mill, one shall be taken and one shall be left.**"

Speaking of the second time zone. This verse refers to the **afternoon**, when they grind at the mill for food for the night.

Luke 17:34 gives us the last time zone which is **night time**, “two shall be in one bed; the one shall be taken, and the other shall be left.”

From this, we can clearly see from Y’shua’s explanation of the ‘last days’ events, there is **indeed** a rapture before the tribulation. But because it was not meant for the disciples and their generation, it was not mentioned directly. It is meant for the ‘final generation’ (Luke 21:32) – our generation that will benefit by it! (See the 16 proofs of a pre-tribulation rapture in my book, ‘Verse by Verse Explanation of the Revelation’).

This study proves that what Y’shua foretold in Matthew chapter 24, does indeed compare with the writings of John on the revelation of Y’shua the Messiah. By reading Matthew 24, you are actually reading ‘the Revelation.’ The word is **easy** and **simple** that even a child can understand it; let’s not make it complicated. Scripture must interpret Scripture, or else we follow a false doctrine.

24:32-35 Now learn a parable of the fig tree

“(32) **Now learn a parable of the fig tree;** When his branch is yet tender, and putteth forth leaves, ye know that summer is nigh (33) So likewise ye, when ye shall see all these things, know that it is near, even at the doors. (34) Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled. (35) Heaven and earth shall pass away, but my words shall not pass away.” (Matt 24:32-35)

The Key Generation

Before we continue, let us first read Luke 21:29-32:

“(29) And he spake to them a parable; **Behold the fig tree, and all the trees;** (30) When they now shoot forth, ye see and know of your own selves that summer is now nigh at hand. (31) So likewise ye, when ye see these things come to pass, know ye that the kingdom of God is nigh at hand. (32) Verily I say unto you, This generation shall not pass away, till all be fulfilled.”

Now we are ready to examine the key to the most important sign as it relates to the time of Y’shua’s coming, in answer to the disciples’ question: “When shall these things be?” The key is found in verse 32 of Luke chapter 21. Y’shua said, “This generation shall not pass, till all these things be fulfilled.” The crucial issue, then, concerns the meaning of “this generation”, because whatever generation He had in mind would not pass until the Second Coming occurs.

There seems to be only two generations from which to choose:

The disciples’ generation – but nothing like that happened historically during their lifetime, and their generation has passed and obviously Y’shua has not come – so it does not seem possible he had their generation in mind.

The generation that saw **Israel officially becomes a nation in 1948** “Fig tree blossoming!” (which will be explained in detail later), is the generation that was old enough to “see” the pictures via television or newsreel of the United Nations officially recognising Israel as a nation and to understand what was going on. Assuming that meant children ±16 years of age in 1948, which generation was born in ±1932 – give or take 5 or 10 years. In Greek, the demonstrative pronoun *haute* (this) always refers to the person or thing mentioned before it. The thing mentioned just before “generation” involves those who see the sign of Israel becoming a nation.

Carefully putting all this together, we can now deduce that this strategic generation is the generation that “sees” the events of 1948. We must be careful here **not to become dogmatic**, but it would seem that these people are witnesses to the events but not necessarily participants in them. That would suggest that they were at least old enough to understand the events of 1948 and would be ±68 years of age in the year 2000.

I believe it is **our generation** of which Y’shua said, “...will not pass away till all these things be fulfilled.”

How long is a generation?

We may logically inquire next, “How long is a generation”? Psalm 90:10 provides insight into this subject.

“The days of our years are three score years and ten and if, by reason of strength, they be four score years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow....”

This means that the generation is seventy years; and if you are very strong, eighty years.

We should weigh Y'shua's words very carefully here. He said, "This generation shall not pass until all these things be fulfilled". It is generally accepted that "this generation" averages seventy years with the possibility of eighty years. However, neither should we expect the entire generation to pass away before Y'shua returns! Because Y'shua can come tomorrow.

Which tree is Israel?

- * "Vine" is Israel in the past — Hos 9:10.
- * "Fig tree" is Israel now — Jer 24:5; Hos 9:10.
- * "Olive tree" is Israel in the future — Rom 11:15-26.

"and all the other trees...." Speaking of the nations:

Independence really started in 1948.

Many countries moved out of British control.

South Africa's National Party came into power.

Also the start of the forming of the European Union – the Revived Roman Empire.

24:36 But of that day and hour knoweth no man

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only."

Why doesn't Y'shua know the day? Please see the explanation of this verse under Matt 4:25, "The rapture of the church compared to the Jewish wedding tradition" before continuing with the section below.

No Man Knows The Day or The Hour

The Jewish or Biblical calendar is primarily a lunar calendar as explained in chapter 8, which is very different from the typical "Gregorian" Secular calendar. The current calendar is set by a mathematical computation that has been in use for approximately 1700 years. Up to this time, the beginning of each month (Rosh Chodesh, literally "Head of the Month") was set by a visual sighting by two witnesses before a rabbinical court. These witnesses had to be of upstanding character, meeting qualifications very similar to those listed in the third chapter of First Timothy concerning zekelim (elders). They presented themselves before the Sanhedrin, of which the Nasi or president then declared the New Month as having begun. The importance of the sighting of the New Moon was considered to be so imperative to the religious life of Israel that these witnesses were allowed to travel on horseback great distances – even on the Sabbath.

The coming of the New Moon was absolutely essential to the structure of the religious life, for YHWH had commanded the observance of certain days as Moedim (Appointed Times). These Moedim were also known as the Haggim (Festivals).

Each festival had a specific time it was to be observed. For example, Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, falls on the tenth day of the seventh month (Tishri). If the Sanhedrin started the new month on the incorrect day, all of Israel could find themselves observing the fast on the day before or after YHWH had specified and feasting on the actual tenth. Therefore, the setting of each festival depended upon the decree that came forth from the Sanhedrin at the beginning of the month. Thus, each festival listed in Leviticus 23 could not be set before the arrival of the month that it was to be held in. An example of this is Pesach (Passover) which is to be observed on the fourteenth day of Aviv (Nisan). It would be impossible to state in the previous month, Adar, on which day of the week Pesach would fall until the Sanhedrin declared which day began the month of Aviv. Likewise, once Aviv arrived, having been instituted by the Sanhedrin from the visual sighting, it would then be known by all on which day of the week that each festival within that month would fall. Of course, this scenario would have to be repeated for each month of the year.

The seventh month, Tishri, has three inter-linked festivals. The first festival occurs on the first day of the seventh month, which of course would also be a Rosh Chodesh or New Moon. This festival is generally called Rosh haShanah which means the Head of the Year, and is commonly celebrated as the Jewish New Year. Among most Christians, this festival is known as the Feast of Trumpets. This title somewhat mis-conveys the actual Biblical name of the festival, Yom Teruah, which means the Day of the Awakening Blast. The next festival is Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement – and occurs on the tenth of Tishri. Five days later the Festival of Sukkot begins and is celebrated for seven days from the fifteenth of Tishri through the twenty-first.

An additional day is attached to Sukkot but is viewed as being separate from these seven days. This day is known as Shimini Atzeret – the Eighth Day, and occurs on the twenty-second of Tishri. Therefore, once the Sanhedrin has set the Rosh Chodesh for Tishri, the rest of the festivals could be calculated. Rosh haShanah stands alone during Tishri, as well as the rest of the year, as being the **only** festival of which **no man knew the day or the hour**. It could only be determined by the decree from the court declaring the New Moon had been spotted.

The Sanhedrin, the highest court of Israel, received its authority as a mandate of YHWH:

- (8) If there arise a matter too hard for thee in judgment, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, being matters of controversy within thy gates: then shalt thou arise, and get thee up into the place which the LORD thy God shall choose;
- (9) And thou shalt come unto the priests the Levites, and unto the judge that shall be in those days, and enquire; and they shall shew thee the sentence of judgment:
- (10) And thou shalt do according to the sentence, which they of that place which the LORD shall choose shall shew thee; and thou shalt observe to do according to all that they inform thee:
- (11) According to the sentence of the law which they shall teach thee, and according to the judgment which they shall tell thee, thou shalt do: thou shalt not decline from the sentence which they shall shew thee, to the right hand, nor to the left.
- (12) And the man that will do presumptuously, and will not hearken unto the priest that standeth to minister there before the LORD thy God, or unto the judge, even that man shall die: and thou shalt put away the evil from Israel.
- (13) And all the people shall hear, and fear, and do no more presumptuously." (Deut 17.8-13)

Based upon the above passage, a court was developed that determined judgments of religious and legal disputes and controversies. During the time of Y'shua, the highest court of Israel was called the Sanhedrin. This court consisted of seventy judges who met within the Chamber of the Hewn Stone in the Temple. It was overseen by a president who bore the title "Nasi". The Sanhedrin was the only court that had the authority to declare the New Month's beginning.

This court on earth, authorised by YHWH, is modeled after a heavenly court. The heavenly court is overseen by the Father Himself, as told by the prophet Daniel.

- (9) "I beheld till the thrones were cast down, and the Ancient of days did sit, whose garment was white as snow, and the hair of his head like the pure wool: his throne was like the fiery flame, and his wheels as burning fire.
- (10) A fiery stream issued and came forth from before him: thousand thousands ministered unto him, and ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him: the judgment was set, and the books were opened."
- (Dan 7.9-10)

Y'shua also spoke of the heavenly court in relation to a court that was instituted in the eschatological congregation. This congregation is the body of Believers who would receive the Ruach haKodesh (the Holy Spirit) at Shavuot (Pentecost) following Y'shua's resurrection. It was to the eschatological congregation (those who belonged to the Kingdom of YHWH) that Y'shua referred when He addressed Peter in Matt 16.18-19.

The expressions, "binding" and "loosening" are heard frequently in Christianity today. Usually, these are in reference to binding Satan or loosening angels or blessings, etc.; however, the terms "binding" and "loosening" during the time of Y'shua referred to the function of the courts of Israel. Their responsibility as the judges of the people was to make decisions based upon YHWH's Torah. Whatever decisions they reached were put forth as binding upon the people; or in the case of debts, vows, obligations, etc., the people or an individual plaintiff being loosed from a binding obligation. Therefore, whenever the Sanhedrin decreed that the new month had begun, it became binding upon Israel. There is one instance where a decree of the court did not stand: if a decision was made that contradicted YHWH's Torah. This is what Y'shua was referring to in the following passage:

- "(1) Then came to Jesus scribes and Pharisees, which were of Jerusalem, saying, (2) Why do thy disciples transgress the tradition of the elders? for they wash not their hands when they eat bread. (3) But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? (4) For God commanded, saying, Honour thy father and mother: and, He that curseth father or mother, let him die the death. (5) But ye say, Whosoever shall say to his father or his mother, It is a gift, by whatsoever thou mightest be profited by me; (6) And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." (Matt 15.1-6)

As mentioned earlier, the Secular (and modern Jewish calendar) is very different from the calendar used during the time of Y'shua. During the age of the Temple and for a number of years following, the court would declare the beginning of each month. Each month, following the decree of the Sanhedrin, signal fires were lit from the top of a mountain letting Jews in the far distance know that the New Month had begun. In turn, additional fires were lit from mountain top to mountain top. However, complications arose from the enemies of the Jewish people. The Samaritans and others began to light signal fires from the tops of the mountains several days before and following the expected time of the New Moon, causing great distress to the entire Jewish world. It was for this reason that the sages under the guidance of Hillel II (c. A.D. 360) worked out the arrival of the New Moon based upon mathematical computation.

Other than the mathematical computation for the arrival of the New Moon, the new calendar differed from the previous one in another way. The new calendar took into consideration the religious convenience of the worshippers and allowed that certain festivals could not fall upon certain days of the week. For example, Hoshanna Rabbah (the last day of Sukkot) was not permitted to fall on a Saturday or Yom Kippur to fall on a Friday. By this action, the courts were making null and void the Biblical commandment to observe the dates of the festivals at the specific appointed time because of the new calendar. Each Moed (appointed time) was of critical importance in its relation to the Messiah; for it is on these dates that the Messiah keeps His appointments with man to achieve the restoration of man and the earth. In Y'shua's first coming, He was slain on Pesach (Passover), buried on Unleavened Bread; and He rose from the dead on the Firstfruits of the Barley Harvest. Fifty days later at Shavuot (Pentecost) the eschatological (last days) congregation received the Ruach haKodesh (the Holy Spirit), empowering them to be witnesses as the Kingdom of Heaven came down to dwell in men's hearts. The final three festivals, which are still futuristic (the fall festivals), likewise are the appointments for Y'shua's second coming with every festival teaching on different aspects of His coming and the Messianic Kingdom here on earth.

When Y'shua spoke of His second coming during His Olivet discourse, there is a strong probability that He referred to Rosh haShanah (Feast of Trumpets) when He spoke of that day that no man knows.

"But of that day and hour knoweth no man, no, not the angels of heaven, but my Father only." (Matt 24:36)

It is impossible to speculate the exact day or year on which the appointed Rosh haShanah will arrive because of the complications of the existing Jewish calendar. In all probability, the year that begins the kingdom will begin when the current Jewish calendar's Rosh haShanah and the Rosh haShanah decreed by the Heavenly court coincide. Oftentimes it seems the emphasis is placed on which year, or which date on a given year this will occur. It is obvious through history and Scripture that no one can pinpoint the exact time these events will take place. However, YHWH never misses His appointments with man, and it is for us to understand the significance of these Appointed Times and Seasons.

- (1) "But of the times and the seasons, brethren, ye have no need that I write unto you.
 - (2) For yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so cometh as a thief in the night.
 - (3) For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them, as travail upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.
 - (4) But ye, brethren, are not in darkness, that that day should overtake you as a thief.
 - (5) Ye are all the children of light, and the children of the day: we are not of the night, nor of darkness.
 - (6) Therefore let us not sleep, as do others; but let us watch and be sober.
 - (7) For they that sleep in the night; and they that be drunken are drunken in the night.
 - (8) But let us, who are of the day, be sober, putting on the breastplate of faith and love; and for an helmet, the hope of salvation.
 - (9) For God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ,
- (10) Who died for us, that, whether we wake or sleep, we should live together with him.
(11) Wherefore comfort yourselves together, and edify one another, even as also ye do." (1 Thes 5:1-11)

24:37-39 But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be

"(37) But as the days of Noe were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be. (38) For as in the days that were before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noe entered into the ark, (39) And knew not until the flood came, and took them all away; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be." (Matt 24:37-39)

We know that evil permeated the earth to such a degree in Noah's time, that YHWH intervened by killing all but a handful of people. Again, at the end of days there will be widespread destruction.

Beyond this, however, Noah's time was also one of great demonic activity as cited in the Book of Jude:

Jude 1:6: "*And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he hath reserved in everlasting chains under darkness unto the judgment of the great day.*"

A resource with much information on this subject is the book of *Enoch*, which was held in high esteem at the time of Y'shua, and is quoted by Jude:

(14) "*And Enoch also, the seventh from Adam, prophesied of these, saying, Behold, the Lord cometh with ten thousands of his saints,*

(15) *To execute judgment upon all, and to convince all that are ungodly among them of all their ungodly deeds which they have ungodly committed, and of all their hard speeches which ungodly sinners have spoken against him.*

(16) *These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaketh great swelling words, having men's persons in admiration because of advantage.*" Jude 1:14-16

The following comparison can be made between Noah's time and the 'end time'

Gen 6:6-7 Gen 6:11-12

6. <i>And the Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart, and</i> 7. <i>so the Lord said, "I will destroy man whom I have created from the face of the earth; both man and beast.</i>	11. <i>The earth also was corrupt before God and the earth was filled with violence.</i> 12. <i>So God looked upon the earth, indeed it was corrupt; for all flesh had corrupted their way on the earth.</i>
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In the time of Noah and Lot, anarchy prevailed as people in these lawless and promiscuous societies did just what they wanted. Force was the most common means to resolve conflicts. So will it be again.

In the time of Noah and Lot, widespread spiritual and moral decline occurred. People became so corrupt that they were "wicked in every intent of their thoughts". So will it be again.

In the time of Noah and Lot, people were excessively materialistic and adopted permissive lifestyles that led to all sorts of licentiousness, including sodomy (derived from Sodom). So will it be again.

In the time of Noah and Lot, people scoffed at the men of YHWH and took no heed of the prophetic warnings of forthcoming judgment. They regarded it as far-fetched speculation and continued with their reckless lives. So will it be again.

In the time of Noah and Lot, YHWH gave the degenerate sinners reasonable time to repent from their evil ways. They refused to repent and thereby sealed their own fate. They had only themselves to blame for their downfall and affliction. So will it be again.

In the time of Noah and Lot, YHWH offered a way of escape to the believers at the critical moment before He turned in wrath to the sinners. The order of events was: first the prophetic warnings about the impending judgment, then the safeguarding of the believers who took heed of the appeal to repent, and ultimately the outpouring of wrath on the sinners. So will it be again.

In the time of Noah and Lot, there was no security for nominal believers whose hearts were still devoted to the things of this world. Lot's wife was a type of those believers who only have an outward form of godliness but are still spiritually dead. This false pretence cost her her life at the last moment. So will it be again.

In the time of Noah and Lot, an awful disaster struck this world soon after the evacuation of the believers. Death and destruction occurred as never before in history. So will it be again.

In the time of Noah and Lot, the sinners didn't realise how many privileges and blessings they enjoyed because of the presence of a few believers in their midst. YHWH was prepared to pardon a whole city if there were only ten believers. When these people (who shone like lights in a wicked and perverted generation) were taken out of the way, the anger of YHWH was provoked and complete spiritual darkness befell the godless. So will it be again.

In the time of Noah and Lot, people scoffed at the builders of the ark: "*and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. This is how it will be at the Coming of the Son of Man.*" (Matt 24:39 NIV)

In the time of Noah and Lot, some of the "third part of the fallen angels" (them that were thrown out of heaven so long before the time of Noah and Lot - Isaiah 14:14-15, Rev 12:3-4) slept with the daughters of men and married them (Gen 6:1-8, Gen 19:1-11). The result of this wicked/ungodly mixture was the "Nephilim (evil spirits/demons). Satan's plan was to contaminate the human race to prevent "The Seed" (Gen 3:15, Isaiah 7:14 – referring to Y'shua) from being born through a pure and uncontaminated bloodline. Avinu

the Father saw what Satan's plan was, and this is the reason why He wiped out the entire contaminated human race. Only Noah and his family were found to be "... perfect in his generation" (KJV Gen 6:9). The English word "perfect" in Hebrew is *tamyim* and does not refer to morally right but bodily perfect, without blemish or blot and of pure stock. This meant that only Noah and his family were untainted by fallen angels, the rest of their generation was all half-human/half angels, the "giants" or the "Nephilim". When they died in the flood, their evil spirits sought "embodiment". YHWH says it will be like that again in the last days as in the days of Noah and Lot (Matt 24:38-39) that the fallen angels will again "take wives for themselves".

These "Evil Spirits" still exist today and are better known as "aliens", or actually demons (this is discussed later in more detail in chapters 4, 8, 9, 13, 16 and 19 of my book *Verse by Verse Explanation of the Revelation of Y'shua HaMashiach*). Satan could not prevent Y'shua from coming the first time and knows Y'shua is coming again for his Bride (Believers) at the Rapture; and for the "blinded" righteous Orthodox Jews at the battle of Armageddon whose eyes will be opened (YHWH has a covenant with His people that He will honour). Satan will once again try with all his might to prevent Y'shua from returning by destroying the Jews as he knows his judgment is shortly thereafter and he wants to evade this.

That is why we are bombarded with "alien" toys, adverts, clothes, etc. Even the front and rear ends of most recent cars and motorcycles look like "aliens". We are being conditioned to accept this as normal. A Platform is being created for the infiltration of Satan that has already started. You will be shocked by the facts that are covered up over "alien" activities. Satan is actively busy with a strategy to deceive the human race, with all kinds of "new age" theories to accept the "aliens" and to dispatch his angels and evil spirits to contaminate the whole human race once again. The world will turn against YHWH and rally against the Jews to wipe them out so that Y'shua will not have Jews to return for. This way, Satan will miss his judgment and rule over the earth as god. But we know he will eventually meet his Waterloo at the Battle of Armageddon.

24:40-44 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken

"(40) *Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken, and the other left.* (41) *Two women shall be grinding at the mill; the one shall be taken, and the other left.* (42) *Watch therefore: for ye know not what hour your Lord doth come.* (43) *But know this, that if the goodman of the house had known in what watch the thief would come, he would have watched, and would not have suffered his house to be broken up.* (44) *Therefore be ye also ready: for in such an hour as ye think not the Son of man cometh.*" (Matt 24:40-44)

As explained in verse 31 under "Now what about the Rapture of the Believers?"

24:45-51 Then shall two be in the field; the one shall be taken

"(45) *Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his lord hath made ruler over his household, to give them meat in due season?* (46) *Blessed is that servant, whom his lord when he cometh shall find so doing.* (47) *Verily I say unto you, That he shall make him ruler over all his goods.* (48) *But and if that evil servant shall say in his heart, My lord delayeth his coming;* (49) *And shall begin to smite his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunken;* (50) *The lord of that servant shall come in a day when he looketh not for him, and in an hour that he is not aware of,* (51) *And shall cut him asunder, and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.*"

The judgment of the nations at the end of the seven years of Tribulation at the Battle of Armageddon will be discussed in Matthew 25.

SECTION IX

TEACHING ON THE END TIMES

(CONTINUE – MATTHEW 25:46)

MATTHEW 25:1-46

TEXT:

- (1) "Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom.
- (2) And five of them were wise, and five were foolish.
- (3) They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them:
- (4) But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps.
- (5) While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept.

- (6) And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him.
- (7) Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps.
- (8) And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out.
- (9) But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves.
- (10) And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut.
- (11) Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.
- (12) But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not.
- (13) Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.
- (14) For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods.
- (15) And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey.
- (16) Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents.
- (17) And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two.
- (18) But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money.
- (19) After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them.
- (20) And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more.
- (21) His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
- (22) He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them.
- (23) His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord.
- (24) Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed:
- (25) And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine.
- (26) His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed:
- (27) Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury.
- (28) Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents.
- (29) For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath.
- (30) And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.
- (31) When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:
- (32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:
- (33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.
- (34) Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:
- (35) For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:
- (36) Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me.
- (37) Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?
- (38) When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?
- (39) Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?
- (40) And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.
- (41) Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:
- (42) For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink.
- (43) I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.
- (44) Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

(45) Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

(46) And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

25:1-2 Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom

"(1) Then shall the kingdom of heaven be likened unto ten virgins, which took their lamps, and went forth to meet the bridegroom. (2) And five of them were wise, and five were foolish."

The Kingdom parables were discussed in detail in the chapter 13 notes.

25:3-9 They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them

"(3) They that were foolish took their lamps, and took no oil with them: (4) But the wise took oil in their vessels with their lamps. (5) While the bridegroom tarried, they all slumbered and slept. (6) And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom cometh; go ye out to meet him. (7) Then all those virgins arose, and trimmed their lamps. (8) And the foolish said unto the wise, Give us of your oil; for our lamps are gone out. (9) But the wise answered, saying, Not so; lest there be not enough for us and you: but go ye rather to them that sell, and buy for yourselves."

Brief layout of the parable:

Lamps = your light must shine as a Believer – be an example to others

Oil = be filled with the Holy Spirit – make sure you are anointed

Wise virgins = some of the greater body of Believers will walk according to YHWH's ways

Foolish virgins = although they are also virgins, they are foolish and could not enter – many Believers think they are on their way to Heaven but are actually on their way to Hell.

Bridegroom tarried = Y'shua tarries, but will eventually come

Slumbered and slept = foolish virgins followed the main stream faith, rejecting the *Torah* and were deceived

Midnight cry = Messiah will come unexpectedly

Go out to meet Bridegroom = Have an expectation and seek Messiah's return

Door was shut = rapture to place and the heavenly door was shut (verse 10)

Went in with him to the marriage = true Believers join with Messiah Y'shua in heaven for our wedding

Verily I say unto you, I know you not = repentance of the foolish will come too late

Ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh = Y'shua will come unexpectedly

Oil in the Old Covenant is frequently used as a symbol of the Holy Spirit, *Ruach haKodesh*. Kings and priests were anointed with oil as a sign of their consecrated (Spirit-filled) lives. Zechariah the prophet was shown a vision of a great golden lampstand (menorah) with two olive trees standing beside it. The trees dripped oil into the bowls of the lampstand, and Zechariah was told: "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit, says the LORD of hosts" (Zech 4:6). The oil symbolised the Spirit of YHWH by which the light of testimony could be maintained in the hour of darkness.

Some ministry of the Spirit is then in view. The supreme ministry of the Spirit is to impart to men the knowledge of Y'shua. In John 16:13-14, Y'shua said of him: "When the Spirit of truth comes, he will guide you into all the truth; for he will not speak on his authority, but...will declare to you the things that are to come. He will glorify me, for he will take what is mine and declare it to you." The Spirit's task, then, is to take the Word of YHWH and through it reveal Y'shua.

"When he comes, he will convince the world of sin and of righteousness and of judgment" (John 16:8). Here is a ministry of the Holy Spirit available to anyone who will search the Scriptures to know the truth. But it is designed to take them deeper – into a fuller and permanent relationship that will involve the imparting of divine life.

Others say the oil could also refer to the *Torah*, as the two cannot be separated (i.e., Romans, chapter 8) See also note to verse 12 below.

Psalm 119:105-107: "(105) Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path. (106) I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments. (107) I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word."

The parable of the virgins is meant to teach preparedness, a common theme in Judaism with regard to the coming of God's Kingdom:

Midrash Rabbah – Ecclesiastes IX:7: “**LET THY GARMENTS BE ALWAYS WHITE; AND LET THY HEAD LACK NO OIL** (IX, 8). R. Johanan b. Zakkai said: If the text speaks of white garments, how many of these have the peoples of the world; and if it speaks of good oil, how much of it do the peoples of the world possess! Behold, it speaks only of precepts, good deeds, and Torah. R. Judah ha-Nasi said: To what may this be likened? To a king who made a banquet to which he invited guests. He said to them, ‘Go, wash yourselves, brush up your clothes, anoint yourselves with oil, wash your garments, and prepare yourselves for the banquet,’ but he fixed no time when they were to come to it. The wise among them walked about by the entrance of the king’s palace, saying, ‘Does the king’s palace lack anything?’ The foolish among them paid no regard or attention to the king’s command. They said, ‘We will in due course notice when the king’s banquet is to take place, because can there be a banquet without labour [to prepare it] and company?’ So the plasterer went to his plaster, the potter to his clay, the smith to his charcoal, the washer to his laundry. Suddenly the king ordered, ‘Let them all come to the banquet.’ They hurried the guests, so that some came in their splendid attire and others came in their dirty garments. The king was pleased with the wise ones who had obeyed his command, and also because they had shown honour to the king’s palace. He was angry with the fools who had neglected his command and disgraced his palace. The king said, ‘Let those who have prepared themselves for the banquet come and eat of the king’s meal, but those who have not prepared themselves shall not partake of it.’ You might suppose that the latter were simply to depart; but the king continued, ‘No, [they are not to depart]; but the former shall recline and eat and drink, while these shall remain standing, be punished, and look on and be grieved.’ Similarly in the Hereafter, as Isaiah declares, Behold, My servants shall eat, but ye shall be hungry (Isa. LXV:13). Ziwatai said in the name of R. Meir: These will recline and eat and drink, while the others will recline without eating and drinking; because the vexation of him who stands [at a banquet without participating in it] is not the same as of him who reclines [without participating in it]. He who stands without eating and drinking is like an attendant, but he who reclines and does not eat suffers very much more vexation and his face turns green. That is what the prophet says, Then ye shall I sit and discern between the righteous and the wicked (Mal. III, 18).”

25:10-11 The bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut

“(10) And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came; and they that were ready went in with him to the marriage: and the door was shut. (11) Afterward came also the other virgins, saying, Lord, Lord, open to us.” (Mat 25:10-11)

The marriage banquet is for Messiah the bridegroom and His bride who is the faith community of Israel, consisting of both Jews and non-Jews who trust in Y’shua and His Torah. The end-times Book of Revelation shows the necessity of Torah (as part of one’s faith in Y’shua), in order to enter the Kingdom of God:

“And the dragon was wroth with the woman, and went to make war with the remnant of her seed, which **keep the commandments of God**, [Torah] and have the testimony of Jesus Y’shua.” (Rev 12:17)

“Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that **keep the commandments of God**, [Torah] and the faith of Jesus.” (Rev 14:12)

“Blessed are they that **do his commandments**, [Torah] that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city.” (Rev 22:14)

25:12-13 But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not

“(12) But he answered and said, Verily I say unto you, I know you not. (13) Watch therefore, for ye know neither the day nor the hour wherein the Son of man cometh.”

This is the same reply Y’shua gave in chapter 7, which was directed to those who thought they could follow Him apart from the will of the Father and His sayings – both of which refer to Torah:

“(21) Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that **doeth the will of my Father** [Torah] which is in heaven. (22) Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in thy name? and in thy name have cast out devils? and in thy name done many wonderful works? (23) And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from me, ye that work iniquity. (24) Therefore whosoever **heareth these sayings of mine, and doeth them**, I will liken him unto a wise man, which built his house upon a rock:” (Mat 7:21-24)

The above would lend credibility to the idea that the oil in the lamps of the virgins represents Torah.

25:14-28 For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country

"(14) For the kingdom of heaven is as a man travelling into a far country, who called his own servants, and delivered unto them his goods. (15) And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability; and straightway took his journey. (16) Then he that had received the five talents went and traded with the same, and made them other five talents. (17) And likewise he that had received two, he also gained other two. (18) But he that had received one went and digged in the earth, and hid his lord's money. (19) After a long time the lord of those servants cometh, and reckoneth with them. (20) And so he that had received five talents came and brought other five talents, saying, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me five talents: behold, I have gained beside them five talents more. (21) His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (22) He also that had received two talents came and said, Lord, thou deliveredst unto me two talents: behold, I have gained two other talents beside them. (23) His lord said unto him, Well done, good and faithful servant; thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord. (24) Then he which had received the one talent came and said, Lord, I knew thee that thou art an hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed: (25) And I was afraid, and went and hid thy talent in the earth: lo, there thou hast that is thine. (26) His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: (27) Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. (28) Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents."

The Hebrew talent was a measurement of weight. Authorities differ as to a talent's exact weight or worth. Suffice it to say that it was a considerable sum. Figuratively speaking, 'talents' are generally reckoned as being inherent abilities or possessions such as intelligence, musical ability, wealth and property, etc.

There is a principle in Judaism that YHWH gives to each one of his servants as much spiritual enlightenment as they are capable of handling. The one human being that had the greatest enlightenment was Moses who spoke directly with YHWH and not in dreams or visions. Everyone else since Moses sees things less clearly:

"For now we see through a glass, darkly; but then face to face: now I know in part; but then shall I know even as also I am known." (1 Cor 13:12)

Matt 24:14 is fairly well understood – the traveler is Y'shua the Messiah and the servants are his professed followers. But take note of that word "goods". In other words, the talents throughout this parable are not inherent abilities, such as intelligence, wealth, good appearance or musical skills. To be sure, in normal conversation one may refer to these as talents. But in these parables, human ability is not what is meant. The "talents" mentioned here are the Saviour's most valuable possessions called "his goods" which He entrusts to his servants. What, you may well ask, are the Master's? I list a few:

YHWH's Word: The inspired writings of the prophets and the Apostles. YHWH Almighty of Abraham, Isaac and Israel has entrusted us with His Word, the HOLY BIBLE; a possession of inestimable worth.

YHWH's Law: The commandments given through the patriarch Moses.

The Everlasting Gospel: This is undoubtedly one of the Almighty's prize possessions.

Spiritual Gifts: Apostleship, Prophecy, Healing, Helps, Tongues, etc.

Prayer: The privilege, yea the *priceless right*, to call upon Him at any time and in any place.

Testimony: The opportunity to testify to others about the saving power of the Almighty and His only begotten Son Y'shua.

These are the "talents" in this parable. These are the 'valuable goods' which were delivered by the Master to his servants. To be sure, some servants have more 'goods' than others: more knowledge of His Word and His law, more spiritual gifts, more opportunities to testify, etc.; but the point to remember is that every servant has at least one of the above talents and possibly several more.

Another point to remember is that every servant is given "*according to his/her ability*". Everyone knows that some people are more inherently able than others. Because we humans cannot accurately assess our own abilities (we usually have inflated opinions about ourselves) the Master has already decided who gets more talents and who gets less.

"And unto one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one; to every man according to his several ability." (verse 15)

In other words, there are two separate entities being described in these parables:

The Master's Goods: His Word, His Law, The Everlasting Gospel, Spiritual Gifts, the right to Pray and Testify etc.

Each Servant's Natural Ability: This is the God-given aptitude each servant possesses to make use of the talent/s mentioned above.

A servant's inherent abilities, whatever they may be (much or little) must not be confused with the Master's goods. They are two separate things. One (the goods) belongs to the Master; the other (inherent abilities) belongs to His followers. This is an important point. Remember it.

The second parable concerning talents and servant responsibility is found in the Gospel of Luke. In it you will notice that each servant receives exactly the same as the next – “one pound”.

- (12) *“He said therefore, A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom, and to return.”*
- (13) *“And he called his ten servants, and delivered them ten pounds, and said unto them, Occupy till I come.”*
- (14) *“But his citizens hated him, and sent a message after him, saying, We will not have this man to reign over us.”*
- (15) *“And it came to pass, that when he was returned, having received the kingdom, then he commanded these servants to be called unto him, to whom he had given the money, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.”*
- (16) *“Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.”*
- (17) *“And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.”*
- (18) *“And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.”*
- (19) *“And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities.”*
- (20) *“And another came, saying, Lord, behold, here is thy pound, which I have kept laid up in a napkin:”*
- (21) *“For I feared thee, because thou art an austere man: thou takest up that thou layedst not down, and reapest that thou didst not sow.”*
- (22) *“And he saith unto him, Out of thine own mouth will I judge thee, thou wicked servant. Thou knewest that I was an austere man, taking up that I laid not down, and reaping that I did not sow:”*
- (23) *“Wherfore then gavest not thou my money into the bank, that at my coming I might have required mine own with usury?”*
- (24) *“And he said unto them that stood by, Take from him the pound, and give it to him that hath ten pounds.”*
- (25) *“(And they said unto him, Lord, he hath ten pounds.)”*
- (26) *“For I say unto you, That unto every one which hath shall be given; and from him that hath not, even that he hath shall be taken away from him.” (Luke 19:12-26)*

In this parable each servant received exactly the same amount - one pound.

What are these two parables concerning talents teaching us? The answer is: They are teaching us several vital lessons. I list them:

The Master has entrusted every one of his servants with a portion of his goods: his Holy Word, his Law, the Everlasting Gospel, the Privilege of Prayer, etc. These things are called the Master's Goods. Believers normally call them 'talents'. It matters little, so long as we realise that they belong to the Master, not to us. The second point is that every servant has been given at least one talent, one pound! So dispel from your mind any notion that you are untalented. Because it's just not true. All believers are talented.

The third point is that there is coming a Day of Reckoning, when every servant will need to give an account of what he/she has done with the Master's goods – that '*He might know how much every man had gained*'. That there will be exceedingly generous rewards for the diligent – far in excess of anything any believer can remotely imagine.

The servant who did nothing with his Master's goods misjudged several things.

Perhaps he thought that he was inherently as good, if not better, than the other servants. He had received, we are told, “*according to his ability*”; but he thought that he had deserved better. He was wrong.

He thought that his Master was a hard man for reaping the benefits of other people's work. His words were: “*I knew thee that thou art a hard man, reaping where thou hast not sown, and gathering where thou hast not strawed.*” Again, he was wrong.

He thought that the best thing to do was to hide the single talent he had received and to return it to the Master. Perhaps he reckoned that he was being honest. But he was wrong again. He had mistaken his hurt pride and wickedness for honesty.

Oh, what a series of tragic mistakes this servant made.

When the Master returns to earth, you can be sure He will not take His talents back. They will remain ours for all time. They and the benefits they bring in their trail are forever ours. The Master's rewards to His servants in these two parables are worth noting.

The Good Servant:

"His lord said unto him, Well done, thou good and faithful servant: thou hast been faithful over a few things, I will make thee ruler over many things: enter thou into the joy of thy lord." (Matt 25:21)

- (16) *"Then came the first, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained ten pounds.*
- (17) *And he said unto him, Well, thou good servant: because thou hast been faithful in a very little, have thou authority over ten cities.*
- (18) *And the second came, saying, Lord, thy pound hath gained five pounds.*
- (19) *And he said likewise to him, Be thou also over five cities."* (Luke 19:16-19)

The Wicked Servant:

It is quite impossible to imagine the grief of believers who are represented by this last servant. It will be tragic to say the least.

"(26) His lord answered and said unto him, Thou wicked and slothful servant, thou knewest that I reap where I sowed not, and gather where I have not strawed: (27) Thou oughtest therefore to have put my money to the exchangers, and then at my coming I should have received mine own with usury. (28) Take therefore the talent from him, and give it unto him which hath ten talents. (29) For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. (30) And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." Matt 25:26-30

These parables point to an eternity of matchless joy for those servants who make good use of the talents they receive. They will enter the Kingdom of Heaven when their Master says: *"Enter thou into the joy of thy Lord!"* Are you going to be amongst them? Are you using the talents YHWH has given you? Or are you burying them in the world - the earth? Make sure you are putting your talents to proper use. It matters little how many talents you have, or how few. The important thing is to use them. The Apostle Paul wrote shortly before his death:

- (6) *"For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand.*
- (7) *I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith:*
- (8) *Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing."* (2 Tim.4: 6-8)

May YHWH grant that all of us here can echo those words and hear the Master say:

"Well done good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."

25:29-30 For unto every one that hath shall be given

"(29) For unto every one that hath shall be given, and he shall have abundance: but from him that hath not shall be taken away even that which he hath. (30) And cast ye the unprofitable servant into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth."

Y'shua's stern message here is that even those who are given a small amount from YHWH will be held accountable to Him for what they did with it (i.e., All believers are called to obedience). You will land in the Lake of Fire forever by also rejecting the truth.

25:31-46 When the Son of man shall come in his glory

"(31) When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory: (32) And before him shall be gathered all nations: and he shall separate them one from another, as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats: (33) And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left. (34) Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: (35) For I was an hungry, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in: (36) Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison, and ye came unto me. (37) Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungry, and fed thee? or thirsty,

and gave thee drink? (38) When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee? (39) Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee? (40) And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me. (41) Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels: (42) For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink: (43) I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not: sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not. (44) Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee? (45) Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me. (46) And these shall go away into everlasting punishment: but the righteous into life eternal."

In Y'shua's day, Palestine was full of poverty, hunger, illness, people forced into a life of crime, "country-bumpkins", and the like. The same He viewed as a potential harvest! His concern for the underdog, the oppressed, the poor, the handicapped, abandoned, and abused is best seen in Matt 25:31-46.

In this passage of Scripture, Messiah is telling His disciples (then and now) about that day "*When the Son of Man [Messiah] comes [the 2nd time] in His glory, and all the angels with Him*" and sits "*on His glorious throne*" as King and Judge over all the nations of the earth. Notice in this passage that there is no mention of believing in His Messiahship, of fulfilling the Law of Moses, or of being a "faithful Christian" or a "devout Jew"-*Messianic* or otherwise. Instead, His concern is about: "Did you give the hungry something to eat?" "Did you give the thirsty something to drink?" "Were you kind to strangers (even "strange" ones)?" "Did you clothe those who needed it?" "Visit the sick and imprisoned?" "Help the widows?" "Provide for the orphan?"

During His first coming, Y'shua did not just "preach" and "save souls". He healed and fed people, too. He shunned no one. Denied no one. He touched lepers; fed strangers; reached out to "bag-ladies", and hob-knobbed with the "low-life's". Hookers and the party crowd found in Him a kind of "city of refuge". Pagans saw a new and living hope. He ate with sinners and attended their parties. The self-righteous labeled Him "a glutton and a derelict"! He lifted the bruised and the crushed. Gave hope to the hopeless. And more! In fact, Y'shua offered His help as far as the curse was found! He did not just "minister to their souls". He blessed everyone He came in contact with in some way, shape or form!

But why did He befriend the riffraff, the hookers, the tax-collectors, uneducated farmers, fishermen, and pagans? After all, there were so many "good" and upstanding people in Palestine, too. He did it in their own best interests!

All right – so what are we, the *Body of Messiah*, supposed to do today? the very same thing! We are to continue the work of Messiah as the Body of Messiah. Look around...what did we miss?

(15) *"If a brother or sister is without clothing and in need of daily food, and one of you says to them,*
(16) *"Go in peace, be warmed and be filled," and yet you do not give them what is necessary for their body, what use is that?"* (James 2:15-16)

And again, 1 John 3:17-18 tells us: "(17) *But whoever has the world's goods, and beholds his brother in need and closes his heart against him, how does the love of God abide in him? (18) Little children, let us not love with word or with tongue, but in deed and truth.*" Let me put it his way: anyone who says that he or she knows YHWH, and does not translate that knowledge into acts of kindness and benevolence towards others is a hypocrite – plain and simple. And hypocrites "*will have their share in the lake of fire which has been prepared for the devil and his angels*".

If you, who have accepted Y'shua as your Saviour expect that *Solo Fide* (faith alone) will make you "worthy of the Kingdom", you could be in for a big surprise!

"Faith, if it has not works, is dead..."

"Show me your faith by your works..."

"For a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone...as was Abraham."

"Just as the body is dead without the spirit, so also faith without works is dead."

In these references from James chapter 2, James is using "your" and "you" in a plural sense. He's addressing a group – not individuals. That group is the Assembly of Messiah. The Assembly of Messiah is a community, and it's social in action. It is not only "salt", staying corruption. It is not only "light", dispelling darkness. But it is "life" and "life-giving", too. It's a society within a society for its redemption. It lives in the surrounding community socially. And, it interacts with outsiders "for their best interests".

What made up the early Messianic community's membership? Former fornicators, idolaters, adulterers, effeminate, homosexuals, thieves, the covetous, revilers, swindlers, etc. (1 Cor 6:9-11). Y'shua went to the oppressed, suppressed, depressed, and distressed. We are to do the same! He reached out to the riffraff, the pagans, the Samaritans and the "uncouth". The Assembly (His Body) is to do likewise. In that first Messianic community, everyone was involved in some way. Some prayed for those who worked actively in the ministry. Others provided what still others lacked, etc. There were NO LONE RANGERS! The power of the Gospel, the power of the *Ruach* that we read about in Acts, is best seen in their "group-action"!

Today we need to learn how to minister in, with and through this same dynamic social structure...the Assembly of Messiah. We need to grasp the fact that we are called to not only promote the Gospel, but to become intentionally involved in the lives of others as well. Look at Acts. What drew the people – the "individuals" or their "community"? I say it was their community. Before His death, resurrection, and ascension Y'shua said, "*By this all men will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another*" (John 13:35.). Their display of love for one another, their oneness along with the Gospel message and their faith in action (their works) drew people to Messiah like a moth to a light!

And, it all started with one, small, unified Assembly. It was one small Assembly of about 120 people who were of one heart and one mind about doing the work of Messiah...as the "Body of Messiah".

So, what's wrong with our message today? Nothing. The problem lies with *us*. We've embraced individualism instead of solidarity with those within our fellowships. We're self-centered. We're too selective about who we hang out with. We are too concerned about our own reputations.

Lastly, do you know why the Jerusalem Assembly was persecuted bodily? Because it ministered bodily. They invaded their world – and they did so with an "all for one, and one for all" attitude...in Y'shua's Name! They didn't avoid it. They moved as a team from the bleachers to the field. They became a mighty force, both for and with Messiah in the pockets of sin, vice and poverty. They found themselves knee deep in new discoveries and developments! They worked the works of YHWH in and through Messiah; thereby showed their faith! Unified individuals, zealous for good works (!)..."*Worthy to inherit the Kingdom prepared for them from the foundation of the world.*" "Wheat" among the tares; "Sheep" among the goats.

From the parable, Y'shua quotes that if you have done it to one of my brothers you have done it to me. The brethren are the children of Israel; and those Gentiles adopted into the faith of Israel who accepted the Messiah. They are those who trust in Him and keep His *Torah* (1 John 2:3-4; 3:22-24; 5:2-3; 2 John 1:6; Rev 12:17; 14:12; 22:14).

As we have seen in the section above, "works" are an integral part of "faith".

"Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only." (James 2:24)

This is the same in Judaism. It can thus be said that those persecuting *Torah*-observant followers of Y'shua, are in fact persecuting Him.

On the Eschatological theme – A brief layout of the Second Coming:
"Come in His glory" = Second Coming – at the return of the Battle of Armageddon
"Throne of Glory" = judgment seat
"Gather nations" = nations will be called to judgment
"Sheep nations" = those who supported the believing Israel
"Right hand" = place of authority – protected side
"Goat nations" = wicked nations who sided with the Antichrist against the Believers
"Left side" = place of judgment
"Everlasting fire" = Gehenna – the Lake of Fire

End of Section IX - Teaching on the End Times

SECTION X
CONCLUSION OF EARTHLY MINISTRY
(MATTHEW 26:1– MATTHEW 28:20)

MATTHEW 26:1-75

TEXT:

- (1) “And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples,
- (2) Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified.
- (3) Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas,
- (4) And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him.
- (5) But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people.
- (6) Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,
- (7) There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat.
- (8) But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste?
- (9) For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor.
- (10) When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me.
- (11) For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always.
- (12) For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial.
- (13) Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her.
- (14) Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priests,
- (15) And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver.
- (16) And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.
- (17) Now the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover?
- (18) And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples.
- (19) And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover.
- (20) Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve.
- (21) And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me.
- (22) And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?
- (23) And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.
- (24) The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born.
- (25) Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said.
- (26) And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body.
- (27) And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it;
- (28) For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.
- (29) But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom.
- (30) And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives.
- (31) Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad.
- (32) But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee.
- (33) Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended.
- (34) Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice.
- (35) Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples.
- (36) Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder.

- (37) And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy.
- (38) Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me.
- (39) And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt.
- (40) And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour?
- (41) Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.
- (42) He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done.
- (43) And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy.
- (44) And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words.
- (45) Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners.
- (46) Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.
- (47) And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people.
- (48) Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast.
- (49) And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him.
- (50) And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him.
- (51) And, behold, one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear.
- (52) Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword.
- (53) Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?
- (54) But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be?
- (55) In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me.
- (56) But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled.
- (57) And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled.
- (58) But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end.
- (59) Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death;
- (60) But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses,
- (61) And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days.
- (62) And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?
- (63) But Jesus held his peace. And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God.
- (64) Jesus saith unto him, Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.
- (65) Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.
- (66) What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.
- (67) Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,
- (68) Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?
- (69) Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.
- (70) But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.
- (71) And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.
- (72) And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.
- (73) And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee.
- (74) Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.

(75) *And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."*

NOTE: The final three chapters of Matthew depicting the days just prior to Y'shua's death; as well as the account of His trial, death and resurrection – are replete with deep mystical meaning. I will only touch on some of these themes in this study.

26:1-2 Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified

"(1) And it came to pass, when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said unto his disciples, (2) Ye know that after two days is the feast of the passover, and the Son of man is betrayed to be crucified."

Note that Y'shua speaks of a connection between Passover and His destiny. All of the feasts of the Lord have some bearing on His plan for the ages. They are a "shadow" of what is to come (Heb 8:5, 10:1; Col 2:17). The study and observance of these Feasts (and the rest of *Torah* - Rom 2:13; James 1:22), is fundamental to faith in YHWH.

26:3-5 Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people

"(3) Then assembled together the chief priests, and the scribes, and the elders of the people, unto the palace of the high priest, who was called Caiaphas, (4) And consulted that they might take Jesus by subtlety, and kill him. (5) But they said, Not on the feast day, lest there be an uproar among the people."

Although the leadership was clearly instigating matters against Y'shua, He does not miss the people as a whole – as we will see in the next chapter. This generation was given more blessing than any other as they had the Messiah in their midst (Heb 11:39-40). Some, like Yochanan the Immerser, were fortunate in this respect (Luke 7:28); but the generation as a whole failed to respond to what YHWH had given them (Matt 25:15), and thus their punishment would be great (Luke 12:47).

26:6 Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper

"Now when Jesus was in Bethany, in the house of Simon the leper,"

This is a mistranslation. Lepers were not permitted to live in the city (see Lev 13:46). Since ancient Hebrew and Aramaic were written without vowels, there was no distinction between the Aramaic words *GAR'BA* (leper) and *GARABA* (jar maker or jar merchant). In this story, a woman pours oil from a jar (verse 7ff); therefore, it is apparent that Simon was a jar merchant or jar-maker and not a leper. (Credit to James Trimm of <http://www.nazarene.net/> for this corrected translation.)

The Invitation

"And one of the Pharisees asked Jesus to eat with him. And he went into the Pharisee's house, and sat down to a meal". (Luke 7:36; Mark 14:3 Para)

"Then six days before the Passover Jesus went to Bethany, where Lazarus was which had been dead, and whom he had raised from the dead. There they made him a supper: and Martha served: But Lazarus was one of them that reclined at the table with Jesus" (John 12:1-2 Para.).

Here, we see Y'shua in Bethany on the day of the selection of the Passover lambs, which was six days prior to the Passover. On this day, He was invited to eat a meal at the house of Simon the Pharisee who was a jar merchant or jar maker. Although it is not stated in the verses above, we will see that the disciples of Y'shua were also invited to this meal.

When one carefully reads the context of Luke 10:38-42 and John 11:1-5; 12:1-2, it seems that Martha is serving because she is the wife of Simon the Pharisee. It is also highly likely that the reason Lazarus is at the meal is because he lived with his sister and brother-in-law (John 12:9).

In order to more clearly understand what is happening here, we must remember that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were very dear friends of Y'shua. John specifically records that Y'shua loved each of them (John 11:5). Not only were they his dear friends, but genealogical studies indicate that Mary, Martha, and Lazarus were also siblings of Y'shua's mother – which makes them his relatives. Because of their friendship and the time they spent with Y'shua, they knew much about Him and what He taught.

26:7-13 There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment

"(7) There came unto him a woman having an alabaster box of very precious ointment, and poured it on his head, as he sat at meat. (8) But when his disciples saw it, they had indignation, saying, To what purpose is this waste? (9) For this ointment might have been sold for much, and given to the poor. (10) When Jesus understood it, he said unto them, Why trouble ye the woman? for she hath wrought a good work upon me. (11) For ye have the poor always with you; but me ye have not always. (12) For in that she hath poured this ointment on my body, she did it for my burial. (13) Verily I say unto you, Wheresoever this gospel shall be preached in the whole world, there shall also this, that this woman hath done, be told for a memorial of her."

Throughout the Bible, there are a number of individuals who are called by name to be remembered for certain actions or events that they either caused or took part in. Even though the woman noted here in Matthew and also in Mark is not mentioned by name, it seems logical that she was Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus; and quite possibly one of the women who continually helped to support Y'shua in his ministry (Luke 8:1-3).

Washing and anointing Y'shua's feet

"And when a certain woman in the city, who was a sinner, knew that he was eating a meal in the Pharisee's house, she brought an alabaster vial of ointment, and stood at his feet behind him weeping, and began to wash his feet with her tears, and wipe them with the hair of her head, and kissed his feet, and anointed them with ointment" (Luke 7:37-38 Para)

"Then Mary took a pound of ointment of spikenard [i.e., pure nard], very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment" (John 12:3 KJV)

There are four important things to learn from these two accounts:

John clearly records that the woman who did the anointing of Y'shua's feet was Mary, the sister of Lazarus and Martha:

"And there was a certain sick one, Lazarus from Bethany, of the village of Mary and her sister Martha. And it was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was sick" (John 11:1-2 Para)

Mary is said to be a sinner – but are not all people sinners? Without going into a detailed explanation, most Bible scholars feel Mary was more than likely a very well-known and prosperous prostitute. She was also the sister of Lazarus and Martha and a person of enough importance to be allowed into the house of the self-righteous Pharisee, Simon.

Coming into the house, Mary sees Y'shua reclining in the traditional eastern manner at a table on a low couch with his feet stretched out behind him, while eating with his right hand. Mary comes up behind Him, kneels down, breaks open the vial of ointment, and washes His feet with her tears before rubbing sweet smelling ointment on them.

During this time, it was a sign of great immodesty for a Jewish woman to allow her hair to flow over her shoulders in public. Mary's actions show that she was not concerned about what people thought of her, because she had more important things on her mind than the customs and prohibitions of that day.

Simon's Indignation

"Now when the Pharisee saw this he said to himself. If this man were a prophet, he would have known that this woman that touches him is a sinful person" (Luke 7:39 Para.).

Simon the Pharisee was full of self-righteousness. He could not understand how Y'shua would allow a person as sinful as Mary to touch him, and Simon condemned him for it. In Simon's thinking, this was proof that Y'shua was not the Messiah.

Simon believed in a social caste system that there were minor and major sins. He did not understand that whether a sin is great or small, it is still a sin. The end result is the same – all sin, unless forgiven, is punishable by eternal death (Rom 6:23).

Herein is a great truth of the Gospel message. The Father and Y'shua have always loved their human creations who are all sinners, and it is because of and through their great love for their creation that we have hope for salvation:

"For God so loved the world, that he gave his only begotten Son, that whoever believes on him should not perish, but have everlasting life. For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:16-17 KJV). See Mark 16:16; Rom 5:6-10; 8:7-18; James 4:4; 1 John 4:9-10.

Y'shua loved Mary the sinner. He had a special love for her because she was a close friend (John 11:5); however, He also loved all the other sinners who were there that day in Simon's house, including Simon.

Spikenard

This ointment is called "spikenard", as revealed in Mark 14:3. The Hebrew *Zohar* (a book of very deep and often mystical commentary), relates spikenard to the man who dies before his time because of the good deeds he has done:

Soncino Zohar, Bereshith, Section 1, Page 56b: "*While the king was still with his company at table, my spikenard sent forth its fragrance (Song of Solomon 1:12).* 'This verse', he said, 'can be expounded as referring to the ways of God. When God sees that a man who cleaves to Him and with whom He abides will one day degenerate, He takes him from the world prematurely, culling, as it were, the odour while it is still sweet; hence it is written, "while the King was with his company, my spikenard gave up its scent." The King is God; the company is the good man who cleaves to Him and walks in His ways; the spikenard indicates the good deeds on account of which he is removed from the world before his time.'

The women and their alabaster boxes

In two separate incidences in the Gospels, we find two women pouring precious, perfumed ointment on the head and feet of Y'shua. In both cases, the women were criticised for "wasting" so expensive a gift in such an extravagant way. In the Mark account (Mark 14:3-9), the value of an alabaster box of perfumed oil was declared to be the same as a year's wages. Yet, these women broke their alabaster boxes and poured out the fragrant oil to show their faith and devotion to the One who was the Messiah of Israel.

Here in Matt 26:6-13 and also in Mark 14:3-9, we find two testimonies of the same event which took place at the house of Simon the Leper, located in Bethany on the eastern face of the Mount of Olives. In this story, the women broke the box and poured the perfumed ointment on the head of Y'shua. The disciples rebuked her by stressing that this ointment could have been sold and the proceeds given to help the poor. Of course, this was a noble gesture on their part. However, Y'shua used this as an opportunity to make two points. One was that He, as the Messiah of the Most High Elyon of Israel, was worth the gesture of devotion that this act so openly showed. He said, "*The poor you will always have with you, and you can help them any time you want. But, you will not always have me*" (Mark 14:6-7).

Secondly, He was telling His disciples that He was soon to be killed. He did this by saying that He would not always be with them, and then likened the anointing with the perfume to the rite of preparing a body for burial: "*She poured perfume on My body beforehand to prepare for My burial*" (Mark 14:8). Y'shua was so impressed with this gesture that He declared that, "*wherever the gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her*" (Mark 14:9). Surely, this has been true for the past 2000 years.

In the second account found in Luke 7:36-50, we find Y'shua reclining at the table as an invited guest in the home of one of the Pharisees. A woman who was known to be a sinner (prostitute) carried an alabaster box of perfume into the room, knelt down and wept tears upon Y'shua's feet – which she then wiped with her hair as she poured the perfumed oil on His feet. In this case, the Pharisee mocked Y'shua by saying that if He were a prophet; He would know that the woman was a sinner. Y'shua knew what this man was thinking and so turned to rebuke him.

Y'shua asked the Pharisee who is most grateful for being forgiven a debt: a man who owed a moneylender 500 denarii or the one who owed 50 denarii. The Pharisee said the one who owed more. Then Y'shua pointed out that what this woman was doing, by faith in His ability to forgive her sin, was displaying her devotion for having her sin forgiven. Y'shua chastised the Pharisee for not showing Him even the most basic courtesy shown to guests in that day; i.e., providing water to wash His feet when He arrived (verse 44); giving the customary "holy kiss" upon each cheek (verse 45); and pouring olive oil upon the head of an arriving guest (verse 46). Yet, Y'shua pointed out how the woman wet His feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, how she kissed His feet which were a sign of the greatest humility, and how she poured expensive perfumed oil on His feet. Washing one's feet in the culture of the Middle East, even today, is a sign of great humility and service because the feet were considered one of the lowliest parts of the body. In

fact, if you visit a Bedouin tent today, you do not sit on the ground straight legged with the soles of your feet facing out toward your hosts as this is a great insult.

The self-righteous Pharisee obviously brought Y'shua into his home to challenge Him, so he did not show Him the courtesy or honour due Him. However, the sinful woman who realised her sinfulness came in humility and worship seeking forgiveness. Y'shua said, "*I tell you, her many sins have been forgiven - for she loved much. But he, who has been forgiven little loves little*" (verse 47). Y'shua told her that her faith had saved her and sent her away in peace, leaving the Pharisee to ponder His words.

All of us would agree that these women showed great devotion by their actions. In fact, by breaking their alabaster boxes, which was the only way to get the ointment out, they showed the depth of their commitment. Their gesture displayed a total commitment to their Lord, which cost them much. They could not put the box back together and get the ointment back. And, their total commitment to Y'shua was subject to criticism in both cases. In one instance, it was the believers who criticised the woman; and in the other case, the religious leaders of the world.

Customs of the Day

(44) "And turning to the woman, He said to Simon, *Do you see this woman? I came into your house. You did not give water for My feet, but she washed My feet with tears and wiped off with the hairs of her head.*

(45) *You gave Me no kiss, but she from when I entered did not stop fervently kissing My feet.*

(46) *You did not anoint My head with oil, but she anointed My feet with ointment.*" (Luke 7:44-46)

During Y'shua's lifetime, there were three important customs that concerned an invited guest: When an invited guest entered the host's house, the host would place his hand on the guest's shoulder and give him the kiss of peace.

The kiss of peace was similar to today's shaking of hands or hugging when greeting a person. It was intended to be an indication of happiness because of one's arrival, affection towards the person; or the affirmation of one's peaceful intentions toward another person.

In Y'shua's lifetime, the kiss of peace was also an indication of respect that was always given to a person of importance or a notable rabbi upon their entering the host's home.

When a guest entered a home, the host would either supply water for his guest to wash his feet, wash the person's feet himself, or have a servant or slave wash them.

Guests were given water by their host as a courtesy to provide for their cleanliness and comfort (Gen 18:1-4; 19:1-2; 24:32; 43:24).

The washing of another person's feet was a gesture of submission to the authority of another (1 Sam 25:41).

The washing of another person's feet was sometimes an expression of respect and love (Luke 1:37-50; John 12:3).

The host would either burn a small amount of sweet-smelling incense to perfume the house or place a drop of rose oil / perfume upon the guest's head.

All of these things were done to show respect and to provide comfort and pleasure for the guest; however, Simon performed none of these common courtesies for Y'shua who was the guest of honour. By this neglect, we can clearly see Simon's attitude toward Y'shua.

The broken alabaster

There were two customs in the East that may have had a bearing on why Mary broke the alabaster rather than just opening it and pouring the ointment out. Both of these customs fit well with the Gospel message when viewed in the light of who Y'shua was and what he was about to do on the Passover:

If a glass was used by a distinguished guest, it was broken so that it could never be used by a lesser person. It was a custom to first bathe the dead, and then anoint the body with fragrant ointments and/or perfumes.

After the body had been anointed, whatever contained these ointments and/or perfumes were broken and its fragments placed with the body.

Lane gives this explanation: "The costly perfume is identified as nard, the aromatic oil extracted from a root native to India. To retain the fragrance of nard, enough ointment for one application was sealed in small alabaster flasks. The long neck of the flask had to be broken to release the aroma. Early in the first century Pliny the Elder (Natural History XIII. iii. 19) remarked that "the best ointment is preserved in alabaster." The value of the perfume, and its identification as nard, suggests that it was a family heirloom that was passed on from one generation to another, from mother to daughter." William L. Lane, The Gospel According to Mark (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1974), p. 492.

26:14-16 Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot

"(14) **Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot**, went unto the chief priests, (15) And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. (16) And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him." (Matt 26:14-16)

Judas, the Thief

"One of his disciples, Judas Iscariot, the one that would betray him said, Why was not this ointment sold for 300 denarii and given to the poor? He said this not because he cared for the poor; but because **he was a thief and carried and administered the money**" (John 12:4-6 Para)

Clearly, Judas was not concerned with the meaning of Mary's act of washing Y'shua's feet or the anointing of his head. What concerned Judas was the amount of money that could have been made by selling the sweet-smelling nard. It is obvious that Judas' question was directed to the other disciples, because many of them also took up his complaint:

"When the disciples saw this, they were indignant, and asked why the ointment had been wasted on Jesus, when it could have been sold for a great amount of money [300 denarii] that could have then been given to the poor, and they were angry with her for what she had done" (Matt 26:8-9; Mark 14:4-5 Para) see also John 12:5-6.

The complaint of Judas and the other disciples about selling the ointment for 300 denarii to give to the poor is yet more proof that the four Gospel accounts speak of the same event.

300 Denarii

To the casual reader, 300 denarii will mean very little; however, during the time of Y'shua, 300 denarii was an enormous amount of money.

One denarii was a full day's pay for a common labourer; therefore, the value of the ointment was at least the value of a full year's pay for a common labourer.

In John 6: 1-10, we see that a meal to feed over 5000 people would have only cost 200 denarii.

The value of the ointment was either 10 or 7.5 times the amount of money that Judas received for his betrayal of Y'shua, depending on which reference you use. (Matt 26:14-15).

The ointment that Mary used to anoint Y'shua was the extremely expensive nard which was made from a rare plant grown in India. Because nard was very expensive, it was normally used very sparingly.

We can safely assume that Mary knew the value of the ointment, and that this occasion was of more value to her than any amount of nard. Her decision to anoint Y'shua with nard shows that her love for Y'shua, and what he thought of her and could do for her was much more valuable than the ointment.

This is also a part of the Gospel message. We are told that we are to love the Father and Y'shua above all other things – including our physical life. We are not worthy to enter the Kingdom of YHWH if we find anything of more value or more important than the Father's call to salvation.

The Biblical Reasons for the Betrayal

Some biblical scholars seem strangely reluctant to pursue the reasons for Judas' betrayal of Y'shua. On the other hand, some theories have little or no biblical support and must definitely be questioned. The Scriptures do suggest several reasons why Judas betrayed the Master, and I believe these to be sufficient.

First of all, we must grasp the fact that Judas, distinct from the eleven, was never a true believer. We know that the 'Bread of Life' discourse' (John 6:22-71) caused many 'followers' of Y'shua to turn aside, refusing His teaching of a Saviour Who was a suffering substitute for men (John 6:60ff.). As an explanation for the turning away of the crowds, Y'shua told His disciples that these unbelievers were not unknown or unexpected. One of them, known to Y'shua (but not yet comprehended by the eleven) was Judas the betrayer: "But there are some of you who do not believe.' For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who it was that would betray Him" (John 6:64).

Moments later Y'shua said, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him". (John 6:70-71)

In the upper room when Y'shua washed the feet of the twelve, He distinguished between the need for what might be called daily cleansing and the once-for-all washing of regeneration. There are two Greek words used by John in this passage: "louo", 'to bathe'; and "nipto", 'to wash up'. Trench says of the difference between these terms: "... nipto" almost always express(es) the washing of a part of the body... while love-in, which is not so much 'to wash' as 'to bathe'... implies always, not the washing of a part of the body, but of the whole...." (R. W. Trench, *Synonyms of the New Testament* (Marshallton, Delaware: The National Foundation for Christian Education, n.d.) p. 151.) In addition, Y'shua also differentiated between the eleven who were 'clean'; that is, saved; and Judas who was not:

"Jesus said to him (Peter), 'He who has bathed (louo,) needs only to wash (nipto,) his feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you.' For He knew the one who was betraying Him; for this reason He said, 'Not all of you are clean'" (John 13:10-11).

From these Scriptures, we conclude that Judas was an unbeliever, a son of perdition (John 17:12). "The exact expression, ho uios ta's apo'leias, is used of the man of sin in 2 Thess. 2:3." (Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), p. 728, fn. 42.) As an unbeliever, Judas failed to grasp who Y'shua really was. Like Satan, who progressively came to control Judas, there was a stubborn refusal to submit to Y'shua as Lord of all. This insubordination may have been carefully concealed, but Judas' own words betrayed his condition. When Y'shua announced during the Passover meal that one of the twelve would betray him, the eleven all responded, "Surely not I, Lord?" (Matt 26:22). But when Judas spoke to the Saviour, he said, "Surely it is not I, Rabbi?" (Matt 26:25). Granted, this is a subtle slip of the tongue; but nonetheless an indication of the condition of the heart of Judas.

The second reason given for the betrayal of Y'shua is that of greed. This condition is most obvious from several incidences. John is careful to inform us that Judas functioned as the treasurer of this little band (John 12:6). Judas was especially irritated by Mary's seemingly wasteful use of her expensive perfume to anoint Y'shua. While the formal reason for his protest was that this could have been sold and the proceeds distributed to the poor, the truth was that he resented not being able to steal from the proceeds which he would have had in his keeping.

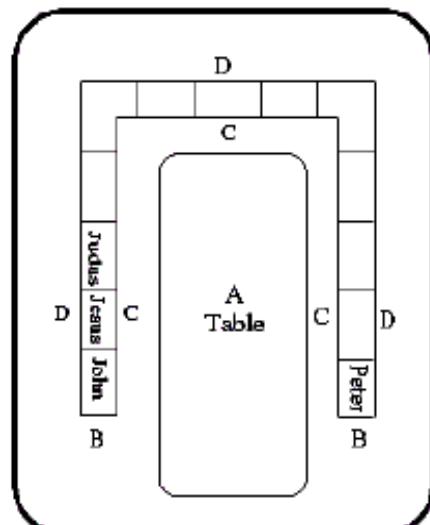
Another evidence of Judas' greed is to be found in his dealings with the religious leaders. His first recorded words with them were, "What are you willing to give me to deliver Him up to you?" (Matt 26:15).

Many scholars find it difficult to believe that a desire for money – especially a sum as insignificant as thirty pieces of silver – could compel him to sell out the Saviour. But Y'shua was not the master of Judas; money was. It is amazing what men will do, even for a small amount of money.

The thirty pieces of silver: "Yet none the less do we mark the deep symbolic significance of it all, in that the Lord was, so to speak, paid for out of the Temple money which was destined for the purchase of sacrifices, and that He, Who took on Him the form of a servant, was sold and bought at the legal price of a slave (Exodus 21:32)." Alford Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1965), II, p. 477).

The third reason for Judas' ignominious act was that of ambition and self-seeking. This I arrive at by inference, and thus some may not consider the evidence compelling. Several things suggest ambition to me. Judas was in the final analysis, possessed by Satan to do this dastardly deed (John 6:70; 13:2, 27). We should expect Judas to manifest the character traits of Satan; one of which was ambition and self-seeking (cf. Isaiah 14:13-15; 1 Tim 3:7). I believe that Judas initially joined this intimate group that followed the Saviour, expecting to further his own position (not unlike the ambitions of some of the other disciples, cf. Luke 22:24).

Some Bible students have determined by careful study that Judas was sitting in the place of honour (second only to Y'shua) during the last supper (see layout on right). Many have gone on to suggest from this that Y'shua placed Judas here as a kind of last appeal to him to change his mind. But the text gives us nothing to support this conjecture. Indeed, the text (John 13) implies that when the disciples entered the banquet room, they jockeyed for the best



positions and the seat of honour. They ignored the basin placed by the door which would have been used by the most humble servant to wash the feet of those entering. This is what Y'shua did as an example of humility. So it would seem that Judas had the seat of honour because he asserted himself the most to get it. "There is, we believe, ample evidence that he not only claimed, but actually obtained, the chief seat at the table next to the Lord. This, as previously explained, was not, as is generally believed, at the right, but at the left of Christ, not below, but above Him, on the couches or pillows on which they reclined." Edersheim, Life and Times, II, p. 493.

"Around a low Eastern table, oval or rather elongated, two parts covered with a cloth, and standing or else suspended, the single divans or pillows are ranged in the form of an elongated horseshoe, leaving free one end of the table, somewhat as in the accompanying woodcut. A represents the table, B B respectively the ends of the two rows of single divans on which each guest reclines on his left side, with his head (C) nearest the table, and his feet (D) stretching back towards the ground.

So far for the arrangement of the table. Jewish documents are equally explicit as to that of the guests. It seems to have been quite an established rule that, in a company of more than two, say of three, the chief personage or Head—in this instance, of course, Christ—reclined on the middle divan. We know from the Gospel narrative that John occupied the place on His right, at that end of the divans—as we may call it—at the head of the table. But the chief place next to the Master would be that to His left, or above Him. In the strife of the disciples, which should be accounted the greatest, this had been claimed, and we believe it to have been actually occupied, by Judas. This explains how, when Christ whispered to John by what sign to recognise the traitor, none of the other disciples heard it. It also explains, how Christ would first hand to Judas the sop, which formed part of the Paschal ritual, beginning with him as the chief guest at the table, without thereby exciting special notice. Lastly, it accounts for the circumstance that, when Judas, desirous of ascertaining whether his treachery was known, dared to ask whether it was he, and received the affirmative answer, no one at the table knew what had passed." Edersheim, Life and Times, II, p. 494.

The fourth and perhaps final reason for the betrayal of Y'shua by Judas was that he had long contemplated it; and for some time intended to do it: "But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, 'Why was this ointment not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to the poor people?'" (John 12:4-5). This passage seems to indicate that Judas' act was the result of considerable deliberation and a rather long-standing decision. Significantly, Lane quotes this remark by Stauffer: "It may be that Judas, the non-Galilean, had for months been a secret agent of the Jerusalem Sanhedrin assigned to work among the Galilean's disciples. At any rate, he regarded the capture of the man who had been proclaimed a blasphemer and pseudo-prophet (John 11:57) as his bounden duty. For he took an oath pledging himself to commit the betrayal—an oath that may well have included a curse upon himself should he fail to carry out the task he had undertaken." (Lane, Mark, p. 496, fn. 27.) Then, as I began to investigate the Greek term used here (*mello*), I found it was often employed by John, and sometimes with the sense of intention or volition. "Denoting an intended action: intend, propose, have in mind ..." (Arndt and Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 502.) "And this He was saying to test him; for He Himself knew what He was intending to do" (John 6:6; cf. 7:35; Acts 20:7, 13; 27:30).

Finally, I discovered this marginal rendering for John 6:71: "Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was **intending to betray Him**" (John 6:71 NASV, marginal rendering). Judas' actions were no impulse – no quick decision. I believe that he had at least toyed with the idea of a betrayal for months.

Let me attempt to construct the process by which Judas came to his fateful decision to betray Y'shua by putting all of these factors together. I must caution you that there is a good deal of conjecture here, but at least we may gain a better grasp of what may have happened and why.

Distinct from the eleven, Judas joined Y'shua in a state of unbelief. "The one non-Galilean, probably, was Judas Iscariot. His name has usually been interpreted, following several early Greek manuscripts, as meaning 'man of Kerioth.' If so, he was from either Kerioth in Moab, on the east of the Dead Sea, or, more likely, Kerioth-Hezron in the deep south of Judaea. In view of his eventual treachery, it is no wonder that the Gospels always portray him as the odd man out; but it may well be that he never really felt at home among this motley crowd of Galileans. Many motives for his volte-face have been suggested, but it is possible that a Judaean disdain for an essentially Galilean movement was among them." (R. T. France, I Came to Set the Earth on Fire (Downers Grove: InterVarsity Press, 1976), pp. 53-54.) The faith of the eleven was limited, but real. Not so with Judas. Judas had some other reason(s), then, for joining this band of disciples. I would suspect that he at least regarded Y'shua as a messianic hopeful who had charismatic appeal and the ability

to attract and motivate the masses. He perhaps perceived Y'shua as a man who was putting together an organisation to revolt against Rome and to physically restore Israel to its rightful place in the sun.

These hopes were often threatened by what Judas heard Y'shua teach. He spoke more of spiritual reform than of social and political action and revolution. A real crises must have come to head in the 'bread of life discourse' of Y'shua in John chapter six; for there, when the crowds were ready to forcibly make Y'shua their King (as Judas had hoped for), Y'shua declined and began to teach of His self-sacrifice and atoning death. The crowds departed, never again to follow Y'shua (John 6:66); and in my mind Judas mentally departed as well – but for some strange reason, he still followed as a disciple.

Judas, like the others, had left all to follow Y'shua (Matt 19:27); but he had expected a little return on his investment by now. Any enterprising businessman is willing to deny himself some luxuries in the hope of making a profit, but too much time had passed and no hope of advantage was on the horizon. Y'shua began to talk more and more of death, not of defeat for the Romans; and glory for Israel, Himself, and especially the disciples. He had charge of the money bag. He would help himself from time to time. After all, he deserved it for all the sacrifices he had made. A man should see a little fruit from his labours.

Perhaps, too, Judas gave thought to taking over the organisation. He, no doubt, was a man of many capabilities (which may have earned him the job of treasurer for the group). If Y'shua would not use the organisation that was beginning to take shape under His ministry, why not remove Y'shua and take over himself? Such thoughts, I would suggest, may well have been entertained in the mind of Judas over the months approaching the final assault on Jerusalem.

With the triumphal entry, the hopes of the betrayer may well have been rekindled one final time. But it was not long until the inevitable became obvious. Y'shua seemed to almost deliberately antagonise the opposition and to alienate those who could have offered their support to the cause of the Kingdom.

The last straw for Judas was what occurred at the dinner party in Y'shua's honour at the home of Simon the Leper (Jar Maker) (Matt 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9; John 12:1-8). In Judas' mind, Mary foolishly squandered an expensive perfume on Y'shua. "Such gifts were given to kings. Only such a gift would be a worthy expression of her deep devotion and profound love for the Master. It was customary to anoint the heads of Rabbis and special guests at marriage feasts, but Mary anointed with the most expensive perfume both the head and the feet of her Lord." (J. W. Shepard, *The Christ of the Gospels* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1939), pp. 531-532.)

Should this not have been sold and the money given to the poor? "It was natural for them to think in terms of provision for the poor, for it was customary on the evening of Passover to remember the poor with gifts (M. Pesachim IX. 11; X. 1; cf. John 13:29). It was also the practice to give as charity one part of the second tithe normally spent in Jerusalem during the feast." (Lane, Mark, p. 493.) Even the other disciples agreed. But the waste of money was perhaps only secondary to Judas. The real irritation may have been Y'shua's words of commendation and His explanation that Mary's anointing was in preparation for His burial. Here He was, heralded and welcomed by those in Jerusalem. Here was the day of opportunity for Y'shua, and He can talk only of death. How could anyone (Judas thought) be so shortsighted?

Judas may have reasoned that the betrayal of Y'shua would do several things. First, it would give Y'shua the death which He seemed determined to have. Also, it would remove Y'shua as the leader of this movement and give Judas the opportunity to take over and do it right. Finally, it would provide an opportunity to recover money that he had every right to expect.

And so it would seem – a lethal combination of greed, ambition and rebellion met in this man Judas. For years he played the role of disciple, but always looking out for his own interests. Such sin cannot be brooded upon and concealed forever.

26:17-22 Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying to Him, "Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover?"

"(17) Now on the first day of the feast of unleavened bread the disciples came to Jesus, saying unto him, Where wilt thou that we prepare for thee to eat the passover? (18) And he said, Go into the city to such a man, and say unto him, The Master saith, My time is at hand; I will keep the passover at thy house with my disciples. (19) And the disciples did as Jesus had appointed them; and they made ready the passover. (20) Now when the even was come, he sat down with the twelve. (21) And as they did eat, he said, Verily I say unto you, that one of you shall betray me. (22) And they were exceeding sorrowful, and began every one of them to say unto him, Lord, is it I?"

Again, YHWH's Feasts play an important role and still should for anyone following Y'shua and the ways of YHWH. The modern religious holiday of Easter is pagan in origin and is alien and contrary to what YHWH has established. (The King James Version of the Bible even has the audacity to replace Passover with "Easter" in Acts 12:4 – a clear case of tampering with the Word of YHWH.)

YHWH commanded His people to keep the Feast of Passover/Unleavened Bread in Exod 12:14-20; 13:6-10; 23:15; 34:18; Lev 23:5-8; Num 28:17-18, Deut 16:8,16).

In addition, all males who were able were required to appear at the Temple in Jerusalem for three feasts: Pesach (Passover), Shavout (Pentecost) and Succot (Tabernacles) – as found in Deut 16:16.

The Preparation Day

We know the following three facts about the preparation of the Passover ceremony that Y'shua and his disciples observed:

Y'shua instructed his disciples to make preparation for the Passover (Matt 26:17-18; Mark 14:12-15; Luke 22:7-12).

The disciples did as they were instructed and prepared for the Passover (Matt 26:20; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:13).

Y'shua and his disciples did eat what they considered the Passover meal (Matt 26:21-22; Mark 14:17; Luke 22:14-16).

26:23-25 And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.

"(23) **And he answered and said, He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me.** (24) The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! it had been good for that man if he had not been born. (25) Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master, is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said."

This would indicate that Judas was sitting on one side of Y'shua (with John on the other). As dipping in the bowl (at Pesach/Passover) is done to the left, this places Judas to His right, in the seat of honour at the Seder table.

This alludes to one of the Psalms:

"Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me." (Psalm 41:9)

26:26 And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and brake it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body."

Another incorrect translation that has led to erroneous doctrine. Y'shua does not bless the bread. "Blessing things" as such is foreign to Judaism. Rather, Y'shua blessed YHWH the maker of the bread, which is still done today at Passover Seders.

This is the blessing He would have been reciting at this point of the meal:

"Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu Melech haOlam, hamotzi lehem, min ha'aretz."

"Blessed are you YHWH God, King of the Universe, Who brings forth bread from the earth."

One of the most basic examples of a rabbinic command that Y'shua obeyed is in the realm of blessings. The sole scriptural basis for the many blessings that an observant Jew still says daily is Deut 8:10:

"ve·a·kal·TA ve·sa·VA·ta u·ve·rak·TA et a·do·NAI e·lo·HE·ka"

"When you have eaten your fill, thank YHWH your God..."

(literally, "And you will eat and you will be full and you will bless YHWH your God").

The sages found justification in this verse for saying a blessing before the meal as well as after, and on many other occasions—indeed, on almost every occasion.

The general rule as delineated in the Babylonian Talmud (Berachot 35a) was “kol da·VAR she·ne·he·neh ta·UN be·ra·KAH” (anything that is enjoyed requires a blessing). If a man built a house or bought something new he was to say, “Blessed is he who has brought us to this moment”.

If one saw a place where great miracles had occurred in Israel's history, one was to say, “Blessed is he who in this place performed miracles for our ancestors”.

In response to a shooting star, lightning, a storm or an earthquake, one was to say: “Blessed is he whose strength fills the universe”; and a mountain, hill, lake, river or desert was to prompt “Blessed is he who fashions the works of creation”.

There was a blessing to be said before publicly reading from the Torah, and another at the completion of the reading; a blessing after immersing oneself in a mikveh (ritual immersion bath); a blessing upon seeing a great scholar.

Y'shua's use of Blessings

There is evidence that Y'shua adhered to the rulings of the Oral Torah in his use of various blessings. In conformity with the sages' interpretation of Deut 8:10, Y'shua not only recited a blessing after meals, but also said the blessing before meals: “ba·RUK ha·mo·TSI LE·hem min ha·A·rets” (Blessed is he who brings bread from the earth). As mentioned above, it is recorded in verse 26 that at the last Passover meal that Y'shua ate with his disciples in Jerusalem, Y'shua “took bread and blessed and broke and gave to his disciples”.

Since in the Greek text there is no direct object following the verbs “blessed”, “broke” and “gave”, English translators have felt it necessary to supply the word “it” after each of these, or at least after “broke” and “gave”. The English reader, therefore, receives the impression that Y'shua not only divided and distributed the bread, but blessed it as well. This is simply a misunderstanding. In the context of taking a loaf of bread before beginning a meal, the blessing can only be a blessing directed toward YHWH.

Saying Grace

Before dining with the two disciples from Emmaus, Y'shua “blessed, broke and gave”, as he did before he fed the five thousand with five loaves and two fish (In Luke's account, but not in Mark's or Matthew's, the text reads “blessed them”; but one important Greek manuscript reads “blessed for them” in Luke 9:16). Because of the recurring “blessed, broke and gave the bread” in the Gospels, it is a common Christian misunderstanding that Y'shua blessed the bread. Consequently, Christians customarily “bless the food” before they eat a meal.

The blessing that was said in Y'shua's time before one ate was praise and thanksgiving to YHWH who so wondrously provides food for his children, to him who “brings bread from the earth”. One does not bless the food, nor does one even ask YHWH to bless the food. One blesses YHWH who provides the food.

It is similarly a misunderstanding to assume that Y'shua multiplied the loaves and fish by blessing them. Y'shua, as usual, simply blessed YHWH before beginning the meal. The miracle was not in the blessing, for food did not multiply on other occasions when Y'shua offered a blessing before breaking bread.

Better Understanding

This is a good example of how Christians' lack of knowledge of Jewish custom has led to misunderstanding an act of Y'shua. In this case, it has led to the development of a Christian practice that has no foundation whatsoever in Y'shua's own practice or teaching – though perhaps not harmful in itself. Luke made it clearer for his Greek-speaking readers when he described Paul's practice of “saying grace”. A literal translation of Acts 27:35 reads: “And taking bread, he gave thanks to God before all, and breaking, he began to eat”.

Which bread must be used for Holy Communion and for Passover?

It is very interesting that there are two main types of Hebrew bread: “Matzo” and “Lechem”, the “bitter” and “sweet bread”. The flat and scorched “bread of affliction” (Matzo) is eaten during Pesach (Passover) which has no leaven in it, pointing to Y'shua who came as a servant and was bruised for our transgressions.

The Lechem bread is the seat raised bread with leaven in it, also pointing to Y'shua. This is the bread that we are supposed to eat during Holy Communion services and not the "flat bread", as all the words used for bread in the verses referring to Holy Communion is raised bread. This bread is full of leaven (symbolic of sin) and it is sweet and raised. This therefore means that Y'shua came to bear all our sins on him, as he became the Lechem that we might have everlasting life. As said, every time we read in the New Covenant of the bread at Holy Communion, you will find the Greek word "artos" or "psomi." In Hebrew it is "lechem"

Hebrew words:

matzah (singular) מַצָּה, matzot (plural) מַצּוֹת, means unleavened bread.

lekhem (singular) לְחֵם, lekhemim (plural) לְחִמִּים, means regular bread.

Aramaic words:

patireh פָּתִירָה means "unleavened bread", d'patireh דְּפָטִירָה means "the unleavened bread", which is the equivalent of hamatzah/hamatzot in Hebrew.

lakhma לְחֵמָה, means regular bread, and is the equivalent of lekhem in Hebrew.

Greek words:

azumos—azumon—azuma αζυμος—αζυμων—αζυμα, means unleavened bread.

artos—arton ἀρτος—ἀρτον, means regular bread.

psomi(to) ψωμι(τό), means regular bread in modern Greek.

epiousios επιουσιος, means daily bread in modern Greek.

26:27-28 For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins

"(27) And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink ye all of it; (28) **For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins.**"

(23) "For I received from the Lord what I also delivered to you, that the Lord Jesus in the night in which He was betrayed took bread;

(24) and giving thanks, He broke and said, Take, eat; this is My body which is broken on behalf of you; this do in remembrance of Me.

(25) In the same way the cup also, after supping, saying, This cup is the New Covenant in My blood; as often as you drink, do this in remembrance of Me." (1Cor 11:23-25 LITV, also see Luke 22:19- 20.)

What does the Bible really say about the New Covenant?

A verse taken out of the context of the whole of Scripture can put the wrong "spin" on what the passage actually means, even making it seem to contradict the rest. Here is a prime example:

"In that he saith, a new (covenant) he hath made the first old. But that which is becoming old and waxeth aged is nigh unto vanishing away." (Heb 8:13, ASV)

Many misinterpret this to be saying that the "New Testament" conflicts with the "Old". While there are some important differences, this is quite the wrong approach to take. In the original Greek, the word here for "new" means "fresh", in contrast to what is now "uninspiring" by comparison (2 Cor 3:7-11).

But the phrase quoted is from Jeremiah 31 (written in Hebrew), so it is much more fruitful to study the meaning in Hebrew than in Greek. The Hebrew word for "new" is chadashah. Let's look at how this term is used most often:

The "new moon" is called Rosh Chodesh ("head of the month"). Chodesh is related to chadashah, and actually means, "renewing one". Actually, there is not a different moon there each month – but a "renewal" of the same one.

An often-repeated Hebrew prayer found in Lam 5:21 says, "Chadesh yamenu k'qedem". Again, the first word shares the same root as chadashah; here it is a verb. The rest of the phrase reads "our days, as of old" or "like the ancient time". If you want something to be "new" in the sense of "never seen before", you hardly want it to be just like something ancient! But "renew our days [to be] like those of old" makes sense. It is another occurrence of the same kind which fills the same role or position. So B'rit Chadashah can just as properly be translated "Renewed Covenant" as "New Covenant".

Does this hold true in the way ancient covenants actually worked? Yes. In ancient suzerainty treaties, if the situation changed for one party, a covenant could be amended (or renewed) to adapt to the new circumstance. But only what was no longer applicable would be revised; everything else remained in effect exactly as before.

If a covenant is to be renewed, there must be a prior relationship between the two parties. With whom does our theme verse say the New Covenant is to be made?

"Behold, the days are coming', declares the LORD, 'when I will make a new covenant with the House of Isra'el and the House of Judah.'" (Jer 31:31, KJV)

It is specifically to be made with both segments or "houses" of Isra'el! So to even be a participant in the New Covenant, we have to fit into one of these categories, Isra'el or Judah. If we are not, why even bother to argue about covenants that have nothing to do with us? The sins the New Covenant addresses had to have been committed by someone who had been included in the first Covenant.

Once a covenant is violated, it is considered nullified. That's why a replacement was needed: because they had no covenant anymore! The covenant itself was not faulty; but because one of the participating parties (Isra'el) had broken it and it could no longer remain in effect and thus had to be renewed. YHWH had promised certain curses would come upon Isra'el if they violated the agreement they'd made with Him.

"And for this reason He is the mediator of a new covenant, in order that since a death has taken place for the redemption of the transgressions that were [committed] under the first covenant, those who have been called may receive the promise of the eternal inheritance. (Heb 9:15, NAS)

So the New Covenant does specifically address those who were party to the first. "Those who are called" refers to those whose "gifts and calling are irrevocable"; that is, Isra'el (Rom 11:29).

Y'shua initiated the renewal of the Covenant at His last Passover, and set it on a firmer foundation – the heavenly Altar instead of the earthly copy (John 20:17; Heb 7:9) with His untainted blood:

"for this is my blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for the forgiveness of sins." (Matt 26:28, RSV)

The Torah (the Law/Teachings of Moshe) is the written substance of the covenant that the people of Isra'el took on as a never-ending agreement with YHWH:

(33) "But this [shall be] the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, saith the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people.

(34) And they shall teach no more every man his neighbour, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, saith the Lord: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more." (Jer 31:33-34, KJV)

Y'shua said, "Not one stroke of the Torah will pass away until all is fulfilled" (Matt 5:18), so this new covenant must be another of the same kind. Unless we have gotten to the point of needing no one to teach us, the Torah is still in effect. All Scripture must be interpreted to agree with it. (Isaiah 8:20) YHWH does not change His mind. The confusion lies in seeing the Torah as a means of justification. But "it is not possible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sin." (Heb 10:4) That was never its purpose. Galatians tells us it is meant to be our trainer until we see that YHWH Himself is really all we need; after that it is to bring us to full maturity:

(5) "Not that we are adequate in ourselves to consider anything as [coming] from ourselves, but our adequacy is from God, who also made us adequate [as] servants of a new covenant,

(6) not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life." (2 Cor 3:5-6, NAS)

The "spirit" behind the letter is what the Torah being written on our hearts means. But we don't therefore forsake the vehicle that got us to that point! When we say something is "on our heart", we mean it preoccupies us. It is all but an obsession! So if the Torah is on our hearts, it hardly can mean it is something we no longer practice! It means we obey – not because we have to, but because we long to.

"Not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord." (Jer 31:32, RSV)

Conclusion:

The "new" covenant spoken about in Jeremiah is actually the Hebrew word "*chadashah*" which refers not to something brand new in creation but rather something that has undergone a reformation in character and purpose, or a simple reappearance on a different scale. The New covenant is a compilation of the former covenants made with *Avraham* (Abraham), *Moshe* (Moses), and *Dah-vid* (David). It does NOT supersede the previous ones in any way. It does, however, "improve" on the covenant responsibilities between the parties by clarifying the purposes of the former covenants. It is better in many, many ways since Y'shua himself in fact inaugurated it.

The following will explain why I believe that the Biblical concept of "covenant" is synonymous with the Biblical concept of "commandment". I am NOT saying they are equal. Nor am I saying that they are the exact SAME things. I am simply saying they are inextricably linked to each other; they convey the same thoughts, intents, purposes, and meanings.

Covenant and Commandment

In Hebraic thinking, the term "covenant" is synonymous with the term "commandment". In the Bible, these terms and concepts are interwoven in such a way as to render them inseparable. How can this be substantiated Scripturally? To quote the section above:

"In ancient suzerainty treaties, if the situation changed for one party, a covenant could be amended (or renewed) to adapt to the new circumstance. But only what was no longer applicable would be revised; everything else remained in effect exactly as before."

What changed about the previous covenants that necessitated a renewal on YHWH's part? Let's read the passage for the answer:

- (31) *"Behold, the days are coming, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and the house of Judah,*
(32) *not like the covenant which I made with their fathers when I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, my covenant which they broke, though I was their husband, says the Lord." (Jer 31:31-32, RSV)*

How did they "break" the first covenant? By not keeping the commandments. Observe:

- (6) *For you are a people holy to the Lord your God; the Lord your God has chosen you to be a people for his own possession, out of all the peoples that are on the face of the earth.*
(7) *It was not because you were more in number than any other people that the Lord set his love upon you and chose you, for you were the fewest of all peoples;*
(8) *but it is because the Lord loves you, and is keeping the oath which he swore to your fathers, that the Lord has brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you from the house of bondage, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt.*
(9) *Know therefore that the Lord your God is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and steadfast love with those who love him and keep his commandments, to a thousand generations,*
(10) *and requites to their face those who hate him, by destroying them; he will not be slack with him who hates him, he will requite him to his face.*
(11) *You shall therefore be careful to do the commandment, and the statutes, and the ordinances, which I command you this day.*
(12) *And because you hearken to these ordinances, and keep and do them, the Lord your God will keep with you the covenant and the steadfast love which he swore to your fathers to keep;*
(13) *he will love you, bless you, and multiply you; he will also bless the fruit of your body and the fruit of your ground, your grain and your wine and your oil, the increase of your cattle and the young of your flock, in the land which he swore to your fathers to give you.*
(14) *You shall be blessed above all peoples; there shall not be male or female barren among you, or among your cattle." (Deut 7:6-14, RSV)*

Before I get labeled a legalist, let me explained YHWH's view of TRUE commandment-keeping:

"For those who trust HaShem for the promises, the proper order for faith and obedience is set by the sequence in which the covenants were given. In other words, faith must precede obedience. But the kind of faith accepted by HaShem is one, which naturally flows into obedience. True obedience never comes before faith, nor is it an addition to faith. It is always the result of true biblical faith. To rephrase this in terms of the covenants: the covenant of promise (Avraham) must come before the covenant of obedience (Moshe). If we were to put Moshe first, attempting to secure those promises by obedience, we would be going against HaShem's order. (This, by the way, is the key to unlocking the difficult midrash used by Sha'ul in Galatians 4:21-31.) All we could hope for would be a measure of physical protection and a knowledge of spiritual things. But we could not receive justification or a personal relationship with the Holy One through obedience to the Torah; it all had to start with faith. Avraham came before Moshe, but Moshe did not cancel out Avraham! The two complemented each other—as long as they came in the proper order." (Taken from Torah Rediscovered, Ariel and D'vorah Berkowitz, FFOZ Publications)

So we see that "commandment breaking" was the reason that YHWH needed to renew the covenant. In a sense, when Isra'el walked away from the covenant; when she forsook the commandments of YHWH, she was declaring that she had no interest in Him; and ultimately this unfaithfulness was seen as grounds for divorce. Observe:

Isaiah 54:1-10: the faithful husband (*HaShem*) is seen promising the unfaithful wife (Isra'el) reconciliation unto himself after a brief period of rejection (verses 7, 8). Why did he reject her? Because she willfully walked out of the covenant agreement in order to pursue alien love, causing *HaShem* to act in accordance with his own *Torah* and give her a bill of divorcement (see Deut 24:1-4).

Jeremiah 3:1-20: YHWH is the husband and Isra'el is the wife. Verse 1a reinforces what *Moshe* stated in Deuteronomy. Verses 1b through 7 demonstrates that the unfaithful bride did not remain pure but adulterated with another "lover", spurning the sorrow and fury of her first husband *HaShem*. In verse 8, after desiring her to return to him, *HaShem* hands her bill of divorcement based on her refusal to remain a faithful bride to him alone. In verses 11-15, the faithful husband pleads with his unfaithful wife to return to him to find forgiveness, but she persists in her adultery. Thus, the unfaithful bride walked out on the marriage covenant to pursue other sexual interests, causing the faithful husband to write her a bill of divorcement. Did *HaShem* wish to write her this bill? According to Genesis, he desires unity for eternity. But hard-heartedness drove his wife to force, as it were, YHWH's hand of divorce upon her. She willingly left YHWH, but he always remained faithful waiting for her return.

Now you might say, where does grace fit in? Well, for one thing, grace steps in when we misunderstand the *Torah* as a document of legalism. We have a human tendency to pervert YHWH's gracious document into something it was not meant to be used for. We read "do this..." and "don't do that...", and we have a tendency to misunderstand the grace behind the words. *Y'shua* came to explain the gracious intent of every command, by explaining the primary thrust of the *Torah* in the first place: leading its reader to a genuine trusting faith in the Messiah—namely, himself! We can therefore see that *Torah* has always been about the heart!

Y'shua's new commandment

"A new command I give you: Love one another. As I have loved you, so you must love one another." (John 13:34, NIV)

Hasn't the *Torah* always commanded us to love one another? Absolutely. Take a look into the book of Leviticus:

"V'ahavta l'reyach kamochah." [you shall love your neighbor as yourself] (Vayikra [Leviticus] 19:18b, Online TaNaKH)

The noticeable contrast or major difference here is that love is shown to be compared with "yourself", whereas *Y'shua* compared love with "as I loved you". So how are we to understand *Y'shua's* comparison and clarification of this basic command? How was *Y'shua's* love demonstrated to us? Again, let's let the *Torah* answer:

"And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweetsmelling savour." (Eph 5:2, KJV)

And again,

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;" (Eph 5:25, KJV)

So we see that Y'shua's love has been fully manifest for us in that he willingly laid down his life for us. To be sure, the *Torah* teaches:

"Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends." (John 15:13, KJV)

So we should be in basic agreement that Y'shua's personal example is what was "new" about this command. But is this a completely "new" *Torah* feature? After all Moshe was willing to die for the sake of all Isra'el and even before that *Yitz'chak* (Isaac) was willing to die at the hand of his father Avraham. Yes, this type of love was "hinted at" all throughout the sacrificial system in the *Torah*, but was ONLY fully demonstrated in Y'shua's personal example.

But was Y'shua demonstrating this love on his own accord? Wasn't He, in fact, operating under the Perfect Will of the Father? Of course He was. Also, He did love us enough to willingly lay down His life for us. So it is both Y'shua's will to die and his Father's will that he should die. Father and Son demonstrated love in perfect harmony. In order to further understand Y'shua's willingness, we only need to see what he also said about the love that has been demonstrated as first originating with his Father:

"And I have declared unto them thy name, and will declare [it]: that the love wherewith thou hast loved me may be in them, and I in them." (John 17:26, KJV)

But notice the bulk of 1 John chapter 4:

- (7) *"Beloved, let us love one another; for love is of God, and he who loves is born of God and knows God.*
 - (8) *He who does not love does not know God; for God is love.*
 - (9) *In this the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only Son into the world, so that we might live through him.*
 - (10) *In this is love, not that we loved God but that he loved us and sent his Son to be the expiation for our sins.*
 - (11) *Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another.*
 - (12) *No man has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us.*
 - (13) *By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his own Spirit.*
 - 0(14) *And we have seen and testify that the Father has sent his Son as the Savior of the world.*
 - (15) *Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God.*
 - (16) *So we know and believe the love God has for us. God is love, and he who abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him.*
 - (17) *In this is love perfected with us, that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so are we in this world.*
 - (18) *There is no fear in love, but perfect love casts out fear. For fear has to do with punishment, and he who fears is not perfected in love.*
 - (19) *We love, because he first loved us.*
 - (20) *If any one says, "I love God," and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen.*
 - (21) *And this commandment we have from him, that he who loves God should love his brother also."*
- (1 John 4:7-21, RSV)

So we see that any attempt to recognise Y'shua's love apart from recognising and understanding YHWH's love is not possible. The love of the Father and the love of the Son are inseparably tied together. But of course, you already know this. So allow me to come full circle by quoting what Y'shua referred to as the two greatest commands in the Bible:

"Sh'ma Yisra'el, Y-H-V-H Eloheynu, Y-H-V-H echad! V'ahavta eht Y-H-V-H Eloheycha, b'chol l'vev-cha, u'v-chol naf'sh'cha, u'v-chol m'odecha." [Hear, Yisra'el: ADONAI is our God; ADONAI is one! And you shall love ADONAI your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your might.] (D'verim [Deuteronomy] 6:4, 5, Online TaNaKH)

"V'ahavta l'reyach kamochah." [you shall love your neighbor as yourself] (Vayikra [Leviticus] 19:18b, Online TaNaKH)

There is little or no disagreement over the "concepts" explained by these *commandments* (Love God; love your neighbour) used by Y'shua and (at least the former) known in Jewish circles as the "*Shema*" ("Hear!"). Every Jew knows that this is not the whole of the *Torah*; simply the hallmark of the *Torah* – the "cornerstone" of keeping the *mitzvoth* (commandments). This is what Y'shua meant when he said that "*all of the Law hangs on these two*". Anyone who correctly understands these two commands is well on his way to keeping any of the rest that may apply to him (notice the context of the complete dialogue transaction, in the corresponding Scripture of Mark 12:28-34. The teacher of the Law is said to have been "*not far from the Kingdom of God*" (verse 34)).

So now do you see that the "command" that Y'shua gave is the essence of the "covenant" that he ratified with them? Commandment and covenant are terms of equal importance and usage. Y'shua's command was not new in this sense, only renewed as stated in the first section above. The covenant with Isra'el is not new, only renewed. When we wish to demonstrate love to YHWH, we must envision love in YHWH's terms; and that means to keep the commandment[s] or covenant[s]. To be sure, love without deed is empty love.

Behold:

"If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15, KJV)

And again here in James:

- (8) *"If you really fulfil the royal law, according to the scripture, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself," you do well.*
- (9) *But if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.*
- (10) *For whoever keeps the whole law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it.*
- (11) *For he who said, "Do not commit adultery," said also, "Do not kill." If you do not commit adultery but do kill, you have become a transgressor of the law.*
- (12) *So speak and so act as those who are to be judged under the law of liberty.*
- (13) *For judgment is without mercy to one who has shown no mercy; yet mercy triumphs over judgment.*
- (14) *What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?*
- (15) *If a brother or sister is ill-clad and in lack of daily food,*
- (16) *and one of you says to them, "Go in peace, be warmed and filled," without giving them the things needed for the body, what does it profit?*
- (17) *So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead."* (James 2:8-17, RSV)

What makes this passage here in James so interesting is that James correctly ties together the *Torah* principles of love, faith, and commandment-keeping. In their genuine forms, these three are inseparable.

So we have seen that Y'shua quotes the two most important *Torah* themes in his answer given above (Love YHWH, Love your neighbour). And we have now seen that James ties these two in to FAITH as well. The two that Y'shua quoted are not the only ones that make a person *Torah*-observant – yet they genuinely verify his change in status as a true (faith-filled) follower of HaShem. How so?

For if one truly loves HaShem, he will have no problem falling in love with Y'shua. Moreover, if he truly loves HaShem and Y'shua, he will have no problem loving his neighbour. The secret is unhindered love for HaShem, and all that he authoritatively represents! Anyone who genuinely loves the Father and the Son will have no problem wanting to keep the *mitzvoth* (commandments). There is an unbreakable tie between the Father, the Son, your neighbour, and the *mitzvot*! Again, John agrees:

- (3) *"And by this we may be sure that we know him, if we keep his commandments.*
- (4) *He who says "I know him" but disobeys his commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him;*
- (5) *but whoever keeps his word, in him truly love for God is perfected. By this we may be sure that we are in him:*
- (6) *he who says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked.*
- (7) *Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment which you had from the beginning; the old commandment is the word which you have heard.*
- (8) *Yet I am writing you a new commandment, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining.*
- (9) *He who says he is in the light and hates his brother is in the darkness still.*
- (10) *He who loves his brother abides in the light, and in it there is no cause for stumbling.*
- (11) *But he who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes."* (1 John 2:3-11, RSV)

John continues in chapter 3:

- (1) "See what love the Father has given us, that we should be called children of God; and so we are. The reason why the world does not know us is that it did not know him.
- (2) Beloved, we are God's children now; it does not yet appear what we shall be, but we know that when he appears we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.
- (3) And every one who thus hopes in him purifies himself as he is pure.
- (4) Every one who commits sin is guilty of lawlessness; sin is lawlessness.
- (5) You know that he appeared to take away sins, and in him there is no sin.
- (6) No one who abides in him sins; no one who sins has either seen him or known him.
- (7) Little children, let no one deceive you. He who does right is righteous, as he is righteous.
- (8) He who commits sin is of the devil; for the devil has sinned from the beginning. The reason the Son of God appeared was to destroy the works of the devil.
- (9) No one born of God commits sin; for God's nature abides in him, and he cannot sin because he is born of God.
- (10) By this it may be seen who are the children of God, and who are the children of the devil: whoever does not do right is not of God, nor he who does not love his brother.
- (11) For this is the message which you have heard from the beginning, that we should love one another,
- (12) and not be like Cain who was of the evil one and murdered his brother. And why did he murder him? Because his own deeds were evil and his brother's righteous.
- (13) Do not wonder, brethren, that the world hates you.
- (14) We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death.
- (15) Any one who hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.
- (16) By this we know love, that he laid down his life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren.
- (17) But if any one has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him?
- (18) Little children, let us not love in word or speech but in deed and in truth." (1 John 3:1-18, RSV)

If our theology is weak in any one of these pillars of teaching (love, faith, and commandment-keeping) we will tend to be out of balance.

Conclusion:

By Y'shua emphasising "as I have loved you", he was firstly giving us a personal example of what true love should look like. Secondly, He was reinforcing the love that the Father already had and has demonstrated for His own people by sending His Son to die for all humanity. And by taking what Y'shua states elsewhere about love being perfected in faithful commandment-keeping (covenant-keeping) we see that His perfect example of love is one that we can and should follow as believers in him. Thus to quote section one above:

"The "new" covenant spoken about in Jeremiah is actually the Hebrew word "*chadashah*" which refers not to something brand new in creation but rather something that has undergone a reformation in character and purpose, or a simple reappearance on a different scale. The New covenant is a compilation of the former covenants made with *Avraham* (Abraham), *Moshe* (Moses), and *Dah-vid* (David). It does NOT supersede the previous ones in any way. It does, however, "improve" on the covenant responsibilities between the parties, by clarifying the purposes of the former covenants. It is better in many, many ways since Y'shua himself in fact inaugurated it."

Love is what ties all of the covenants together, and love has always been the desired response of the Father. *Avraham* clearly loved YHWH, *Moshe* clearly loved YHWH, and *Dah-veed* clearly loved YHWH. Y'shua would not come and teach anything less than what has already been taught in his Father's *Torah*: **LOVE**.

26:29-30 But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom

"(29) But I say unto you, I will not drink henceforth of this fruit of the vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom. (30) And when they had sung an hymn, they went out into the mount of Olives."

Blood was sprinkled on the people at the initiation of the Covenant in Exodus 24.

"New Testament" is a term that takes away from a correct understanding. Y'shua is referring to what is also called the "New Covenant" in English; but according to the *Tenakh*, is more correctly considered a "*renewed Covenant*". This Covenant renewal is found in the book of Jeremiah and also referred to in other places in the *Tenakh*. Unfortunately, the English word "new" in either case falsely implies that the "old" covenant (with *Torah* as its foundation) is abolished. We know from Y'shua's own words that this is not the case. See notes to Matthew chapter 5, and forward. None of YHWH's covenants have been disposed of. (Also see explanation at verse 28 above.)

It would seem in verse 29, that Y'shua Himself does not drink of this cup. This is because the "New Covenant" is not fully established by Him at this time. The Hebraic understanding is that of a "Renewed Covenant" that YHWH will make when Judah (with Benjamin) and Ephraim (Lost 10 Tribes) are reunited one day at the time of Messiah's coming – hence He will drink of the cup only, "... *in my Father's kingdom.*"

26:31 All ye shall be offended because of me this night

"Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad."

Not long after this came a series of disagreements between the Jews and Rome, including major wars around A.D. 70 and A.D. 132. The result of these actions was not only the further dispersion of Jews across the empire, but also the suppression of the faith of the original Messianic (Nazarene) community. This led to the development of a "faith" that was decidedly "anti- *Torah*" and incorporated many pagan elements that eventually organised itself into the Catholic/Christian religion and its "spinoff" Protestant children.

I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad

From the Hebrew Scriptures:

"Awake, O sword, against My Shepherd, Against the Man who is My Companion," Says the LORD of hosts. "Strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered; Then I will turn My hand against the little ones." (Zech 13:7)

From the Rabbinic Writings:

"If we search the prophets we shall find that He who is promised as the Shepherd of Israel is THE MESSIAH. The Messiah therefore is the person to be smitten before the scattering of the sheep." (Rabbi David Kimchi on Zechariah)

From the New Covenant:

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

Y'shua said: *"Indeed the hour is coming, yes, has now come, that you will be scattered, each to his own, and will leave Me alone. And yet I am not alone, because the Father is with Me."* (John 16:32)

Then Y'shua said to them, *"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep of the flock will be scattered'"...Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled. (Mat 26:31, 56)*

26:32-35 Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee

"(32) But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. (33) Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. (34) Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. (35) Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples".

It is interesting to note the change in Peter before and after the giving of the *Ruach haKodesh* (Holy Spirit). He goes from being impulsive and rebuked by Y'shua (Matt 16:23), even denying the Messiah to save his own skin (at the end of this chapter), to being a chief spokesperson for Y'shua among his Jewish brethren (as seen in the Book of Acts).

26:36-37 He took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee

"(36) Then cometh Jesus with them unto a place called Gethsemane, and saith unto the disciples, Sit ye here, while I go and pray yonder (37) And he took with him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy."

After leaving the place where they had eaten the Passover meal, Y'shua led his disciples to the Mount of Olives where he waited for his arrest. As they went to the Mount, they came to a place called Gethsemane, and Y'shua asked eight of his disciples to wait while he took Peter, James, and John with him to keep watch while he prayed.

As the four left the others and walked along the path, Y'shua became very depressed and apprehensive as he thought about the events that would shortly take place.

26:38-39 He went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed

"(38) Then saith he unto them, My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with me. (39) And he went a little further, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as thou wilt."

Y'shua asked his Father three times in this agonising prayer (verses 38-44) to stop the events that would lead to his death. But why would Y'shua ask his Father to abandon what had been planned before the creation of the earth? The answer is that Y'shua did not want to experience the agony and pain of the torturous death that he knew was just hours away if there were another way to accomplish his mission.

Who Was Y'shua?

In order to understand why Y'shua was so concerned about his impending death, we must remember who he was. This man was YHWH incarnate; He was the Creator of humanity. He had been an immortal spirit-being who possessed the highest form of existence (life that springs forth from itself; never dying or decaying). Y'shua had never personally experienced the agony and sorrow that precedes a painful death; however, He had seen others suffer and die during the centuries before His birth as a human, and He was well acquainted with death during His human experience. Therefore, He was justifiably apprehensive and did not want to die if there was another way humanity could be saved.

26:40-44 And findeth them asleep

"(40) And he cometh unto the disciples, and findeth them asleep, and saith unto Peter, What, could ye not watch with me one hour? (41) Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak. (42) He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, thy will be done. (43) And he came and found them asleep again: for their eyes were heavy. (44) And he left them, and went away again, and prayed the third time, saying the same words."

An angel appears

"And there appeared an angel to him from heaven, strengthening him" (Luke 22:43 KJV).

In preparation for his three and a half-year ministry, Y'shua fasted before the Father for forty days (Matt 4:1-11). At the end of this fast, angels came and ministered to Him. Although the Scriptures do not say what this angelic ministry entailed, it can be assumed that not only were Y'shua's physical needs supplied; but also he was encouraged to go forward and complete his mission.

Verse 43 of Luke chapter 22 shows an occurrence similar to the one that happened at the beginning of Y'shua's ministry. Again, we are not told what the angel did but we can assume the angel came to encourage Y'shua and discuss the things that would shortly come to pass.

The blood of agony

"And being in an agony he prayed more earnestly: and his sweat was as it were great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:44 KJV).

As Y'shua continued to speak to his Father in prayer and think about the reality of what was going to happen to him, the human side of his nature began to exert more and more pressure upon his thoughts. Remember

that Y'shua was human and about to face the greatest enemy of humans – death. Y'shua was not going to die peacefully; he would have his spiritual character put to the test through humiliating torture. Undoubtedly, he thought about why He had come to earth, the great importance of his mission, the tremendous risk that He was taking being human, and the reality of what would happen if He failed this last test.

There is a condition called haematidrosis that can afflict a person when mental agony becomes so great that it overwhelms the body's nervous system. This condition causes the subcutaneous capillaries that lie just under the skin to dilate and rupture into the sweat glands which causes blood to be expelled with sweat.

It is impossible for any human to comprehend the tremendous mental pressure, agony, and anguish that Y'shua experienced as he spoke with his Father; because no human has ever been an immortal being and faced with the decisions that Y'shua was faced with.

If Y'shua failed to maintain his righteousness before YHWH in this final test of faith, he would have ceased to exist forever. Moreover, humanity would have ceased to exist, because there would be no sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin; therefore, each human would have to die forever for violating the law of YHWH. Imagine how awful that would be for all of us!

The commitment that Y'shua made when he gave up his immortality and became a human placed him in the same condition as all of humanity; he had to keep and practice his Father's law perfectly in order to gain salvation, which he did throughout his life.

Up to this point in his life, Y'shua was worthy to be given eternal and immortal life; and because he had obtained salvation, he did not have to die for humanity; however, if he did not give his sinless life as the perfect sacrifice for humanity, humanity would have no hope of salvation.

These among other things, were on the mind of Y'shua as he spoke to his Father in prayer.

The Lord's Prayer

John, who was one of those whom Y'shua took with him to watch as he prayed, was inspired to record the part of Y'shua's prayer in which he asked the Father to show favour for two specific groups of people: the eleven disciples who had remained faithful to him up to that point in time, and those who would become his followers after his death and resurrection.

John 17:1-26

"These words spoke Jesus, and lifted up his eyes to heaven, and said, Father, the hour is come; glorify your Son, that your Son also may glorify you" (verse 1).

Y'shua was now ready to finish his mission and sacrifice his life for the sins of humanity.

"As you have given him power over all flesh, that he should give eternal life to as many as you have given him. And this is life eternal, that they might know you the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent" (verses 2-3).

At this point in time, there were very few people whom the Father had chosen to believe his message concerning who He was, who his Son was, and how to enter the Family and Kingdom of YHWH.

"I have glorified you on the earth: I have finished the work which you gave me to do. And now, O Father, glorify you me with your own self with the glory which I had with you before the world was" (verses 4-5).

Here, Y'shua asks Avinu the Father to return him to his former state of existence as the immortal Creator Elohim in the Kingdom of YHWH.

"I have manifested your name to the men which you gave to me out of the world: yours they were, and you gave them to me; and they have kept your word. Now they have known that all things whatsoever you have given me are of you. For I have given to them the words which you gave me; and they have received them, and have known surely that I came out from you, and they have believed that you did send me" (verses 6-8).

Y'shua had fulfilled his mission to prepare the eleven men whom the Father had called to be leaders in his plan of salvation and he had taught them the truth concerning the Elohim family and their plan for humanity.

"I pray for them: I pray not for the world, but for them which you have given me; for they are yours. And all mine are yours, and yours are mine; and I am glorified in them. And now I am no more in the world, but these are in the world, and I come to you. Holy Father, keep through your own name those whom you have given me, that they may be one, as we are. While I was with them in the world, I kept them in your name: those that you gave me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled" (verses 9-12).

Here, Y'shua specifically asks Avinu the Father to protect the eleven from harm in order that they, too, may become a part of the Heavenly Family.

"And now come I to you; and these things I speak in the world, that they might have my joy fulfilled in themselves. I have given them your word; and the world have hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I pray not that you should take them out of the world, but that you should keep them from the evil. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world" (verses 13-16).

Because these eleven had been selected by the Father for the purpose of learning about the Family of YHWH and His purpose for humanity, they were considered a part of the spiritual family of YHWH as Y'shua was. Therefore, these people needed Avinu the Father to protect them from the evil that rules the earth.

"Sanctify them through your truth: your word is truth. As you have sent me into the world, even so have I also sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify myself, that they also might be sanctified through the truth" (verses 17-19).

Y'shua asks that these eleven be set apart for the holy purpose of carrying on the work of preaching and teaching YHWH's truth and his coming Kingdom, which will bring peace and establish YHWH's rule on earth. He then asks that the same consideration be afforded to all those who, in the future, would believe in him through the efforts of these eleven.

"Neither pray I for these alone, but for them also which shall believe on me through their word; That they all may be one; as you, Father, are in me, and I in you, that they also may be one in us: that the world may believe that you have sent me. And the glory which you gave me I have given them; that they may be one, even as we are one: I in them, and you in me, that they may be made perfect in one; and that the world may know that you have sent me, and have loved them, as you have loved me" (verses 20-23).

Here, Y'shua speaks of all those whom the Father has called and will call to be in the first resurrection. He also expresses His desire for their success, so that they may also experience the awesome glory of life as a son in the Family of YHWH:

"Father, I will that they also, whom you have given me, be with me where I am; that they may behold my glory, which you have given me: for you loved me before the foundation of the world. O righteous Father, the world have not known you: but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. And I have declared to them your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (verses 24-26).

The Garden

After finishing His prayers to his Father, Y'shua allowed the disciples to sleep a little longer. Then, hearing a crowd approaching and knowing that the time of his betrayal was at hand, He woke the eleven to wait for his betrayal and arrest. See Matt 26:45-46; Mark 14:41-42; John 18:1.

26:45-49 Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me

*"(45) Then cometh he to his disciples, and saith unto them, Sleep on now, and take your rest: behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of man is betrayed into the hands of sinners. (46) **Rise, let us be going: behold, he is at hand that doth betray me.** (47) And while he yet spake, lo, Judas, one of the twelve, came, and with him a great multitude with swords and staves, from the chief priests and elders of the people. (48) Now he that betrayed him gave them a sign, saying, Whomsoever I shall kiss, that same is he: hold him fast. (49) And forthwith he came to Jesus, and said, Hail, master; and kissed him."*

The betrayal

"(1) When Jesus had spoken these words, he went forth with his disciples over the brook Cedron, where there was a garden, into which he entered, and his disciples.

- (2) And Judas also, which betrayed him, knew the place: for Jesus often resorted there with his disciples.
- (3) Judas then, having received a band of men and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, comes there with lanterns and torches and weapons.
- (4) Jesus therefore, knowing all things that should come upon him, went forth, and said to them, Whom do you seek?
- (5) They answered him, Jesus of Nazareth". (John 18:1-5 KJV)

The "I AM"

"Jesus said to them, I AM... As soon as he had said to them, I AM, they went backward, and fell to the ground. Then asked he them again, Whom seek you? And they said, Jesus of Nazareth" (John 18:5-7 KJV).

Y'shua plainly told those who came to arrest him that he was "I AM". There is no doubt by their actions. These people understood that Y'shua said he was the Creator God – the "I AM". This announcement was so startling to them that they fell to the ground for fear of what He might do to them if He were indeed YHWH.

"Jesus answered, I have told you that I AM: if therefore you seek me, let these go their way: That the saying might be fulfilled, which said, Of them which you gave me have I lost none". (John 18:8-9 KJV)

Here, Y'shua speaks of the prophecy in Psalms 109:6-8 concerning the loyal disciples and the one who would betray him. See also John 17:12; Acts 1:20.

26:50-53 One of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword

"(50) And Jesus said unto him, Friend, wherefore art thou come? Then came they, and laid hands on Jesus, and took him. (51) And, behold, **one of them which were with Jesus stretched out his hand, and drew his sword**, and struck a servant of the high priest's, and smote off his ear. (52) Then said Jesus unto him, Put up again thy sword into his place: for all they that take the sword shall perish with the sword. (53) Thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matt 26:50-53)

Peter uses his sword

'Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus". (John 18:10 KJV)

"And he [Y'shua] touched his ear, and healed him". (Luke 22:51 KJV)

In defense of Y'shua, Peter pulled his sword and struck one of the high priest's servants on the head, cutting off his ear. Seeing what Peter had done, Y'shua touched the man's ear and healed the wound. Even while being betrayed, Y'shua shows his great empathy, compassion, concern, and love by healing a person who had come to cause him harm.

26:54-56 But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled

"(54) But how then shall the scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it must be? (55) In that same hour said Jesus to the multitudes, Are ye come out as against a thief with swords and staves for to take me? I sat daily with you teaching in the temple, and ye laid no hold on me. (56) **But all this was done, that the scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled.** Then all the disciples forsook him, and fled."

See notes on Matt 27:35 concerning "fulfillment of prophecy".

26:57-63 And the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ (Y'shua = Salvation), the Son of God

"(57) And they that had laid hold on Jesus led him away to Caiaphas the high priest, where the scribes and the elders were assembled. (58) But Peter followed him afar off unto the high priest's palace, and went in, and sat with the servants, to see the end. (59) Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; (60) But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none. At the last came two false witnesses, (61) And said, This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days. (62) And the high priest arose, and said unto him, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee? (63) But Jesus held his peace. **And**

the high priest answered and said unto him, I adjure thee by the living God, that thou tell us whether thou be the Christ, the Son of God."

The horror of the night that Y'shua was about to spend in the hands of his captors is almost impossible to describe. By early morning, the strong and healthy son of Nazareth would be reduced into a man who was weak, bruised, bleeding and barely alive by merciless beating and torture.

***"Then the band and the captain and officers of the Jews took Jesus, and bound him, And led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year"* (John 18:12-13 KJV).**

***"Now Annas had sent him bound to Caiaphas the high priest".* (John 18:24 KJV)**

The text implies that the High Priest had an understanding of Scripture that correlated the Messiah to the "Son" of YHWH. This is not easily found in Scripture when read at the literal level.

Y'shua condemned to death by the High Priest

(55) ***"And the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death; and found none.***

(56) ***For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together.***

(57) ***And there arose certain, and bare false witness against him, saying,***

(58) ***We heard him say, I will destroy this temple that is made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.***

(59) ***But neither so did their witness agree together* (Mark 14:55-59 KJV).**

(60) ***"False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.***

(61) ***They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul"* (Psalm 35:11-12 KJV).**

(60) ***"And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answer you nothing? what is it which these witness against you?***

(61) ***But he held his peace, and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked him, and said to him, Are you the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?***

(62) ***And Jesus said, I am: and you shall see the son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.***

(63) ***Then the high priest tore his clothes, and said, What need we any further witnesses? Ye have heard the blasphemy: what think ye?***

(64) ***And they all condemned him to be guilty of death"* (Mark 14:60-64 KJV). See also Luke 22:66-71.**

Unworthy of Death

Under the Law of YHWH, there must be at least two witnesses to a crime before a person can be convicted and punished. Because there were no witnesses to a crime, Y'shua should have been released; however, Y'shua knew the prophecies concerning the Lamb of YHWH, so he told them who he was and for what purpose he had come.

Is there is a law in Judaism against obstructing justice?

The *Torah* has many laws that fall loosely under the category of obstruction of justice.

It is forbidden to swear falsely.

It is forbidden to withhold testimony. If you know that Mr. X owes Mr. Y 100 dollars, you cannot say "It's none of my business; I'll just stay home and relax." You are obligated to go to court and tell the court what you know. You cannot plead the fifth.

It is forbidden to testify falsely. In certain cases, a false witness is punished with what he would have inflicted on his victim had his false testimony been accepted. (So if A testifies that I stole 100 dollars, he has to pay 100 dollars.)

A judge is forbidden to pervert the law.

A judge is obligated to judge justly.

A judge cannot be afraid of a bully or the mafia.

A judge cannot take a bribe. If he receives even the slightest favour from one of the parties, he is disqualified from judging on that case.

A judge is forbidden to cheat for a poor person. (If Bill Gates and a guy on skid row come to court arguing over a hundred bucks, the judge must rule according to law. He cannot say: "Gates is right. But he won't really miss a hundred dollars, while the other dude will be able to buy some food. So I'll rule in the poor guy's favour." That's a no-no.)

Conversely, the judge cannot say, "Bill Gates is a prestigious guy, why should I embarrass him by ruling against him?" The judge cannot tamper with the law to suit the sentiments of the individual parties. A judge is not allowed to listen to one party without the presence of the other party.

26:64 Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven

"(64) Jesus saith unto him, *Thou hast said: nevertheless I say unto you, Hereafter shall ye see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven.*" (Matt 26:64)

"*I was seeing in the visions of the night, and lo, with the clouds of the heavens as a son of man was [one] coming, and unto the Ancient of Days he hath come, and before Him they have brought him near.*" (Daniel 7:13)

One of the "puzzles" that concerned the Jewish sages was that some parts of the *Tenakh* seemed to indicate that the Messiah would arrive triumphantly on the clouds, while others said He would come on a donkey. The conclusion they reached was that if Israel merited it, he would come on the clouds; but if they failed, he would come on a donkey:

Talmud - Mas. Sanhedrin 98a: "*R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction. It is written, in its time [will the Messiah come], whilst it is also written, I [the Lord] will hasten it! — if they are worthy, I will hasten it: if not, [he will come] at the due time. R. Alexandri said: R. Joshua opposed two verses: it is written: And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven whilst [elsewhere] it is written, [behold, thy king cometh unto thee...] lowly, and riding upon an ass! — if they are meritorious, [he will come] with the clouds of heaven; if not, lowly and riding upon an ass.*"

Y'shua, as we know, first came to his people on the back of a donkey (Matt 21:5) and is destined to return in the clouds with the rapture of the Believers, as explained in Matthew chapter 24.

26:65-75 Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy

"(65) *Then the high priest rent his clothes, saying, He hath spoken blasphemy; what further need have we of witnesses? behold, now ye have heard his blasphemy.* (66) *What think ye? They answered and said, He is guilty of death.* (67) *Then did they spit in his face, and buffeted him; and others smote him with the palms of their hands,* (68) *Saying, Prophesy unto us, thou Christ, Who is he that smote thee?* (69) *Now Peter sat without in the palace: and a damsel came unto him, saying, Thou also wast with Jesus of Galilee.* (70) *But he denied before them all, saying, I know not what thou sayest.* (71) *And when he was gone out into the porch, another maid saw him, and said unto them that were there, This fellow was also with Jesus of Nazareth.* (72) *And again he denied with an oath, I do not know the man.* (73) *And after a while came unto him they that stood by, and said to Peter, Surely thou also art one of them; for thy speech betrayeth thee.* (74) *Then began he to curse and to swear, saying, I know not the man. And immediately the cock crew.* (75) *And Peter remembered the word of Jesus, which said unto him, Before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. And he went out, and wept bitterly."*

Again, the reaction of the High Priest is that of someone claiming in some fashion to be YHWH, as all Jews were considered "sons of YHWH" in a greater sense.

The Jewish trial in perspective

The trial of *Y'shua* was unique in many ways. Normally in Jewish law, witnesses acted as prosecutors and their duty was to bring a charge against the accused. This would be a clear statement of the offence alleged, together with the evidence to support it. Instead, the decision to arrest *Y'shua* was taken by the authorities; and at no stage in the proceedings against him was *Y'shua* formally charged with any offence. In fact, He was eventually sentenced not for any offence, which happened before He went to court – but for something that happened in the court itself. Imagine the hue and cry there would be today if a man was on trial for his life, but at no stage in the proceedings was he ever charged with any offence. Unbelievably, it was his judges who conspired to have *Y'shua* convicted.

Another unique thing about the trial of *Y'shua* is the number of times he appeared in court. In fact, it is more correct to speak of the trials, rather than the trial of *Y'shua*. Never has anyone been tried by so many courts in such a short space of time. Within about ten hours *Y'shua* appeared six times before four different judges. His main trials were those before the Jews and the Romans, each of which had three separate stages. *Y'shua* underwent a double trial. Two great and independent systems of criminal legalism were called into play to determine his fate.

The examination before Annas:

After Y'shua had been arrested, John tells us that they “led him away to Annas first; for he was father in law to Caiaphas, which was the high priest that same year.” (John 18:13.)

There is nothing surprising about Y'shua being brought before Annas rather than Caiaphas. He was the heart of the family, and by the Jewish law, still High Priest. The house of Annas derived much of its wealth from the business side of the Temple. Y'shua had just overturned the Temple stalls, which were the property of Annas and his family. No doubt Annas used his influence to arrange that Y'shua be brought to him to answer for this.

While the Jewish law is different from the western law, the examination of Y'shua before Annas appears to have been a preliminary examination. Strictly speaking, this was illegal; for Jewish law provided the strict safeguards for the accused, in that he could not be asked about his offence until formally charged. One curious feature of legal procedure in the *Sanhedrin* was that the man involved was held to be absolutely innocent, and indeed not even on trial, until the evidence of the witnesses had been stated and confirmed.

The argument about the case could only begin when the testimony of the witness was given and confirmed. Bearing this in mind, we can see how the examination before Annas proceeded. Annas began by questioning Y'shua about his disciples and teaching. Perhaps he wished to insinuate that Y'shua and the disciples were revolutionaries, plotting against the existing government.

Y'shua does not mention the disciples in his reply. He is clearly determined to protect them, for He replies:

(20) “I spake openly to the world; I ever taught in the synagogue, and in the temple, whither the Jews always resort; and in secret have I said nothing.

(21) Why askest thou me? ask them which heard me, what I have said unto them: behold, they know what I said.

(22) And when he had thus spoken, one of the officers which stood by struck Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, Answerest thou the high priest so?” (John 18:20-22)

That is the point of the conversation between Y'shua and Annas. Y'shua in that incident was reminding Annas that he had no right to ask him anything until the evidence of the witness had been taken and found to agree. When Y'shua said this, one of the officials near by struck him in the face, saying is that the way to answer the High Priest? This assault was quite illegal but it should not surprise us. Those proceedings were all tainted with illegality.

Y'shua then defends himself by inviting this man to give evidence of any evil that he has spoken. “If I have spoken wrongly, testify to the wrong” (John 18:23.) At this stage, Annas quite wrongly concluded that there was a sufficient case to bring Y'shua on trial before Caiaphas the High Priest. The preliminary examination, inadequate as it was, had ended. Then Annas sent him (still bound) to Caiaphas the High Priest.

The trial before Caiaphas and the *Sanhedrin*

Caiaphas was the son-in-law of Annas, the current High Priest and thus the most important man in the Jewish nation. In a unique way, he was not only the religious leader of the Jews, but also their political and judicial head. Just as during the Roman occupation, the procurator represented the Jewish nation.

As such, he was responsible to the Roman procurator for the good order and discipline of the Jews. Josephus (writer in the First Century A.D.) gives us the details of the origin of the high office...

“History informs us that Aaron, the brother of Moses, officiated to God as a high priest, and that, after his death, his sons succeeded him immediately; and that this dignity has been continued down from them all to their posterity. Whence it is the custom of the Jews that no one should take the high priesthood of God, but he who is the blood of Aaron, while everyone that is of another stock, though he were a king, can never obtain that high priesthood.”

The High Priest was the supreme judge in Israel. Moses had presided over the seventy elders, so the High Priest also presided over the greater Sanhedrin of seventy.

No one in Israel was allowed to disobey the orders of the High Priest. His authority was supreme and could not be denied. In the time of seventy, the office of High Priest was in the hands of the Sadducees; who were

behind the arrest of seventy. It was therefore unlikely from the start that seventy would have a fair trial, and the records confirm this.

There has been much debate amongst scholars as to whether this trial before Caiaphas took place at the formal session of the Sanhedrin, or like the appearance before Annas, was merely a preliminary enquiry. Mark's Gospel records that "*they led Jesus away to the high priest: and with him were assembled all the chief priests and the elders and the scribes...and the chief priests and all the council sought for witness against Jesus to put him to death*" (Mark 14:53, 55.)

This seems like a formal Jewish trial; but because of the breaches of the law as laid down in the *Mishnah*, some scholars have argued that this could not have been a formal trial. But there are other trials reported from this time in which the authorities played fast and loose with the law – such as the stoning of Stephen and the attempted stoning of woman taken in adultery – so this may represent a breakdown in Jewish law under Roman occupation.

In Jewish law, it was usual for the trial to follow immediately after the arrest. Because of this and the approaching Passover, there was no time to take Y'shua to the palace of Caiaphas; and the trial took place in an upper room in his house (at night-time). This was also illegal because according to Jewish law, no case involving the death sentence should be tried at night. The trial began with the taking of evidence which is essential to any legal case. First, Matthew records:

"Now the chief priests, and elders, and all the council, sought false witness against Jesus, to put him to death; But found none: yea, though many false witnesses came, yet found they none." (Matt 26:59-60)

Though many false witnesses came forward. Mark adds to this:

"For many bare false witness against him, but their witness agreed not together." (Mark 14:56)

By doing this, Caiaphas and the *Sanhedrin* were guilty of three breaches of the law: they will be discussed later. But before we discuss, it is important to note that by law they needed two witnesses before any man could be sentenced to death.

"Whenever someone kills another, the evidence of witnesses is required for the execution of the murderer. The evidence of a single witness is not sufficient for putting a person to death." (Num 35:30)

Now the first breach is that they should not have been looking for witnesses. As judges, they should not only have been neutral but should have acted as counsel for the defense. They should have left the business of providing witnesses to others and not have taken it on themselves. Then, to make matters worse, they were looking for false witnesses. It was bad enough to seek for witnesses at all, but to seek for false evidence compounded the matter. Lastly, they were directly seeking to put Y'shua to death. This was absolutely illegal. In a case involving the death sentence, they should have been even more on the side of the accused; instead, the fate of Y'shua was sealed before he was even tried. Hear what the bible also says about witnesses...

"You shall not bear dishonest witness against your neighbor." (Deut 5:20)

Clearly, Annas and Caiaphas had organised the whole process. They were far more responsible for the death of Y'shua than either Judas or Pilate. Despite all this, they could not find even two false witnesses to agree. In Jewish law, this was called 'vain testimony'. The evidence of the witnesses did not agree. It could not even be accepted provisionally. Y'shua was unaccused and the trial should have been abandoned.

But this was not the end of the trial. Matthew records that finally two witnesses came forward and declared:

"This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God, and to build it in three days" (Matt 26:61)

We do not know who these further witnesses were, though it had been suggested that they were connected with the Temple police.

Then at long last, a charge was laid against Y'shua. He was accused of blasphemy of the worst kind. To the Jews, the Temple was the dwelling place; and to blaspheme the Temple was to blaspheme YHWH himself. Blasphemy and sorcery were added to the crime of sacrilege, for it was presumed that only by satanic power could a man rebuild the Temple of YHWH in three days which had taken forty-six years to build.

These charges were indeed serious and also had deep implications.

There was one area in which the Roman administration allowed the Sanhedrin to exercise unrestricted authority – this was the area of offence against the sanctity of the Temple. If this evidence had been admissible, there would have been a *prima facie* case for the court to go ahead and deal with the charge in its own authority without any reference to the Roman governor.

Jewish law in its '*hakiroth*' (searching queries) gives seven questions which must be asked of a witness in a trial for blasphemy that relate to the time and place of the blasphemy. These seven witnesses would easily be able to answer these questions. The occasion on which Y'shua was meant to have said these words was about two years earlier on the first cleansing of the Temple.

John records His exact words, "*Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up*" JOHN 2:19, BUT JOHN THEN ADDS, '*But he spake of the temple of his body*' (John 2:21).

These two witnesses had twisted the words of Y'shua, and by a willful misrepresentation tried to make them say something which he had not said. No wonder Mark records, "*but neither so did their witness agree together*" (Mark 14:59). The prosecution had failed for the second time. There was no case before the court. Once again, Y'shua was unaccused.

But there was another illegality at this stage in the proceedings. According to Jewish law, the *Sanhedrin* should now have dealt with these false witnesses because the law is very clear about it.

- (15) "*One witness alone shall not take the stand against a man in regard to any crime or any offense of which he may be guilty; a judicial fact shall be established only on the testimony of two or three witnesses.*"
- (16) "*If an unjust witness takes the stand against a man to accuse him of a defection from the law,*"
- (17) "*the two parties in the dispute shall appear before the LORD in the presence of the priests or judges in office at that time;*"
- (18) "*and if after a thorough investigation the judges find that the witness is a false witness and has accused his kinsman falsely,*"
- (19) "*you shall do to him as he planned to do to his kinsman. Thus shall you purge the evil from your midst.*"
- (20) "*The rest, on hearing of it, shall fear, and never again do a thing so evil among you.*" (Deut 19:15-20)

Their testimony did not agree; and as Moses wrote, these witnesses had tried to swear a man's life away and their lives should have been forfeited. While we are not told what happened to them, it is more than likely that they did not pay any penalty – let alone what was laid down by the law. Caiaphas and the *Sanhedrin* protected them.

By now, one thing was quite certain. The case against Y'shua had broken down. Twice witnesses had disagreed. Y'shua was still unaccused. The trial (if there was one) should have ended. But Caiaphas was determined to have Y'shua convicted and condemned to death. Instead of discharging Him, he now stood up and cross-examined Y'shua. He ignored the fact that the only two witnesses had failed to agree.

"And the high priest stood up in the midst, and asked Jesus, saying, Answerest thou nothing? what is it which these witness against thee?" (Mark 14:60).

Y'shua was still entitled to remain silent. Not only was he unaccused, but even if he had been accused, Jewish law (like English law) gave an accused the right of silence. No one could be compelled to convict themselves by being forced to speak. This silence of Y'shua must have infuriated Caiaphas more than ever. He now threw all semblance of legality to the wind. Something happened which is unique in legal history. Caiaphas ceased to be a judge and turned himself into council for the prosecution, taking the case into his own hands. What has started out as a trial has now become an inquisition.

Matthew tells us how Caiaphas put Y'shua on solemn oath, and used the oath of testimony saying:

"I adjure Thee by the living God, that Thou tell us whether Thou be the Christ, the Son of God." (Matt 26:63)

Such an adjuration was understood to render an answer legally necessary, despite the fact that it was illegal to do this trial for life. By Jewish law, Y'shua had to reply:

"If any person refuses to give the information which, as a witness of something he has seen or learned, he has been adjured to give, and thus commits a sin and has guilt to bear" (Lev 5:1)

In this case, silence would have been by itself an admission of guilt. The climax of the trial had been reached. Another fact is if Y'shua did not speak here, he would have broken a law; which then in turn would have made him a sinner.

"Again the high priest asked him, and said unto him, Art thou the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" (Mark 14:61), asked Caiaphas. As Y'shua replied, he knew that he was signing his own death warrant.

"Jesus said, I am: and ye shall see the Son of man sitting on the right hand of power, and coming in the clouds of heaven." (Mark 14:62)

Y'shua gave Caiaphas all that he wished for and more. In reply to the question, "Art thou the Christ?" Y'shua said emphatically "*I am.*"

Yes He was the Messiah, the Son of YHWH. But He added to this: He was the one who was going to sit at the right hand of YHWH. He was the one who would come on the clouds of heaven. At this stage, the judges could scarcely believe their ears. The accused man, they reckoned, had convicted himself out of his own mouth. No need of further witnesses: this was plain blasphemy, and they have heard it for themselves.

In later codifications of the Jewish law, blasphemy was limited to the pronouncement of the 'unutterable name' of YHWH of Israel. The name spelt with four consonants YHWH, from which 'YaHoWaH' was derived from many years later.

There is no suggestion that Y'shua pronounced this name; but his language, to those who grasped its support, implied that he was the assessor and peer of the Most High. If this did not amount to constructive blasphemy, it is difficult to imagine what did count as such. If Y'shua had contended himself with claiming to be the Messiah, the pharisaic members of the court might have deplored his claim. They would not have regarded it as grounds for a severe sentence and they would probably not have been happy about handing him over to the Romans. But his additional words altered the situation.

It was not safe for the city or the nation to let such a 'blasphemer' go free, and YHWH would not hold them guiltless if they took no steps to restrain him. When Y'shua made the claim that he was the Son of YHWH, Caiaphas the High Priest tore his clothes. This was a sign of great grief or shock. The High Priest was forbidden to tear his garments even when mourning for the dead, according to the Law of Moses.

"And he that is the high priest among his brethren, upon whose head the anointing oil was poured, and that is consecrated to put on the garments, shall not uncover his head, nor rend his clothes." (Lev 21:10)

The rest of the *Sanhedrin* knew the law and realised that Caiaphas had broken the law with this act; but even worse is the fact that the High Priest had to personally oversee the Passover sacrifices later during the day in his priestly gear. But Y'shua (according to the Jews) had now incriminated himself, and all the attention was focused on him.

"Ye have heard the blasphemy", said Caiaphas; and then he asked, "*what think ye?*" There was only one answer: the verdict was unanimous.

"And they all condemned him to be guilty of death." (Mark 14:64)

Once Y'shua was condemned, the *Sanhedrin* showed its contempt of its apparently monstrous behaviour. Some began to spit at Him, they blindfolded Him, struck Him with their fists and said, "*Prophesy*"; and the guards took and beat Him.

"And some began to spit on him, and to cover his face, and to buffet him." The reference to blindfolding would agree with an ancient prophecy that when the Messiah comes he would be able to judge by smell without the need of sight. In other words, the members of the *Sanhedrin* were saying, "*and to say unto him, Prophesy: and the servants did strike him with the palms of their hands.*" (Mark 14:65) So, by bending the rules of law in every conceivable direction, Caiaphas had got his own way: Y'shua had been condemned to death.

The trial by night was over. But because under Jewish law no case involving the death sentence could be tried at night, it was now necessary to re-assemble the whole *Sanhedrin* early in the morning to ratify what had already taken place. There was no time to lose. Caiaphas had to make sure that no conscientious member of the *Sanhedrin* raised an objection about the previous night's proceedings. Also, it was necessary

to obtain a death-warrant from Pilate, for the Jewish court did not have the power to carry out the death sentence.

We are not certain as to whether a large number of judges now re-assembled, but probably this was the case. Luke in his Gospel gives the details of this short trial. This time no witnesses were called because Y'shua had already condemned himself by the claims that he had made. Caiaphas, along with others, once again cross-examined Y'shua.

"Then said they all, Art thou then the Son of God? And he said unto them, Ye say that I am. And they said, What need we any further witness? for we ourselves have heard of his own mouth." (Luke 22:70)

Caiaphas then said to the court, why do we need any testimony? We have heard from His own lips. This short trial was now at the end, and the death sentence had been ratified by the Sanhedrin; albeit, illegally. The case was now remitted to Pilate, who as Roman governor had the power to carry out the death sentence.

SECTION X

CONCLUSION OF EARTHLY MINISTRY

MATTHEW 27:1-66

TEXT:

- (1) "When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death:
- (2) And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor.
- (3) Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders,
- (4) Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that.
- (5) And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself.
- (6) And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood.
- (7) And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in.
- (8) Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day.
- (9) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value;
- (10) And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me.
- (11) And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest.
- (12) And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing.
- (13) Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee?
- (14) And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly.
- (15) Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would.
- (16) And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas.
- (17) Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?
- (18) For he knew that for envy they had delivered him.
- (19) When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him.
- (20) But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus.
- (21) The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas.
- (22) Pilate saith unto them, What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ? They all say unto him, Let him be crucified.
- (23) And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified.
- (24) When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it.
- (25) Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children.

- (26) Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified.
- (27) Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers.
- (28) And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe.
- (29) And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews!
- (30) And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head.
- (31) And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him.
- (32) And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross.
- (33) And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull,
- (34) They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink.
- (35) And they crucified him, and parted his garments, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots.
- (36) And sitting down they watched him there;
- (37) And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS.
- (38) Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left.
- (39) And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads,
- (40) And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross.
- (41) Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said,
- (42) He saved others; himself he cannot save. If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.
- (43) He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God.
- (44) The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth.
- (45) Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.
- (46) And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?
- (47) Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.
- (48) And straightway one of them ran, and took a spunge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.
- (49) The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.
- (50) Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost.
- (51) And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent;
- (52) And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,
- (53) And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.
- (54) Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God.
- (55) And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him:
- (56) Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children.
- (57) When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple:
- (58) He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered.
- (59) And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth,
- (60) And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed.
- (61) And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre.
- (62) Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate,
- (63) Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again.
- (64) Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.
- (65) Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. (66) So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

27:1-2 When they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate

"(1) When the morning was come, all the chief priests and elders of the people took counsel against Jesus to put him to death: (2) And when they had bound him, they led him away, and delivered him to Pontius Pilate the governor."

Because the Jews were a captive people under the rule of the Roman Empire, it was unlawful for the Sanhedrin to execute anyone found guilty of violating their religious law without first obtaining Roman approval. Therefore, they sent Y'shua to Pontius Pilate to be sentenced to death. However, after Pilate had spoken to Y'shua, he could find nothing that would be worthy of death and he wanted to release him.

Background on Pontius Pilate

Who was the man who commanded the execution of Y'shua? He has been described as the best-known Roman of all time, more famous than Julius Caesar or Nero. Millions of Christians throughout the world remember him when every Sunday they recite the words of the creed, '*I believe in Jesus Christ... who... suffered under Pontius Pilate.*' But until recently, apart from reference to Pilate in the Gospels and the writings of the Jewish historian Josephus, there was no evidence that Pilate ever existed.

Then during the summer of 1961, some Italian archeologists were excavating an ancient theatre at Caesarea – the port in the Mediterranean that used to be the Roman capital of Palestine. As they worked, they unearthed a large stone which had part of an inscription on it. When it was cleaned, they were able to construct the original inscription. There in three-inch lettering were the Latin words:

*Caesareans Tiberiev
Pontivs Pilatvs
praefectvs ivdaee*

'Pontius Pilate, prefect of Judea, presented this tiberium to the Caesareans.' Much to their amazement, the Italians had found the first archaeological evidence for the existence of Pontius Pilate. It is significant that he was presented as the Prefect of Judea. As such, he was not only a Roman administrator but also a governor with military responsibility.

What sort of a man was Pilate?

He became governor of Palestine with the governor of Syria as his immediate superior, in around A.D. 26. The previous governor, Valerius Gratus, was recalled to Rome because he had had trouble with the Jews. Palestine was a frontier province of the Roman Empire and already had the reputation of being not an easy place to govern.

Though we know nothing about the career of Pilate before he came to Palestine, he must have been a man of some ability before he was posted by the Roman emperor Tiberius to such a difficult post in the empire. Sadly, from the beginning of his term of office, Pilate (like his predecessor) was in trouble with the Jews. Somehow he failed to understand them and was lacking in diplomacy.

Apart from the trial of Y'shua, we know of four other incidents in which Pilate and the Jews were in conflict.

#1. The affair of the Roman standards:

As the occupying power, the Romans respected the religious view of the Jews; including their abhorrence of idols. YHWH had said in the 10 commandments:

"You shall not make for yourselves an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow to them or worship them."

But at the time of Pilate's governorship, emperor worship was beginning in the Roman Empire and Roman soldiers were being encouraged not only to recognise the emperor as king, but also to worship him as one of their Gods. As a result, they carried on their shields little images of the emperor as a sign of his power.

To the Jews, these were graven images and so deeply offensive. Up to the time of Pilate, every Roman commander had marched his troops in Jerusalem without the image of the emperor their standards. But, soon after his arrival, Pilate sent a fresh garrison of troops to Jerusalem by night and ordered them to take

with them their standards with the emperor's image on them. When the Jews awoke the next morning to find these shields under the shadow of the Temple, they were outraged.

Immediately there was uproar, and many of them marched in protest from Jerusalem to the Roman headquarters at Caesarea. There they staged a five-day mass demonstration, protesting to Pilate about this gross violation of Jewish religious law.

Instead of showing respect, Pilate was stubborn and would not yield to their request. He ordered his troops to surround the protestors and threatened them with instant death if they did not disband at once. But the Jews were made of sterner stuff and refused to go away. They bared their necks and challenged the Roman soldiers to cut their heads off. They would rather die than have these images in Jerusalem.

Pilate, who had obviously not expected this depth of feeling, could not risk a wholesale massacre. He then had to climb down and order the offensive standards to be removed. His first test of strength with the Jews had ended in a humiliating defeat. This did not augur well for the future.

#2. The affair of the aqueduct

For a long time the water supply in Jerusalem had been inadequate and Pilate constructed a new aqueduct to improve the water supply. At first sight, this should have been popular and a worthy cause. But Pilate financed the construction of the aqueduct with funds from the Jewish Temple treasury. This enraged the Jews, who felt that their funds should not have been used for this purpose.

While this action of Pilate must have been made with some co-operation from the priest in Jerusalem, riots soon broke out all over the city. Pilate acted quickly. He surrounded the rioters with Roman soldiers disguised as civilians. At a given signal they beat the mob with their staffs and, their swords. As a result there was bloodshed and order was restored very soon. This time Pilate had won, but the price was too high and the relationship between him and the Jews had continued to worsen.

#3. The affair of the wooden shields

On another occasion, Pilate set up some wooden shields in the Roman headquarters in Jerusalem. Unlike the Roman standards, they bore no image but they were dedicated to the emperor Tiberius. Again the Jews protested, seeing this as an affront to their religion.

In their eyes, it was a subtle attempt to introduce emperor worship within the holy city itself. Again they protested to Pilate, but again he stubbornly refused to have the shields removed. The Jews then appealed to the Roman emperor himself and wrote a letter of protest to him. In a strongly-worded reply, the emperor wrote back, ordering Pilate to remove the shields and to transfer them at once to Caesarea. He also ordered Pilate to uphold the religious customs of the Jews. Thus Pilate had been soundly and humiliatingly defeated by the Jews.

It was after this incident that he had to make the decision about the trial of Y'shua, and this helps to explain his conduct.

#4. The last conflict

The last incident in Pilate's career involved the Samaritans, a tribe of people related to the Jews (who still exist to this day) who were discriminated against by the Jews.

A false prophet arose among them who promised he would uncover the sacred vessels of the Tabernacle – the Ark of the Covenant. According to tradition, these had been hidden by Moses in Mount Gerizim. This caused a sensation among Samaritans, and many of them assembled to go up this mountain together. Some of them arrived with weapons, which alarmed Roman authorities.

Pilate ordered his troops to block all the roads leading to Mount Gerizim. A pitched battle then began and many of the Samaritan senate protested to Pilate's immediate superior (the governor of Syria), accusing him of murder and using excessive force.

The governor of Syria ordered Pilate to return to Rome and to answer to the emperor Tiberius the charges made against him. Pilate had no choice and departed to Rome. But before he reached there, the emperor died. History does not record what subsequently happened. Was the judge, Pontius Pilate, himself judged in Rome? We simply do not know.

These four incidents give a picture as to the sort of a man Pilate was. He was a typical Roman of his day; arrogant, and with little understanding of the Jews – whose governor he was. Above all, he was stubborn and unyielding. But when he came face to face with Y'shua and had to judge him, he became a different man. In many ways he seems to be secretly admiring Y'shua the accused, unsure of himself and strangely accommodating to the Jewish authorities.

So what really happened in the Roman court that day? Whatever it was, it made Pilate the best-known judge who has ever lived. We will look thoroughly into the Roman trials as we proceed through this chapter.

27:3-10 Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet

"(3) Then Judas, which had betrayed him, when he saw that he was condemned, repented himself, and brought again the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, (4) Saying, I have sinned in that I have betrayed the innocent blood. And they said, What is that to us? see thou to that. (5) And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself. (6) And the chief priests took the silver pieces, and said, It is not lawful for to put them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood. (7) And they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. (8) Wherefore that field was called, The field of blood, unto this day. (9) Then was fulfilled that which was spoken by Jeremy the prophet, saying, And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him that was valued, whom they of the children of Israel did value; (10) And gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord appointed me."

This verse presents a problem, as Zechariah (Zech 11:12-13) is the actual source or this prophecy and not Jeremiah. There are several possible explanations for this:

As seen earlier in Matthew, this could be a case of subsequent scribal error. The *Shem-Tob Hebrew Matthew* has Zechariah as the prophet in this verse. We view this as the most likely explanation over the next two verses, as this shows a clear difference between translations.

(12) "And I said unto them, If ye think good, give me my price; and if not, forbear. So they weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver.

(13) And the LORD said unto me, Cast it unto the potter: a goodly price that I was prised at of them. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them to the potter in the house of the LORD". (Zech 11:12-13)

It could also be that Jeremiah is referred to as the "source", since in ancient times the scrolls of the "minor" prophets (i.e. Zechariah) were bound together with those of the "major" prophets (i.e., Jeremiah), and that the book of Jeremiah was indeed the "head" of the grouping. Although this is possible, it would be the only use of this method in the Gospels, making it somewhat unlikely.

It could be that Matthew is combining two prophecies which contain elements of the other. Although this device is used (at the *Midrashic* level of Hebrew Bible commentary), there doesn't seem to be a strong reason for it here.

27:11-17 Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?

"(11) And Jesus stood before the governor: and the governor asked him, saying, Art thou the King of the Jews? And Jesus said unto him, Thou sayest. (12) And when he was accused of the chief priests and elders, he answered nothing. (13) Then said Pilate unto him, Hearest thou not how many things they witness against thee? (14) And he answered him to never a word; insomuch that the governor marvelled greatly. (15) Now at that feast the governor was wont to release unto the people a prisoner, whom they would. (16) And they had then a notable prisoner, called Barabbas. (17) Therefore when they were gathered together, Pilate said unto them, Whom will ye that I release unto you? Barabbas, or Jesus which is called Christ?"

Y'shua or Barabbas? A Yom Kippur nugget

Perez and Zerah was a foreshadowed picture of the two goats used on *Yom Kippur* (Day of Atonement) and the two goats were a shadow of Y'shua and Barabbas.

"Now at the feast the governor was accustomed to releasing to the multitude one prisoner whom they wished. And they had then a notorious prisoner called Barabbas. Therefore, when they had gathered together, Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release to you? Barabbas, or Jesus who is called Christ?" (Matt 27:15-17 NKJV)

Here we are told that Y'shua is brought before Pilate. Pilate, who finds no fault in Y'shua and personally does not want to put him to death, plots to put Y'shua up against Barabbas and let the people choose whom they want to set free. "Surely they will choose Barabbas; after all he was a 'notorious prisoner'", had to be

the thought of Pilate. Of course, we know the people chose Barabbas over Y'shua. Lost in the English translation is a marvelous *Yom Kippur* nugget. (See my Pictorial Teaching CD on "God's plan for the ages in the 7 Main Feasts of Lev 23" to get a full understanding of the feasts.)

The name Barabbas is actually the Aramaic term **Bar Abbas**, meaning "son of the father". Even more bizarre is that his actual name, according to some Greek manuscripts, was Jesus Barabbas; or Jesus son of the father. The two identical goats used on *Yom Kippur* were one goat for YHWH and the other for *Azazel*. There is much debate on whom or what *Azazel* was. Some say *Azazel* was the name of the mountain that the goat was pushed off; some say that *Azazel* was a demonic angel, or even satan himself. I am of the opinion that YHWH sheds light on this age-old mystery by a statement that His Son made and was penned by John in John 8:44

"You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it."

Y'shua was rebuking a group of legalistic Pharisees by bringing up the point that their father was not YHWH as they were claiming, but rather Satan because of their unbelief.

We can conclude that everyone is either a child of Father YHWH or father Satan by Y'shua's statement. With this in mind, Matt 27:17b could actually read something similar to: *"Which one do you want me to release to you: Jesus son of the father or Jesus Son of the Father who is called Messiah?"* This is clearly a fulfillment to the two identical goats used on *Yom Kippur*.

Why would such richly detailed information be left out of our English translations? Believe it or not, it was man who intervened; most likely with good intentions, but in effect robbing us of some rich Hebraic teachings. It is believed that Christian scribes deleted "Jesus" from their copies of Matthew out of reverence, for as the early church father Origen said, *"We know that no one who is a sinner [is called] Jesus."* Fortunately, the original text is beginning to show up again in translations like David H. Stern's Complete Jewish Bible and the New Revised Standard Version. Sadly, this isn't the only attempt by man to tamper with the Word of YHWH. For example, Acts 12:4 in the King James Version reads:

"And when he had apprehended him, he put him in prison, and delivered him to four quaternions of soldiers to keep him; intending after Easter to bring him forth to the people."

Why would a Pagan origin festival be mentioned in the Bible? Easter used here is actually the Greek word "pascha" which is found twenty-nine times in the New Covenant; twenty-eight times this word is translated as Passover. Was this a slip of the pen by a translator? I'm not trying to find flaws someone made nearly four hundred years ago. The point I would like to make is there's more to the Bible than our Western minded eyes sometimes see; and if we would begin to study the Scripture from a more Hebraic point of view (for indeed the authors were Hebrews), then the Word of YHWH would come alive in our lives and bring forth abundant faith, as it is written:

"So then faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the word of God." (Rom 10:17 NKJV)

A *Yom Kippur* thought

Yom Kippur is the time that Israel sought for forgiveness from YHWH. It is also a time in which Jews seek forgiveness from each other. In Christianity, much focus is placed on seeking YHWH *"to forgive us of our trespasses"*, but little attention is placed on *"as we forgive those who trespass against us"*.

27:18-19 Have thou nothing to do with that just man

"(18) For he knew that for envy they had delivered him. (19) When he was set down on the judgment seat, his wife sent unto him, saying, Have thou nothing to do with that just man: for I have suffered many things this day in a dream because of him." (Mat 27:18-19)

Pilate tried all to prevent Y'shua from being crucified; he even scourged Y'shua in the hope that the legalistic Pharisees would release him.

(13) *"And having called together the chief priest and rulers and the people,*
(14) *Pilate said to them, You have brought this man to me as perverting the people. And, behold,*
examining him before you I found nothing blamable in this man regarding that which you charge against him.

- (15) But neither did Herod; For I sent you up to him, and, behold, nothing worthy of death is done by him.
 (16) Therefore I will chastise him, and release him." (Luke 23:13-16 Para)
 (20) "Pilate therefore, willing to release Jesus, spoke again to them.
 (21) But they cried, saying, Crucify him, crucify him.
 (22) And he said to them the third time, Why, what evil have he done? I have found no cause of death in him: I will therefore chastise him, and let him go.
 (23) And they were instant with loud voices, requiring that he might be crucified. And the voices of them and of the chief priests prevailed". (Luke 23:20-23 KJV)
 (15) "And so Pilate, willing to content the people, released Barabbas to them, and delivered Jesus, when he had scourged him, to be crucified.
 (16) And the soldiers led him away into the hall, called Praetorium; and they called together the whole band.
- (17) "And they clothed him with purple, and platted a crown of thorns, and put it about his head,
 (18) And began to salute him, Hail, King of the Jews!
 (19) And they smote him on the head with a reed, and did spit upon him, and bowing their knees worshiped him.
 (20) And when they had mocked him, they took off the purple from him, and put his own clothes on him, and led him out to crucify him". (Mark 15:15-20 KJV)

The Roman Scourging

Roman scourging was one of the most cruel and horrible kinds of punishment of that time and was known as the "halfway death" because those who were administering it were supposed to stop just before a person died from the punishment. The Roman scourging was so deadly that it was supposed to be administered by a specially trained man called a *lictor*. The instrument of punishment was called a *flagellum*, and was a short piece of wood which had several strips of leather attached to it on which were tied small pieces of bone, chain, or metal. When the *lictor* brought the *flagellum* down hard upon the victim, it would bruise, cut and tear the flesh, causing internal and external bleeding.

Because of the severity of Roman scourging, it was not to be administered in addition to another punishment because the scourged person would often die from his injuries.

The broken body:

"Just as many were astonished over you – so much was the disfigurement from man, his appearance and his form from sons of man". (Isaiah 52:14 Para)

The beatings that *Messiah Y'shua* suffered at the hands of the Roman soldier bruised and tore his flesh so much, that it disfigured him to the point that he was unrecognisable as a man.

By His stripes you are healed:

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, and bruised for our lawlessness: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his wounds we ourselves are healed". (Isaiah 53:5 Para)

The Hebrew words for "wounded" and "bruised" are '*hala'* and '*daka*' which mean 'to fatally wound', 'bore through', or 'pierce' and to 'be crushed', 'contrite', or 'broken'. Both of these words foretell the kind of beating and torturous death that the Saviour would endure as the sacrifice for humanity.

After *Y'shua* was scourged, Pilate again brings *Y'shua* before the Jews and tells them that he can find no fault in him. The Scriptures record that Pilate tried to release *Y'shua* three times. But, each time he tried, the legalistic religious leaders and rulers of the Jews refused to accept his decision; and became so forceful in their demand for the execution of *Y'shua* that they even denied the sovereignty of YHWH as their King:

- (4) "Pilate therefore went forth again, and said to them, Behold, I bring him forth to you, that you may know that I find no fault in him.
 (5) Then came Jesus forth, wearing the crown of thorns, and the purple robe. And Pilate said to them, Behold the man!
 (6) When the chief priests therefore and officers saw him, they cried out, saying, Crucify him, crucify him. Pilate said to them, Take you him, and crucify him: for I find no fault in him" (John 19:4-6 KJV).
 (12) "And from then on Pilate sought to release Jesus: but the Jews shouted, If you let this man go, you are not a friend of Caesar: whoever claims to be a king speaks against Caesars."

- (13) When Pilate heard this, he brought Jesus before him, and sat down in the judgement seat...
- (14) ...and he said to the Jews, Behold your king!
- (15) But they shouted, Away with him, crucify him. Pilate said, Shall I crucify your king? And the chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar". (John 19:12-15 Para)

27:20-24 He took water, and washed his hands before the multitude

"(20) But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitude that they should ask Barabbas, and destroy Jesus. (21) The governor answered and said unto them, Whether of the twain will ye that I release unto you? They said, Barabbas. (22) Pilate saith unto them, **What shall I do then with Jesus which is called Christ?** They all say unto him, Let him be crucified. (23) And the governor said, Why, what evil hath he done? But they cried out the more, saying, Let him be crucified. (24) When Pilate saw that he could prevail nothing, but that rather a tumult was made, **he took water, and washed his hands before the multitude**, saying, I am innocent of the blood of this just person: see ye to it."

The following two things are of prophetic importance:

As a final act of denying any responsibility for the death of Y'shua, Pilate commanded that a bowl of water be brought to him so that he could wash his hands. This washing of hands that Pilate did was not a Roman custom; it was part of the law as recorded by Moses in Deuteronomy chapter 21, and was done to proclaim innocence for a murder for which no guilty party could be found. Pilate did this to show that neither he nor Rome were to be blamed for the death of Y'shua.

When the people said, "*His blood be on us, and on our children*" they accepted the responsibility for the murder of Y'shua.

The act of washing body, hands or feet ceremonially, demonstrates the state of the person spiritually.

Exod 30:19-21 shows the importance of this statement:

- (19) "For Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet thereat:
- (20) When they go into the tabernacle of the congregation, they shall wash with water, that they die not; or when they come near to the altar to minister, to burn offering made by fire unto the LORD:
- (21) So they shall wash their hands and their feet, that they die not: and it shall be a statute for ever to them, even to him and to his seed throughout their generations."

Matt 27:24 says that Pilate washed his hands before the people, declaring that he was innocent of Y'shua's blood. Mark 7:3 shows the people holding to the tradition of *rachatzah* (the hand washing ceremony) As they wash their hands they say, "*baruch atah haShem Eloheynu Melech haolam, asher kidshanu bmitzvotav v'tzivanu al n'tiylat yadayim*" which means, "Blessed are you hashem our Elohim king of the universe, Who has sanctified us with His commandments, and has commanded us concerning the washing of the hands."

The explanation for doing this is found in the reference from Psalm 24:2, 3 "*Who may ascend the hill of the Lord? or who shall stand by His holy place? He that has clean hands and a pure heart.*" In the ceremony, no attempt is made to wash the hands in cleaning them with soap, etc.; because the purpose is to show the clean (innocent) state of the hands. Washing the hands does not make one innocent. This is confirmed by Y'shua's words when the legalistic Pharisees enquired why his disciples do not wash their hands before eating. "*It is not what goes into the mouth that defiles a man but what proceeds out of the heart.*"

27:25 Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children

"Then answered all the people, and said, His blood be on us, and on our children."

As mentioned, the "multitude" was willing to go along with the efforts of their leaders; hence Y'shua's words about the entire generation being wicked (Matt 12:45; 16:4). The principle in force here is that to whom much is given (by YHWH), much is expected.

An example of this is Moses, who was given greater spiritual insight than anyone else in history. He was not allowed to enter the Holy Land due to certain sin (striking the rock and not speaking to it), which for someone of "lesser stature" would probably not have merited such punishment.

This generation was blessed beyond any to that point in that they had the *Torah* in the flesh among them (i.e., Hebrews 11). They rejected this blessing, however, and therefore suffered severe consequences. As they "cut off" the Messiah (i.e., Dan 9:26), they themselves would be cut off. This is the principle of *middah k'neged middah* (YHWH's punishment being "measure for measure").

Despite the words of the people, their actions did not condemn all Jews from that point on (as some anti-Semites teach). Each person is guilty for their own sin before YHWH, although the effects of that sin may continue for several generations.

27:26 And when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified

"Then released he Barabbas unto them: and when he had scourged Jesus, he delivered him to be crucified."

Summary of the Roman trials

The first Roman trial

The Jewish trials of *Y'shua* had been characterised by prejudice and hatred. The Romans, however, had no personal feelings against *Y'shua*, and the justice given by the Romans was famous.

We would expect Roman law to give *Y'shua* a fair trial, but this was not to be the case; in fact, things got worse. Frank Morison in his book, 'Who Moved the Stone?' says:

"If anyone thinks that in approaching the trial of Jesus of Nazareth by Pontius Pilate he is approaching the simple and the obvious, he is making a miscalculation. This thing is very subtle. Outwardly it has all the placidity of still waters, but beneath the apparent stillness there are deep and hidden currents that make it incomparably the greatest and most profoundly interesting psychological study in history. We do not get rid of the mystery of Christ when we bring to the Roman bar; we increase it tenfold."

One of these mysteries is as to whether Pilate had come to some understanding with the Jewish authorities before *Y'shua* appeared before him on trial. The account of the trial shows that this is more than likely.

For starters, Pilate would not normally have held court on the day of the Jewish Passover. But the Gospels record that as a concession to the Jewish authorities, he did agree to try *Y'shua* straight away. The legalistic Pharisees expected Pilate to simply ratify the death sentence already passed on to *Y'shua*, as the Passover sacrifices would start in a couple of hours. But much to their surprise, he refused to do this.

Then there is the urgent message sent by Pilate's wife to her husband while in court, "*don't have anything to do with that innocent man.*" It is difficult to explain this unless she had prior knowledge of the trial of *Y'shua*. Such knowledge could only have come from her husband, who in turn must have obtained it from the Jewish authorities.

The fullest description of this trial is found in John's Gospel. This account could be of great interest to his readers, many of whom would like *Y'shua*, be compelled one day to stand before a Roman court because of their faith.

We know that John, along with Peter, managed to gain entrance into the court of the High Priest. John may have followed *Y'shua* as he entered the *praetorium*, which was the official residence of Pilate. This would explain the detailed account that John gives us of this trial and his description of the dramatic moment in which *Y'shua* confronts Pilate, his judge.

Roman courts also only began to sit shortly after daybreak. The Roman Seneca mentions 'thousands hurrying to the forum at the break of the day – how base their case is, and how much baser are their advocates'. Even in those days, lawyers were not popular! Caiaphas probably remitted the case to Pilate around dawn, and the trial took place soon afterwards.

John records that to avoid ceremonial uncleanness, the Jews did not enter the palace; they wanted to be able to eat the Passover (John 18:28). So Pilate came out to them (John 18:29). Jews taught that the houses of the Gentiles were ceremonially unclean, and that any Jew who entered them would also be considered unclean for seven days afterwards and would not be able to observe the Passover Feast.

It is a sad commentary to find that Caiaphas and the Jewish authorities were concerned about a ceremonial uncleanness that would prevent them from keeping the Passover; but they were not at all concerned about *Y'shua*, who claimed to be the Messiah. Instead they planned to kill Him.

This early morning trial of *Y'shua* before Pilate was not a full trial according to Roman law. There was, in fact, no need for Pilate to follow Roman legal procedure at all; for *Y'shua* was not a Roman citizen but merely a

Jewish peasant to whom the laws of Rome did not apply. However, Pilate did not follow Roman legal procedure to some extent.

It seems that he was aware as he sat in court that *Y'shua* was no ordinary man. Certainly, he realised it that it was out of envy that they had handed *Y'shua* over to him.

"For he knew that it was out of envy that they had handed him over." (Matt 27:18)

The charge:

Roman law has had a great influence on English law, and Pilate's first question in this trial was the same one that any English lawyer would ask today: "What have you been accused of?"

When Caiaphas and the others brought *Y'shua* to him, Pilate came out to them and asked, "*What accusation bring ye against this man?*" (John 18:29.) Caiaphas appears to have been surprised at this. Evidently, he thought that Pilate would simply ratify the death sentence and 'rubber stamp' the verdict of the Jewish court. But this was not to be. Taken aback and resenting Pilate's insistence on retrying the case, the Jewish authorities curtly replied, "*If he were not a criminal, we would not have handed him over to you.*" (John 18:30 NAB.)

Pilate made his first attempt to get rid of the case. With ill-concealed impatience, he retorted: "*Take him yourselves, and judge him according to your law.*" (John 18:31) "*We do not have the right to execute anyone*" (John 18:31.)

Pilate had still not had an answer to his question, and so *Y'shua* had not been charged. Without a charge he could not be tried. The Jewish authorities were in dilemma. They could reveal the true nature of their charge: blasphemy. Pilate as a Roman and pagan would not be concerned about this. So they hastily re-framed their charge.

Their determination to kill *Y'shua* is seen in the way in which they did this. They now brought a charge against Him that was not even mentioned in the Jewish trial and which was quite obviously false.

"We found this man misleading our people; he opposes the payment of taxes to Caesar and maintains that he is the Messiah, a king." (Luke 23:2)

The first charge – that of 'subverting our nation' was very vague; and, unless some definite act could be proved, could be easily disproved. The second charge, "*he opposes payment of taxes to Caesar*", was obviously false. That very week, in answer to the trick question, "*Is it lawful to pay the census tax to Caesar or not?*" (Matt 22:17), *Y'shua* had given his famous reply, "*Then repay to Caesar what belongs to Caesar and to God what belongs to God.*" (Matt 22:21)

But the last charge He claims, "*he claims to be the Messiah; a king*" was a serious one. The Jewish authorities were accusing *Y'shua* of being a revolutionary against Rome. Pilate must have been surprised to find the Jews, of all people, suddenly becoming champions of Rome! But this was a charge that he could not ignore.

The authority of the Roman emperor was at stake. The charge was treason. The interrogation the Roman statute on treason was the Lex Julia Majestatis, 48 B.C. It made it an offence to engage in any activity against the Emperor or the Common Wealth. It could have been argued that *Y'shua* was an alien and owed no duty to the Roman state, but as a Jew living in Roman occupied territory, he did owe allegiance to Caesar. In A.D. 6, the emperor agreed to make Palestine a Roman province and the Jewish nation gave their allegiance to Caesar. Any breach of this by a Jew was treason.

Now that the charge had been made, the next step was to examine the accused. To do this, Pilate returned to the *praetorium* and took his seat upon the *bema* (a portable chair or throne) with *Y'shua* in front of him.

In some scene full of dramatic power, John pictures for us the lowly majesty of *Y'shua* confronting the proud majesty of Rome's representative. At this moment all the other actors in the passion recede from the foreground. The basic idea is the confrontation of Caesar by *Y'shua* with kingship as the topic for discussion. Pilate summoned *Y'shua* and the accounts in all four Gospels record his first question,

"Art thou the King of the Jews?" (John 18:33.)

The word “*thou*” is forceful. As Pilate looked at Y’shua, he was surprised that anyone should be suggesting that he was a king. Certainly He did not look like one! Y’shua replied:

“Sayest thou this thing of thyself, or did others tell it thee of me?” (John 18:34)

This question makes a vital distinction. There were two ways in which the word “*king*” might be understood. It could refer to a political king uprising against Caesar – a resistance leader. If this was what Pilate meant, the answer was ‘no’. But it could refer to a Messianic King of the Jews, in which case the answer was ‘yes’.

Pilate replied angrily, “Am I a Jew? Thine own nation and the chief priests have delivered thee unto me: what hast thou done?” (John 18:35.) Pilate realises that the accusation had come from the Jewish authorities. He then asked Y’shua what he had done to arouse their hostility. He wanted to find out whether Y’shua had committed an offence against Roman law.

The defense:

Y’shua had now to answer the charge made against him. Instead of pleading ‘not guilty’, He made a plea known in English law as ‘confession and avoidance’. This is a common defense. Y’shua said in effect:

“In answer to the charge, I ‘confess and avoid’; that is to say, I admit I made and do make a claim alleged against me, I assert that that claim, in the sense in which I made it, is true in substance and in fact. I do not; however make the claim in the sense alleged by my accusers. I admit that I claim to be a king, but not the sort of a king, alleged by the chief priest. I make no claim to be a king, a rival to Caesar. I am not guilty of treason against the emperor. I admit and assert that I have come to found a kingdom but not an earthly one, my kingdom is out of this world: If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants fight, that I should not be delivered to the Jews: but now is my kingdom not from hence.” Translated from John 18:36.

Pilate took the point and replied, “Art thou a king then?” Y’shua answered, “Thou sayest that I am a king. To this end was I born, and for this cause came I into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth. Every one that is of the truth heareth my voice.” (John 18:37.)

Pilate must have been startled when he heard these words. Here was a king who was different. Y’shua claimed to be a king in a unique sense; a king as no earthly ruler had ever been or could be. Pilate replied with his famous words: “What is truth?” (John 18:38)

Some suggest that Pilate was not serious when he asked this: ‘What is truth?’ said jesting Pilate, and would not stay for an answer. But this could have been a serious question. Certainly, Pilate re-membered Y’shua’s words. When the Chief Priest and the Jewish authorities protested about the notice over the crucifixion stake of Y’shua, “Jesus of Nazareth the King of the Jews” (John 19:19-22), he refused to change it.

Whoever Y’shua was, it was clear that he was no rebel.

The release:

In Roman law, three forms of verdict were possible;

Not guilty (absolvo),

Guilty (condemno) and

Doubtful (non-liquidest).

Scots law still has these three possible verdicts. Pilate could have given in to the Jewish authorities and condemned Y’shua to death because he was a revolutionary against Rome. But Pilate realised that this was not the case. Then he could have given a verdict of doubtful (‘not proven’). This would have had the effect of referring the case back for a new trial on another day. There could have been justification for this because of the unsatisfactory nature of the evidence. But Pilate, whatever his other faults, acted with justice and gave a just sentence.

Descending from this judgment seat and taking Y’shua with him, he went out to the Chief Priest and the crowd (who had been waiting impatiently) and gave his final decision, “I find in him no fault at all.” (John 18:38)

The trial was at an end and the prosecution had failed. The court ought to have then been cleared and the prisoner set free. But Pilate’s words, far from ending the case, made matters worse and stirred up the crowd into frenzy. They shouted out,

“He stirreth up the people, teaching throughout all Jewry, beginning from Galilee to this place.” (Luke 23:5)

When Pilate heard the words “*Galilee*” he asked whether *Y’shua* was a Galilean. He must immediately have realised that this was another opportunity to get rid of the case. If *Y’shua* belonged to Galilee, the man to handle his trial should be the local ruler of Galilee, Herod. Pilate, while he could have given *Y’shua* a full trial himself, also had power after a preliminary examination to remit the case to Herod who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Not only did this get Pilate out of a painful dilemma, but it was a diplomatic master stroke.

Sometime previously, Pilate and Herod had quarreled badly; this gesture on Pilate’s part would help to heal the breach. Pilate hoped that not only would Herod now deal with this case but that he would be flattered as well.

The trial of Herod - the second Roman trial

So *Y’shua* now went to be tried by Herod. This particular Herod – Herod Antipas – was the son of the Herod who ordered the slaughter of the babies in Bethlehem when *Y’shua* was born. It was Herod Antipas who had murdered John the Immerser at a whim of his step-daughter and who was at this time living with Herodias, the wife of his own brother Phillip.

When he saw *Y’shua* he was delighted, for he had wanted to see him for a long time. When Herod first heard of *Y’shua* “...he was perplexed, because that it was said of some, that John was risen from the dead; And of some, that Elias had appeared; and of others, that one of the old prophets was risen again.” (Luke 9:8-9)

Subsequently, Herod had tried to kill *Y’shua*, mainly because of this superstitious fear that he was John the Immerser who had risen from the dead. This was now his hour of opportunity. He was hoping to see *Y’shua* perform a miracle. Herod tried to cross-examine *Y’shua* as a lawyer cross-examines a witness, but he was disappointed *Y’shua* was not willing to satisfy his idle curiosity and work a few miracles for the entertainment of him and his friends. He answered none of the questions that were put to him.

Y’shua was exercising an elementary legal right when he remained silent. But his silence meant more than this. It spoke more eloquently than words. While *Y’shua* had answers for his Jewish and Roman judges he had no answer for this murderer playing at holding a court of justice. Nothing could have been more galling to Herod than the silence with which his questions were received. Herod was infuriated. He joined his soldiers in ridiculing and mocking *Y’shua*.

“And Herod with his men of war set him at nought, and mocked him, and arrayed him in a gorgeous robe, and sent him again to Pilate.” (Luke 23:11)

Dressing Him in elegant robe, they sent Him back to Pilate. That day Herod and Pilate became friends – before this they had been enemies. Pilate had paid his respects to Herod; and in turn, Herod had paid his respects to Pilate by sending *Y’shua* back.

Behind all this was Herod’s refusal to deal further with this case. Why did he miss this opportunity of giving *Y’shua* a proper trial and passing a sentence of death upon him? Deep down Herod feared *Y’shua*. His conscience still bothered him about the murder of John the Immerser. Also, while he was willing to join in mocking *Y’shua*, it was quite another thing to try him and sentence him to death. Herod knew that He had done nothing worthy of this. Once again, the ball was back in Pilate’s court.

The third Roman trial - back at Pilate

The return of *Y’shua* to Pilate was bitter, though not an unexpected blow. Pilate thought he had gotten rid of this case; but like a boomerang, it came back to him and now he had to take some action.

The crowds were getting out of control, and Pilate’s authority as governor was seriously threatened. But he was still a just man and for the second time he declared that *Y’shua* was innocent.

“You brought this man to me and accused him of inciting the people to revolt. I have conducted my investigation in your presence and have not found this man guilty of the charges you have brought against him, nor did Herod, for he sent him back to us. So no capital crime has been committed by him. Therefore I shall have him flogged and then release him.” (Luke 23:14-16)

This punishment was flogging; and despite its illegality, Pilate hoped that this cruelty would satisfy the crowd. But to them this was a sign that Pilate was weakening. Far from being satisfied, they demanded that *Y’shua* be crucified.

In desperation, Pilate decided to take advantage of a Jewish custom by which the Roman governor in Passover week released a prisoner as a gesture of good will. There is a precedent for this in Roman law. An imperial magistrate could pardon and acquit individual prisoners in response to the shouts of the populace. Among the prisoners held by the Roman at this time there was one, interestingly enough, also called *Y'shua* - *Y'shua Barabbas*.

This man was a prisoner of some notoriety: a bandit and a murderer and a member of a local resistance movement that to most of the Jews would make him a hero. The crowd was given a choice. He also hoped to get himself out of his dilemma and to get the best of both worlds. If his plan succeeded, *Y'shua* would be released; but on the other hand, technically he would be convicted as a criminal who had then been found not guilty.

While Pilate was sitting on his judgment seat waiting for the people to make their choice, he received a message from his wife. She was Claudia Procula, the illegitimate daughter of Claudia, the third wife of the Emperor Tiberius. It has been suggested that it was due to her connections that Pilate had been appointed the prefect of Judea.

Her action was certainly unusual. Judges should not be interrupted when sitting in court. But Claudia had dreamt that night about *Y'shua*. Perhaps she had heard him personally and knew that her husband had made an arrangement with the Jewish authorities to try *Y'shua* that day. This dream had interested her and she had to send an urgent message, *"Have nothing to do with that righteous man. I suffered much in a dream today because of him"* (Matt 27:19.) The whole of human history would have changed if Pilate had paid attention to his wife's message. He did not, but this message strengthened his resolve to see that justice was done.

Pilate's plan to have *Y'shua* released failed. While he waited in court for the crowd's decision, the Chief Priest and the elders persuaded the crowd to choose *Y'shua Barabbas* instead of *Y'shua HaMashiach*. They knew what this meant. *Y'shua HaMashiach* would be sentenced to death and destroyed. More desperate than ever, Pilate cried out,

"Then what shall I do with Jesus called Messiah?" They all said, 'Let him be crucified!" (Matt 27:22-23)

It was now quite clear to Pilate that the Chief Priest and the crowd were determined to kill *Y'shua*. As a last bid to satisfy them, he made his final attempt to release *Y'shua*. He cried out his earlier promise and took *Y'shua* and had him flogged.

Flogging was usually a type of a replacement to crucifixion. It was a terrifying punishment. The victim was stripped, tied to a pillar or stake and then beaten with a whip made up of leather lashes to which pieces of metal and bone were inserted. According to Roman law, no maximum number of strokes was prescribed by law; but Jewish law only allowed forty strokes (Deut 25:2-3.) Very often, the victim's back was reduced to a pulp and many died beneath the lash.

Pilate was still hoping to satisfy the crowd's blood lust and make them willing to let *Y'shua* go free. *Y'shua* was not scourged in order to be crucified but in order to escape crucifixion. While flogging *Y'shua*, the Roman soldiers could not resist some crude horseplay. *Y'shua* had been accused of being "*king of the Jews*", so they would treat him as a king. They twisted together a crown of thorns and put it on his head. They clothed Him in a purple robe and went up to Him again and again, saying, *"Hail, King of the Jews!" And they struck him repeatedly"* in the face (John 19:2).

Y'shua was then taken outside. The very sight of Him should have been enough to show the crowd that he could not possibly claim to be a king, and thus allow Pilate to release him. But when Pilate said to the crowd, *"Behold, the man!"* (John 19:5) it only stirred up the crowd to greater anger. Cries of 'Crucify him, crucify him!' now echoed through the court.

Despite the fact that he had just had *Y'shua* flogged, Pilate for the third time declared that he was innocent, *"Take him yourselves and crucify him. I find no guilt in him."* (John 19:6) Pilate could have been talking to the wind for all the effect this had on the Jews. They insisted, *"We have a law, and according to that law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God."* (John 19:7)

The truth was out! The real charge against *Y'shua* was at last revealed. Pilate could not be called a religious man; but like many Romans of his day, he was evidently superstitious. The Romans had many stories about

YHWH's appearance in human form. Pilate had been both intrigued and impressed by Y'shua. Could there be something supernatural about him?

He realised the seriousness of this charge and decided not to consider it publicly, but to examine Y'shua about it personally and in private. "Where are you from?" he asked Y'shua (John 19:9). Could it be that he might have thought to himself that the accused was indeed a man come from God? But Y'shua did not answer. Previously he had answered other questions readily. Pilate persisted with his questioning. "Do you not speak to me? Do you not know that I have power to release you and I have power to crucify you?" (John 19:10)

Y'shua answered, "You would have no power over me if it had not been given to you from above. For this reason the one who handed me over to you has the greater sin" (John 19:11.) These were Y'shua's last words to Pilate. He pointed out that the real responsibility for His trial rested with Caiaphas and the Jewish authorities. These words had a profound impact on Pilate. The truth was beginning to dawn. There was something different about this man - something God-like.

The result was that from then on, "Pilate tried to release him". We do not know how Pilate tried to do this, but the Jews kept shouting, "If you release him, you are not a friend of Caesar. Everyone who makes himself a king opposes Caesar." (John 19:12) Later they shouted... "We have no king but Caesar." (John 19:15) Again, this revealed the crowd's hostility towards Y'shua. Caesar was certainly not their friend or their king. But they were determined that Y'shua must be crucified.

The Jews' threat to report Pilate to Caesar amounted to blackmail. On a previous occasion, the Jews had made a similar threat to send a deputation (or embassy) to Caesar. Philo tells us that Pilate feared that if they actually sent an embassy, they would also expose the rest of his conduct as a governor by stating in full the briberies, the insults, the outrageous and meaningless injuries, the executions without trial constantly repeated, and the ceaseless and supremely grievous cruelty. Pilate had already been in serious trouble with the Jews three times, and under no circumstances could he risk a complaint being lodged against him.

He was outmaneuvered and afraid of a riot because the Jews had gotten the better of him. Pilate yielded. He collapsed, miserably, utterly; and hurtled down the slippery slope of self-interest and expediency to his destruction. He abandoned his high duty as judge to do right and mete justice to the accused. He gave way to the clamour of the mob without fear or favour, partiality, affection or ill will in an attempt to save himself from a charge of treason.

Pilate's last gesture was to wash his hands of the whole affair. He did this publicly, taking advantage of a Jewish custom. But he could not avoid the fact that the ultimate responsibility was his. Matthew records,

"Then he released Barabbas to them, but after he had Jesus scourged, he handed him over to be crucified." (Matt 27:26)

So the trials of Y'shua were at an end. Pilate, the one man who could have obtained justice for Y'shua, had handed him over to his executioners. And every time the church says the creed, they remember that Y'shua "suffered under Pontius Pilate."

The sentence:

When Y'shua was sentenced there was no doubt about what would happen. Under Jewish law, a death sentence could be carried out by: stoning, burning, beheading or strangling.

Roman law added the torture of crucifixion. This was the most horrible of all punishments. It had been invented by the Phoenicians. They had tried death by the spear, boiling in oil, stoning, strangulation, drowning and burning; but all these had been found to be too quick. They wanted a way of punishing criminals slowly and inexorably, so they devised death by crucifixion. By it they could decide how much they wanted to hurt and how long it would take the victim to die. The victim might then hang there for two or three days until at last suffocated and died either of exhaustion or starvation. From it, we get our English word 'excruciating'.

It represented the same peak of the torture's art, atrocious physical sufferings, length of torment, ignominy, the effect on the crowd gathered to witness the long agony of the crucified. Nothing could be more horrible than the sight of this living body: seeing, hearing, still able to feel; and yet reduced to the state of a corpse by forced immobility and absolute helplessness. We cannot even say that the crucified person writhed in agony, for it was impossible for him to move.

He was stripped of his clothing, unable even to brush away the flies which fell on his wounded flesh that was already lacerated by the preliminary scourging, exposed to the insult and curses of people who could always find some sickening pleasure at the sight of the tortures of others – a feeling which is increased and not diminished by the sight of pain.

The crucifixion stake miserably represented humanity reduced to the degree of unimportance, suffering and degradation. The penalty of crucifixion combined all the most ardent tormentor could desire: torture, the pillory, degradation, and certain death – distilled slowly drop by drop. It was an ideal for the torturer.

The Romans adopted crucifixion as a means of deterring crime; therefore, they reduced it to an exact science with a set of rules to be followed. On one occasion, when they repressed a revolt, we are told that 6,000 men were crucified on a single day and hung on crucifixion stakes between Capua and Rome. But no Roman citizen could be crucified; it was a punishment reserved for slaves and the worst type of criminals.

Throughout the trial, the Jews were determined that Y'shua should be put to death; and eventually through the weakness of Pilate, they had succeeded. The sentence was a foregone conclusion: death by crucifixion. Numerous religious fears and political motives caused both Jews and the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to kill Y'shua the Messiah.

Rebellion (insurrection) against Rome and Pilate was possibly underway in Jerusalem during Y'shua's final days

(1) "At that very time there were some present who told him about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with their sacrifices.

(2) He asked them, 'Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were worse sinners than all other Galileans?

(3) No, I tell you; but unless you repent, you will all perish as they did." (Luke 13:1-3 NAB)

"They they all shouted out together... "Release Barabbas for us!" This was a man who had been put in prison for an insurrection (stasis) that had taken place in the city, and for murder". (Luke 23:18 NAB)

"And there was one called Barabbas who had been imprisoned with the rebels, who in the insurrection (stasis) had committed murder". (Mark 15:7)

Mark 15:27; Matt 27:38 (Luke 23:32).

"And they crucified two robbers with him, one on the right, and one on the left."

Antiquities 18.3.2 60-62 (War 2.9.4 175-177) (speculative) "Pilate undertook to bring water to Jerusalem using money from the sacred treasury, and deriving the source of the stream from the distance of two hundred furlongs. However, the Jews were not pleased with what had been done about this, and many ten thousands of people got together and made a clamor against him, insisting that he should leave off that design. Some of them also cried insults and abuse at the man, as crowds of such people usually do. So he clothed a great number of his soldiers in the people's garments, under which they carried clubs, and sent them off where they might surround them, he bid the crowd to withdraw. While they boldly cast abuse upon him, he gave the soldiers a prearranged signal. But the soldiers laid upon them much greater blows than Pilate had commanded, and equally punished those that were tumultuous and those that were not. Showing no softness, the people were caught unarmed by men prepared for the action, a great number of them were slain, and others of them ran away wounded. And thus an end was put to this insurrection (stasis)."

The Gospels agree that Y'shua was crucified along with two thieves – the Greek word for "thieves" used by Mark and Matthew is *liéstai* (singular *lēistēs*) – the same word Josephus uses throughout his works (77 times) to indicate both simple robbers and anti-Roman revolutionaries. There is an implication that these thieves were involved in the recent insurrection in Jerusalem. Barabbas, who was to be crucified at the same time as Y'shua, is identified by Mark and Luke as a participant in the insurrection. These suggest that Y'shua may have been grouped by the authorities with those involved in an anti-Roman riot.

The quoted passage by Josephus describes one such insurrection in Jerusalem under Pilate. Josephus does not describe an event where the blood of Galileans "is mixed with the sacrifices". Galilee, which wasn't under direct Roman rule, was the origin of the anti-Roman Fourth Philosophy developed by Judas the Galilean, whose descendants were eventually leaders in the revolt against Rome (see The Causes of the War Against Rome). It's a good possibility, then, that in any insurrection Galileans were involved.

27:27-41 And they crucified him, and parted his garments

"(27) Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the common hall, and gathered unto him the whole band of soldiers. (28) And they stripped him, and put on him a scarlet robe. (29) And when they had platted a crown of thorns, they put it upon his head, and a reed in his right hand: and they bowed the knee before him, and mocked him, saying, Hail, King of the Jews! (30) And they spit upon him, and took the reed, and smote him on the head. (31) And after that they had mocked him, they took the robe off from him, and put his own raiment on him, and led him away to crucify him. (32) And as they came out, they found a man of Cyrene, Simon by name: him they compelled to bear his cross. (33) And when they were come unto a place called Golgotha, that is to say, a place of a skull, (34) They gave him vinegar to drink mingled with gall: and when he had tasted thereof, he would not drink. (35) **And they crucified him, and parted his garments**, casting lots: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, They parted my garments among them, and upon my vesture did they cast lots. (36) And sitting down they watched him there; (37) And set up over his head his accusation written, THIS IS JESUS THE KING OF THE JEWS. (38) Then were there two thieves crucified with him, one on the right hand, and another on the left. (39) And they that passed by reviled him, wagging their heads, (40) And saying, Thou that destroyest the temple, and buildest it in three days, save thyself. If thou be the Son of God, come down from the cross. (41) Likewise also the chief priests mocking him, with the scribes and elders, said."

There are many citations of Scripture from the *Tenakh* used by Matthew (and other "New Testament" writers) in association with Y'shua being the Messiah. The quotation in these verses is from Psalm 22:1 and Psalm 22:14-18. Many people will cite such statements from "New Testament" as a fulfilled prophecy.

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?..." (Psalm 22:1)

(14) "I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; It has melted within Me.

(15) My strength is dried up like a potsher, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death.

(16) For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet;

(17) I can count all My bones.

(18) They look and stare at Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots." (Psalm 22:1, 14-18)

But one can legitimately ask: What is the basis for quoting a verse from the *Tenakh* as a prophecy about the Messiah; and furthermore, specifically that "Y'shua fulfilled it".

Examining the text of Psalm 22 (which Matthew cites), we see that it is a *Psalm of David* and is written in the "first person". Therefore, it is David who is crying out to YHWH in a time of his need. There is no specific reference to "Messiah" anywhere in the text. How, then, is this a "Messianic prophecy" as well as being "proof" for Y'shua being Messiah?

The same can be said of most of the other prophecy fulfillments of the "New Testament". For example, the *Jewish New Testament* and *Jewish New Testament Commentary* both have lists of "Messianic prophecies" fulfilled by Y'shua. (*Jewish New Testament Jewish*, Introduction, section VII, *Jewish New Testament Commentary*, pp. 79-80).

Examining the *Tenakh* citations, we find the same thing in these texts – no mention of "Messiah". (In fact, the term "Messiah" is only found in one place in the entire *Tenakh* – in chapter 9 of Daniel.)

Unfortunately, we lack the level of understanding that the (Hebrew) "New Testament" authors had to demonstrate why these *Tenakh* verses are "Messianic prophecies" and how they make the connection to Y'shua fulfilling them. Our ability to decipher these Scriptures is hampered due to almost two thousand years of reading the "New Testament" outside the context of *Torah* as it was understood and presented in the Hebraic minds of Matthew, John, Peter, Paul, James, etc.

27:42-45 If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him

"(42) He saved others; himself he cannot save. **If he be the King of Israel, let him now come down from the cross, and we will believe him.** (43) He trusted in God; let him deliver him now, if he will have him: for he said, I am the Son of God. (44) The thieves also, which were crucified with him, cast the same in his teeth. (45) Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour."

This wicked generation was still looking for signs to the very end (i.e., Matt 16:4). The proper attitude of a believer was found in three men tossed into a furnace many years prior to this:

- (17) "If it be so, our God whom we serve is able to deliver us from the burning fiery furnace; and he will deliver us out of your hand, O king.
- (18) But if not, be it known to you, O king, that we will not serve your gods or worship the golden image which you have set up." (Dan 3:17-18)

27:46 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, **My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?**"

The ideas of: a) Messiah being Elohim; and, b) Y'shua talking to YHWH, are both difficult to prove using Scripture at the literal (*p'shat*) level. The concept of YHWH's various "emanations" that lies deep within the mystical aspects of Judaism are touched on below.

Forsaken: What Did Y'shua Mean?

What did Y'shua mean when He cried out on the crucifixion stake, "*My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?*" (Matt 27:46 and Psalm 22:1) Was He really and truly forsaken by the Father, or was it a figure of speech? Did He doubt YHWH? Why did He ask? Did he not know the answer?

To understand the answer to these questions, one must understand the nature of the person of Y'shua, the nature of His sufferings, and the nature of His question.

The Nature of His Humanity: Real and Complete Humanity:

There are several reasons for the incarnation of Y'shua. One is that YHWH is immortal and cannot die; Y'shua took on humanity in order to be able to die.

YHWH is immortal. The psalmist prays, "*the heavens are the work of Your hands. They will perish, but You will endure; Yes, they will all grow old like a garment. . . But You are the same, And Your years will have no end.*" (Psalm 102:25-27). Paul blesses YHWH as "*the King eternal, immortal, invisible*" (1 Tim 1:17). Since YHWH is immortal, how is He to die on the crucifixion stake? YHWH cannot die. "*Therefore, when He came into the world, He said: '... a body You have prepared for Me'*" (Heb 10:4-5). Y'shua took on humanity and a body in order to be able to die.

Another reason for the incarnation is that YHWH Cannot be Tempted. "*Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God'; for God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone*" (James 1:13). And He would have to be tempted in order to become a sinless sacrifice (not merely innocent, but tested and proven without sin). He would have to be tempted; in order to as a man, undo the mess man got us into. Y'shua took on humanity in order to be really and truly tempted. Hebrews affirms that Y'shua was "*in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin*" (Heb 4:15-16). It was not His deity, but His humanity which made that possible.

Y'shua was not merely Elohim encased in a body. His humanity was real inside and out. He possessed a human spirit and was psychologically human.

"This selfsame one is perfect both in deity and in humanness; this selfsame one is also actually God and actually man, with a rational soul [meaning human soul] and a body. He is of the same reality as God as far as his deity is concerned and of the same reality as we ourselves as far as his humanness is concerned; thus like us in all respects, sin only excepted." - Definition of Chalcedon, 451

Y'shua experienced real human emotions. Several examples are:

Love: The disciple "*whom Jesus loved*" (John 13:23)

Compassion: "*But when He saw the multitudes, He was moved with compassion for them, because they were weary and scattered, like sheep having no shepherd.*" (Matt 9:36) (literally, "moved in one's internal or visceral organs".)

Distress: "He began to be sorrowful and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch with Me.'" (Matt 26:37)

Joy: "In that hour Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, "I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes..." (Luke 10:21)

Anger: "And when He had looked around at them with anger, being grieved by the hardness of their hearts" (Mark 3:5)

Indignance: "When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the kingdom of God belongs to such as these." (Mark 10:14, NIV)

Y'shua functioned in a true human function:

Y'shua played by the rules we have to play by. "But when the fullness of the time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the law." (Gal 4:4)

Though fully and truly Elohim, Y'shua did not exercise His prerogatives as Elohim. He never ceased to be who He was. He simply chose not to exercise His powers as Elohim. Instead, He functioned as the prototype of the Spirit-filled man.

"Although from the beginning He had the nature of God He did not reckon His equality with God a treasure to be tightly grasped. Nay, He stripped Himself of His glory, and took on Him the nature of a bondservant by becoming a man like other men. And being recognised as truly human, He humbled Himself and even stooped to die; yes, to die on a cross." (Phil 2:6-8, Weymouth)

He accepted, for a while, limitations to which humans are subject. For example, He refused to exercise His omniscience as Elohim. He chose to know only what the Father would reveal to Him. He did not know when the second coming would take place. "But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father" (Mark 13:32). There were times when the Father revealed the thoughts and secrets of those with whom He came in contact; but when speaking to the father of one boy tormented by a demon, He did not know the answer and asked for information: "So He asked his father, 'How long has this been happening to him?' And he said, 'From childhood'" (Mark 9:21). Y'shua, in His incarnation, chose to be limited to one place at a time, refusing to exercise for a time, omni-presence. He could have chosen to call in twelve legions of angels to rescue Himself from the crucifixion stake (Matt 26:53), but He chose to accept the limitations of humanity and suffering.

Y'shua lived in complete dependence upon the Father, as mankind was designed to do:

He played by the same rules which we have to play by. He replied to the Father to lead Him in what to say, "For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak" (John 12:49 Cp: John 7:17, 8:26, 12:50, 14:10, 24).

He relied on the Father's power to perform His signs and miracles. As Elohim, He could have done so in His own power; but as Man, He relied on the Father. "Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do; for whatever He does, the Son also does in like manner'" (John 5:19). He answered His critics, stating that: "If I cast out demons with the finger of God, surely the kingdom of God has come upon you" (Luke 11:20, see also John 4:34, 5:36). The assumption, again, is that He relied on the Father for the power.

When Y'shua selected His disciples, He relied on the Father for direction. "Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles". (Luke 6:12-13)

Y'shua lived in continuous fellowship with the Father, in continuous obedience to the Father, in continuous dependence upon the Father, and thus experienced continuous empowerment from the Father. On earth, He was the prototype of the Spirit-filled man.

The nature of His sufferings: Real wrath and alienation

YHWH's attitude toward sin is one of wrath and fury:

Look at what the Bible says about YHWH's wrath. It is strong and frightening. Some wish to make YHWH one-dimensional: "YHWH is love" - as if love were His only quality. That is not the picture we find in Scripture.

Psalm 7:11 says that, "God is a just judge, And God is angry with the wicked every day"

Nah 1:2 says, "God is jealous, and the LORD avenges; The LORD avenges and is furious. The LORD will take vengeance on His adversaries, And He reserves wrath for His enemies."

It is in the New Covenant as well as the Old, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom 1:18)

The reason for this horrifying wrath is the horrid, offensive nature of sin. YHWH hates sin. It deserves to be punished. It should be punished. YHWH is just; it *will* be punished. Nah 1:3 affirms, "The LORD is slow to anger and great in power, And will not at all acquit the wicked." YHWH cannot simply overlook sin. He is too holy to just pretend it didn't happen. He is not a Santa Claus figure – who for all the threatening about being nice still comes any way.

Y'shua's substitutionary work on the crucifixion stake made Him the object of YHWH's wrath:

On the crucifixion stake, Y'shua was experiencing sin for us. "For He made Him who knew no sin to be sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Cor 5:21).

Notice the stunning words the Scriptures use to describe the experience of Y'shua (emphasis added)...

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a **curse** for us (for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree')" (Gal 3:13)

(4) "Surely He has **borne our griefs** And carried our **sorrows**..."

(5) He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed...

(6) ...the LORD has **laid on Him the iniquity of us all.**" (Isaiah 53:4-6)

(10) ...it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put Him to grief. When You **make His soul an offering for sin.**" (Isaiah 53:10)

One key word to explain what happened at the stake is *propitiation*: "And He Himself is the propitiation for our sins" (1 John 2:2). The word means to turn away wrath by sacrifice, and thus make YHWH favourable toward us. In pagan religions, it's like the tribe throwing the virgin into the volcano. Is this a Biblical concept? The difference between that and pagan tribesmen chucking the girl down the volcano is that, first, the volcano deity is a fictional character; and second, true Deity has come Himself to be the sacrifice. Y'shua turned the wrath from us by absorbing it in Himself. He exchanged His righteousness for our unrighteousness.

The context and nature of Y'shua's experience

Was Y'shua Actually Forsaken?

Y'shua was in some way forsaken, in that He actually experienced the wrath of YHWH on the crucifixion stake.

Y'shua, as a Man, had lived in continuous fellowship with the Father: "And He who sent Me is with Me. The Father has not left Me alone, for I always do those things that please Him." (John 8:29). Yet now on the crucifixion stake, His fellowship with the Father is broken. There is a thick darkness covering the day (verse 45). It is not merely the absence of light; it is spiritual and it is thick. Y'shua is experiencing the wrath of YHWH as our substitute – the wrath which we deserved. The word He uses for this He takes from Psalm 22:1 – *forsaken*. "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"

"I remember, also, that our blessed Lord had lived in unbroken fellowship with God, and to be forsaken was a new grief to him. He had never known what the dark was till then: his life had been lived in the light of God... His fellowship with the Father was of the highest, deepest, fullest order; and what must the loss of it have been? We lose but drops when we lose our joyful experience of heavenly fellowship; and yet the loss is killing: but to our Lord Jesus Christ the sea was dried up I mean his sea of fellowship with the infinite God." - Charles Spurgeon.

Notice that Y'shua speaks as Man to YHWH, not as Son to Father. His prayer addresses, "My God, My God", not "My Father". Y'shua is functioning as a man functions and dies on the crucifixion stake functioning as a man.

As it addresses YHWH, it is not a cry of total despair. It is a cry of submission and dependence. In Psalm 22, the context is of one who is trusting in YHWH.

"*The question has been asked, 'How can God forsake God?' The answer must be that God the Father deserted the Son's human nature...*" (William Hendriksen, New Testament Commentary on Matthew, page 971). Y'shua is YHWH incarnate, with all the qualities which make man; including a human spirit and emotions.

Wayne Grudem maintains that "*It is better to understand the question... as meaning, 'Why have you left me for so long. This is the sense it has in Psalm 22.'*" That would make sense in terms of Jesus adopting limited knowledge in His incarnation. Grudem goes on to observe, "*Jesus in his human nature knew he would have to bear our sins, to suffer and die. But, in his human consciousness, he probably did not know how long this suffering would take.*" (Systematic Theology, page 576)

On the cross Y'shua never ceased to be who He is – Elohim. "*God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself*" (2 Cor 5:19). Y'shua functioned as a man, really and fully man – and He died as a man, experiencing suffering and death and the unknown as a man. He was forsaken not only as our sin bearer, but as a man. He was forsaken as our substitute... He was forsaken that YHWH might never leave nor forsake us. (Heb 13:5; Rom 8:31-39)

27:47-50 Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias

"(47) **Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calleth for Elias.** (48) And straightway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. (49) The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. (50) Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost."

Although the tradition of Elijah returning is associated with Passover (as previously discussed) – why they are saying that Y'shua is calling for Elijah, when He is obviously calling out to YHWH – is quite interesting. The only explanation I can give is that the people standing at the foot of the crucifixion stake heard Elias, which is very close to "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*".

Matthew first transliterates the Aramaic / Chaldean (according to the Vatican manuscript), the words used by Y'shua: *El'i, el'i, lama sabachthani* – in the Hebrew, it is *Eli, Eli, lama Zaphthanei*.

This is the only one of the seven sayings of Y'shua on the Crucifixion stake given by Mark and Matthew. The other six occur in Luke and John. This is the only sentence of any length in Aramaic preserved in Matthew, though he writes Aramaic words like *amen, corban, mammon, pascha, raca, Satan, Golgotha*. The so-called Gospel of Peter preserves this saying in a Docetic (Cerinthian) form: "*My power, my power, thou hast forsaken me!*"

Y'shua cried with a loud voice, as in great distress; having been silent during the three hours of darkness and patiently bearing all his soul sufferings. He was under a sense of divine wrath and the hidings of his Father's countenance, and his conflicts with the powers of darkness; but now in the anguish of his soul, he calls out, saying: "*Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani*"; which words are partly Hebrew and partly Chaldee. The three first are Hebrew and the last Chaldean, substituted in the room of "*Azabthani*"; as it was (and still is) in the Chaldean paraphrase of the text in Psalm 22:1, from whence they are taken.

The moment of death

Some feel that Y'shua either died of heart failure or suffocated on the crucifixion stake. However, if either of these beliefs is true, how do we reconcile what Y'shua said about his body and blood as he instituted the new rituals and symbols for the Passover; and how do we reconcile the prophecies that speak of his death?

"*And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it, and broke it, and gave it to the disciples, and said, Take, eat; this is my body. And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it; For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins*" (Matt 26:26-28 KJV)

Y'shua told his disciples that his blood would seal the New Covenant and offer forgiveness for sin.

As for the prophecies that foretell Y'shua's death, Isaiah was inspired to record that the death of the Messiah would be caused by the shedding of his blood. If Y'shua is the Messiah, he would have had to have died by the shedding of his blood:

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul to death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isaiah 53:12 KJV).

It is very important to understand that Y'shua fulfilled every prophecy concerning the first advent of the Messiah and he died according to the prophesies. If these things were not true, Y'shua cannot be the Redeemer and Saviour of humanity and mankind is still lost without hope of salvation and condemned to death by the law of YHWH.

However, as the Scriptures clearly show, Y'shua did fulfill the first coming of the Messiah and the prophetic symbolism of the Passover Lamb in precise detail and he did die by the shedding of his life-blood.

In order to find out what killed Y'shua, all of the Gospel accounts of his death must be reviewed and the true chronology of events must be reconstructed. When this is done, it becomes apparent that, indeed, Y'shua did die as the prophecies foretold.

The Gospel Accounts

The following is a review of Mark's, Luke's, and John's accounts of Y'shua's death. We will review Matthew's account in the end of the study, because within it is a clear explanation of how Y'shua died and the moment of his death.

Mark's record:

- (33) "And when the sixth hour was come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour.
(34) And at the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, *Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?* which is, being interpreted, *My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?*". (See also Psalm 22:1-2.)
(35) And some of them that stood by, when they heard it, said, *Behold, he calls Elias.*
(36) And one ran and filled a sponge full of vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink, saying, *Let alone; let us see whether Elias will come to take him down.*
(37) And Jesus cried with a loud voice and gave up the spirit.
(38) And the veil of the temple was torn in two from the top to the bottom". (Mark 15:33-38 KJV)

Luke's record:

- (44) "And it was about the sixth hour, and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour [noon to 3 p.m.].
(45) And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said,
(46) *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit: and having said thus, he gave up the spirit.*". (Luke 23:44-46 KJV)

Both Mark and Luke state that Y'shua died after giving a loud cry and the veil of the Temple was torn from top to bottom.

John's record:

"After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst". (John 19:28 KJV)

Because Y'shua knew that he must fulfill all of the prophetic Scriptures concerning his death, he made his thirst known to those watching him.

"Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth. When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the spirit". (John 19:29-30 KJV) (See also Psalm 69:21.)

Mark, Luke, and John did not record all of the events surrounding Y'shua's death. And what they did record is not in chronological order. When these events are viewed in their true chronological order, the mystery of when and how Y'shua died can be easily solved.

The Legs Broken:

- (31) "The Jews therefore, because it was the preparation, that the bodies should not remain upon the cross on the Sabbath day, (for that Sabbath day was an high day,) besought Pilate that their legs might be broken [so they would suffocate and die sooner], and that they might be taken away.
- (32) Then came the soldiers, and broke the legs of the first, and of the other which was crucified with him.
- (33) But when they came to Jesus, and saw that he was dead already, they broke not his legs". (John 19:31-33 KJV) (See also Exod 12:46; Num 9:12; Psalm 34:19-20.)

The Piercing of Y'shua:

"But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water" (John 19:34 KJV).

"And I will pour upon the house of David, and upon the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and of supplications: and they shall look upon me whom they have pierced, and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and shall be in bitterness for him, as one that is in bitterness for his firstborn". (Zech 12:10 KJV)

The Hebrew word for pierced that is used in this prophecy is 'daqar', which means 'to stab' and 'to strike through'. The word 'daqar' is very important because it confirms Matthew's account, which shows that the stabbing of Y'shua and the subsequent draining of his blood is what killed him.

"And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: ...that you might believe. For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken" (John 19:35-36 KJV).

John reveals that the reason the soldier speared Y'shua was to fulfill Scriptures concerning Y'shua as the prophetic Passover lamb, and so that others would believe when they read his record of the event.

"And again another scripture says, They shall look on him who they pierced" (John 19:37 KJV) (See also Psalm 22:16-17.)

John makes two references to Y'shua being pierced. The first refers to the piercing of His side, and the second most likely refers to the nailing of His hands and feet. Because of the chronological order of events, it would seem that Y'shua was already dead before the soldier stabbed him. But is this so, or is there something missing in John's account?

If we take all of the Scriptures reviewed so far at face value, it would seem to prove that Y'shua had died of something other than the shedding of his blood. However, this is not the case.

What is life?

In order to understand what the Scriptures refer to when they say that the Messiah will pour out his life, we need to know what the source of life is as YHWH defines it:

- (10) "And whatsoever man there be of the house of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, that eats any manner of blood; I will even set my face against that soul that eats blood, and will cut him off from among his people.
- (11) For the life of the flesh is the blood: and I have given it to you upon the altar to make an atonement for your souls [or your life] ...for it is the blood that makes an atonement for the soul.
- (12) Therefore I said unto the children of Israel, No soul of you shall eat blood, neither shall any stranger that sojourns among you eat blood.
- (13) And whatsoever man there be of the children of Israel, or of the strangers that sojourn among you, which hunts and catches any beast or fowl that may be eaten; he shall even pour out the blood thereof, and cover it with dust.
- (14) For it is the life of all flesh; the blood of it is for the life thereof: therefore I said unto the children of Israel, You shall eat the blood of no manner of flesh: for the life of all flesh is the blood thereof: whosoever eats it shall be cut off." (Lev 17:10-14 KJV)

YHWH says that the life-force of a physical life-form resides within the blood. In order to prove that Y'shua was actually the prophetic Passover lamb, it must be proven that he bled to death.

The shedding of blood:

- (19) "For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people [making a blood contract],
- (20) Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined unto you.
- (21) Moreover he sprinkled likewise with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry [setting them apart by the sacrifice of blood].
- (22) And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission [no forgiveness]". (Heb 9:19-22 KJV – Also read verses 23-28)

Y'shua's shed blood:

Scriptures in both the Old and New Covenant, which state that without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sin, are very clear. If Y'shua died of heart failure due to mental stress, suffocation, or any cause other than the shedding of his life's blood, we have no Saviour or forgiveness of sin.

"It was therefore necessary that the patterns of things in the heavens should be purified with these; but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these". (Heb 9: 23)

Physical things can be purified with physical things (i.e., the blood of animals). However, spiritual things must be purified with spiritual things. Therefore, Y'shua was a better sacrifice than animals because, besides being a physical man, He was also spiritual (i.e., the Son of YHWH).

- (24) "For Christ is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:
- (25) Nor yet that he should offer himself often, as the high priest enters into the holy place every year with blood of others;
- (26) For then must he often have suffered since the foundation of the world: but now once in the end of the world [end of this age] has he appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself".
- (27) And as it is appointed unto men once to die, but after this the judgment:
- (28) So Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many; and unto them that look for him shall he appear the second time without sin unto salvation". (Heb 9:24-28)

It is very important to note that without the shedding of blood, there is no remission or forgiveness of sin; and that all of the sacrifices for the atonement of sin before the advent of Y'shua were blood sacrifices.

To cover or to forgive:

Although animal sacrifices before Y'shua's sacrifice were also blood sacrifices, they were not perfect in the eyes of YHWH. Animal sacrifices could only temporarily cover a sin, set it aside and hide it from God's view. Such sacrifices could never render forgiveness for sin because they did not equal the value of the sinner's life. Therefore, the penalty was not paid; it was merely delayed for a time.

- (1) "For the law having a shadow of good things to come, and not the very image of the things, can never with those sacrifices which they offered year by year continually make the comers thereto perfect.
- (2) For then would they not have ceased to be offered? because that the worshipers once purged should have had no more conscience of sins.
- (3) But in those sacrifices there is a remembrance again made of sins every year.
- (4) For it is not possible that the blood of bulls and of goats should take away sins". (Heb 10:1-4 KJV)

These animal sacrifices were meant to be a shadow of things to come; they pointed toward Y'shua and His ultimate sacrifice that was able to render forgiveness of sin:

- (5) "Wherefore when he [Y'shua] comes into the world, he says, Sacrifice and offering you would not, but a body have you prepared me:
- (6) In burnt offerings and sacrifices for sin you have had no pleasure.
- (7) Then said I, Lo, I come (in the volume of the book it is written of me,) to do your will, O God.
- (8) Above when he said, Sacrifice and offering and burnt offerings and offering for sin you would not, neither had pleasure therein; which are offered by the law.

(9) *Then said he, Lo, I come to do your will [that will was to become the perfect and ultimate sacrifice], O God. He takes away the first, that he may establish the second". (Heb 10:5-9)*

The original agreement with national Israel was set apart and sealed by the blood of sacrificial animals. The new agreement is also set apart and sealed by blood – the blood of Y'shua:

(10) *"By the which will we are sanctified [i.e., set apart] through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ once for all.*

(11) *And every priest stands daily ministering and offering oftentimes the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins:*

(12) *But this man, after he had offered one sacrifice for sins for ever, sat down on the right hand of God". (Heb 10:10-12) (See also 2 Cor 5:21.)*

Y'shua is the perfect and final sacrifice for sin:

(13) *"From henceforth expecting till his enemies be made his footstool.*

(14) *For by one offering he has perfected for ever them that are sanctified.*

(15) *Whereof the Holy Spirit also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before,*

(16) *This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them". (Heb 10:13-16)*

Here, we see a new covenant that is established by a blood sacrifice.

(17) *"And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more.*

(18) *Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin". (Heb 10:17-18)*

Once Y'shua died by offering His blood (His life), there could not be a more valuable sacrifice made; therefore, those who have this sacrifice applied as payment for their sins obtain forgiveness.

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus". (Heb 10:19)

Notice it is by the blood of Y'shua that we are able to come into the Father's presence. Y'shua's blood makes this possible because his life was in his blood, which he freely gave as an offering for our sins. If this were not so, there would still be no access to YHWH except through a physical priesthood and the sacrificial worship system. If Y'shua did not die from the loss of his blood, all of the Scriptures that speak of our being justified and having access to the Father through his blood would be meaningless.

Eph 2:13-18 KJV:

"But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ". (Eph 2:13 KJV)

Here, Paul speaks to those who are non-Israelites: people who had no promise before Y'shua died and was resurrected.

(14) *"For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*

(15) *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; for to make in himself of two one new man, so making peace". (Eph 2:14-15)*

With the giving of his life-blood, Y'shua opened the way for Israelites as well as non-Israelites called to salvation during the Gospel age to access Avinu the Father without a sacrificial system of worship, which had been necessary under the former agreement with national Israel.

Y'shua abolished the necessity of animal sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin and for justification; because His blood sacrifice was more valuable than any animal life, including human life. His sacrifice was a perfect sacrifice.

(16) *"And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby:*

(17) *And came and preached peace to you which were afar off, and to them that were near.*

(18) *For through him we both have access by one Spirit unto the Father". (Eph 2:16-18)*

Matthew's account:

In order to understand how and when Y'shua died, it is important to review Matthew's account of Y'shua's death:

- (45) "Now from the sixth hour there was darkness over all the land unto the ninth hour.
(46) And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?
(47) Some of them that stood there, when they heard that, said, This man calls for Elias.
(48) And straightaway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink.
(49) The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him.
(50) Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit.
(51) And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in two from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent". (Matt 27:45-51)

The New King James translation says, "Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit."

It is important to note that none of the other Gospel accounts record that Y'shua cried "again" after he had been offered the vinegar to drink. Why is this important? It is important because there is something missing from the King James translation of Matthew's account. When this missing text is inserted into its proper place, the mystery of how and when Y'shua died is solved. Notice how this passage reads when properly translated with the missing text:

Again notice that; "Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me" (KJV)? "And straightaway one of them ran, and took a sponge, and filled it with vinegar, and put it on a reed, and gave him to drink. The rest said, Let be, let us see whether Elias will come to save him. And another took a spear and thrust it into his side; and out came water and blood. Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit". (Matt 27:48-51)

Quoted from The Restoration of Original Sacred Name Bible based on the Rotherham version. See also the Moffet and the Fenton translations.

When we review all of what Matthew originally wrote about the last few minutes of Y'shua's life, it is clear that the correct chronology of events shows two distinct cries of agony and the last cry was made after the centurion stabbed Y'shua with his spear, bringing his life to an end as the blood drained from his body.

It is unfortunate that this last sentence is left out of Matthew's account by many translators; however, most of the ancient transcripts and writings have the last part of this verse with the sentence above intact.

When this Scripture is properly translated, it conveys the correct sequence of events and confirms prophecy. A careful reading of all the Scriptures clearly shows that Y'shua was offered vinegar several times, and that he cried out twice. The second time he cried out was when the spear was thrust into his side.

27:51 The veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake

"**And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent".**

This is the veil separating the Holy Place from the Holy of Holies (Heb 9:3-9; 10:19-22.) as discussed in the previous sections above.

27:52-53 The graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose

"**(52) And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, (53) And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.**"

Before we look at this resurrection that took place at Y'shua's death, let's first go back to what Y'shua said on the crucifixion stake. What did Y'shua tell the righteous man on the crucifixion stake?

Y'shua told the righteous man on the crucifixion stake that "today, you shall be with me in paradise".

"And Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, To day shalt thou be with me in paradise." (Luke 23:43)

Where do the Scriptures say paradise is? Y'shua was in the heart of the earth for three days, which is where paradise was originally.

"For as Jonas was three days and three nights in the whale's belly; so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth." (Matt 12:40)

The Scriptures also says that Y'shua descended into the lower parts of the earth.

"Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?" (Eph 4:9)

Where did the body and soul of the wicked man on the crucifixion stake go to? His body was buried in a grave, 'mneemeion' in Greek. Take note that the Hebrew word for 'grave' is 'queber', which is the same place. Our English Bible and other translations sometimes use the word 'hell' for 'hades', and at times 'hell' is also used for the 'bottomless pit' or 'tartarus'. This is very misleading and causes the student to be confused, and it does not give the reader an accurate and true picture of the underworld. It is important to understand that 'hades' and the 'lake of fire' are two separate places (See my Pictorial Teaching CD "The Spirit World".) Let's look where 'hades' is...

By reading Luke 16:19-31 very carefully, we can see how neatly three of the five compartments fit in the underworld.

(19) *"There was a certain rich man, which was clothed in purple and fine linen, and fared sumptuously every day:*

(20) *And there was a certain beggar named Lazarus, which was laid at his gate, full of sores,*

(21) *And desiring to be fed with the crumbs which fell from the rich man's table: moreover the dogs came and licked his sores.*

(22) *And it came to pass, that the beggar died, and was carried by the angels into Abraham's bosom (Paradise): the rich man also died, and was buried;*

(23) *And in hell (hades) he lift up his eyes, being in torments, and seeth Abraham afar off, and Lazarus in his bosom.*

(24) *And he cried and said, Father Abraham, have mercy on me, and send Lazarus, that he may dip the tip of his finger in water, and cool my tongue; for I am tormented in this flame.*

(25) *But Abraham said, Son, remember that thou in thy lifetime receivedst thy good things, and likewise Lazarus evil things: but now he is comforted, and thou art tormented.*

(26) *And beside all this, between us and you there is a great gulf fixed (the start of the bottomless pit): so that they which would pass from hence to you cannot; neither can they pass to us, that would come from thence.*

(27) *Then he said, I pray thee therefore, father, that thou wouldest send him to my father's house:*

(28) *For I have five brethren; that he may testify unto them, lest they also come into this place of torment.*

(29) *Abraham saith unto him, They have Moses (the 'Torah' – the 1st 5 books that Moses wrote in the O.T. also called the law) and the prophets (Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel... etc); let them hear them (in other words, they have the O.T. Scriptures, which is all they need).*

(30) *And he said, Nay, father Abraham: but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.*

(31) *And he said unto him, If they hear not Moses and the prophets, neither will they be persuaded, though one rose from the dead."*

Hereby it is also clear that there is to be no communion between the dead and the living. So this is the place (sheol/hades) where the wicked man on the crucifixion stake went to, and also the wicked of all generations will go to, until they will be judged by Y'shua and cast into 'the lake of fire' forever.

What was the reason for Y'shua to descend into the underworld?

Y'shua went to proclaim to the spirits in prison.

(18) *"For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:*

(19) *By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison".* (1 Pet 3:18-19)

These two verses are extremely difficult to interpret due to the little information given and because nothing is said about the response of the hearers in prison. What we know is that the O.T. saints lived according to the

law, and they never knew Y'shua. Y'shua went to proclaim the fruits of his victory to them as well as to the fallen angels and demon spirits locked up in the underworld.

Please note that the O.T. saints were kept by Satan in prison; remember Satan had ‘*dunamis*’ power. Satan had the prison keys: in other words, although they were in ‘paradise’, they were confined there by Satan. They needed to be released.

Where did Y'shua go to take from the bowels of the underworld?

Satan had the souls locked up in the heart of the earth. The righteous ones were in paradise and the wicked ones in ‘sheol / hades’. Note what Y’shua is saying in the following verse:

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death." (Rev 1:18)

Y'shua went down to take the keys of 'hell' (*hades*), so as to ensure that Satan would not be able to release the wicked souls ever again. They are destined for judgment at the 'Great White Throne'.

Y'shua went down for a second reason, and that was to release the righteous souls (i.e., to set the captives free) and to strip Satan of his power.

- (8) "Wherefore he saith, When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.
(9) (Now that he ascended, what is it but that he also descended first into the lower parts of the earth?
(10) He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things.)" (Eph 4:8-10)

These are the ‘First Fruits’ that were kept captive by Satan in paradise.

- (1) "The Spirit of the Lord GOD is upon me; because the LORD hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the meek; he hath sent me to bind up the brokenhearted, **to proclaim liberty to the captives, and the opening of the prison to them that are bound;**
(2) To proclaim the acceptable year of the LORD, and the day of vengeance of our God; to comfort all that mourn;" (Isaiah 61:1-2)

The exact moment when Y'shua blew his last breath, his spirit was released; and instantly the righteous souls of the 'old dispensation' were released from prison.

- (52) "And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose,
(53) And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many." (Matt 27:52-53)

Now take note - the flood occurred 2319 years BC. The victory of Y'shua over Satan was proclaimed 2352 years later in the underworld. The souls/spirits of those who were disobedient were still there. They were not there in the underworld for a short period to be purged. No, they are still captives there because they cannot escape and are thus awaiting their ultimate judgment.

“By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison.” (1 Pet 3:19)

The resurrection of Y'shua after three days

He that descended is also the One that ascended – speaking of Y'shua.

"He that descended is the same also that ascended up far above all heavens, that he might fill all things."
(Eph 4:10)

When Y'shua ascended on high, he let captives free; meaning Y'shua took the righteous souls with him and for him.

"Thou hast ascended on high, thou hast led captivity captive: thou hast received gifts for men; yea, for the rebellious also, that the LORD God might dwell among them." (Psalm 68:18)

Y'shua then went to heaven (the third heaven - 2 Cor 12:2); and is (since then until now) at the right hand of YHWH.

"Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him." (1 Peter 3:22)

Elohim stripped Satan's power; and all angels, authorities and powers were made subject to Y'shua.

"So then after the Lord had spoken unto them, he was received up into heaven, and sat on the right hand of God." (Mark 16:19)

Glory to El Elyon! Satan's power base after the crucifixion stake was changed from 'dunamis' to 'exousia' power; meaning, 'only what the Holy Spirit allows him to have'. Satan's head is now bruised!

"There hath no temptation taken you but such as is common to man: but God is faithful, who will not suffer you to be tempted above that ye are able; but will with the temptation also make a way to escape, that ye may be able to bear it." (1 Cor 10:13)

27:54 Truly this was the Son of God

"Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God."

"Son of God" – See explanation at the end of this chapter, "Y'shua crucified on the Passover" in chapter 1, under "Will the real Y'shua please stand up", in "How could Y'shua be Son of Yoseph and Son of God?" under Matt 1:23, and "Matt 4:3 The Son of God".

27:55-61 He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus

"(55) And many women were there beholding afar off, which followed Jesus from Galilee, ministering unto him: (56) Among which was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joses, and the mother of Zebedee's children. (57) When the even was come, there came a rich man of Arimathaea, named Joseph, who also himself was Jesus' disciple: (58) He went to Pilate, and begged the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be delivered. (59) And when Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, (60) And laid it in his own new tomb, which he had hewn out in the rock: and he rolled a great stone to the door of the sepulchre, and departed. (61) And there was Mary Magdalene, and the other Mary, sitting over against the sepulchre."

The body of Y'shua was then removed from the crucifixion stake. The Bible teaches that He was unrecognised as a human being, which is a far cry from how we perceive Y'shua on the crucifixion stake!

"..... Just as there were many who were appalled at him -- his appearance was so disfigured beyond that of any man and his form marred beyond human likeness" (Isaiah 52:14)

Y'shua's burial

(Also see explanation from Matt 27:66 onwards)

The Hebrew Scriptures:

(7) *"He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He opened not His mouth.*

(8) *He was taken from prison and from judgement, and who will declare His generation? For He was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgressions of My people He was stricken.*

(9) *And they made His grave with the wicked -- but with the rich at His death, because He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth."* (Isaiah 53:7-9)

The Rabbinic Writers:

"Jonathan ben Uzziel interprets it in the Targum of the future Messiah; and this is also the opinion of our own learned men in the majority of their Midrashim." (Rabbi don Yitzehak Abarbanel, circa 1500 CE)

"Forthwith the Holy One began to make a covenant with the Messiah: O Messiah, my righteousness, said he, the iniquities of those who are hidden beside thee will cause thee to enter into a hard yoke... said the Messiah, Lord of the world I accept it joyfully, and will endure these chastisements... Messiah accepted the chastisement of love, as it is written; He was oppressed, and he was afflicted." (Rabbi Moshe Ha-Darshan, 10th, 11th century CE, Midrash on Bereshith)

"The prophet here declares how the Messiah resigns himself to die, and be buried in their tomb." (Japheth ben Ali ha-Levi, c. 920 CE)

Y'shua died a Jew

When Y'shua was taken prisoner by a Roman captain, his cohort, and some Jewish officials (John 18:12), He was delivered into the custody of the Jewish priests, elders, and scribes ([Mark 14:53](#)). The Roman soldiers would not have placed Him under Jewish jurisdiction if He was not Jewish.

Later, Y'shua was brought before the *Sanhedrin*, the Jewish council (Luke 22:66). He was charged with an offense against Jewish Law (Matt 26:65-66, Lev 24:13-14, John 19:7). Pilate, head of the Roman occupation, also recognised Jewish jurisdiction over Y'shua (John 18:31). This was because Y'shua was a Jew (John 18:35).

He identified Himself unmistakably as the Messiah (Mark 14:61-62); and as we know, the Messiah must be Jewish. He said He is the King of the Jews (Matt 27:11) as we have also seen above, and the King of the Jews must Himself be Jewish according to the *Torah*. The Jewish crowd also called Him 'King of the Jews' (Mark 15:12). He was mocked, spat on and beaten by Roman soldiers as 'King of the Jews' (Mark 15:16-20); and when they crucified Him, their charge was 'King of the Jews' (Matt 27:37).

The place of judgment had a Hebrew place-name called *Gabbatha*, meaning *Stone Pavement* ([John 19:13](#)); and the place of crucifixion had a Hebrew place-name called *Golgotha*, or *Place of a Skull* (Mark 15:22).

Joseph of Arimethea, who took custody of Y'shua's body, was Jewish (Luke 23:50-52); and he laid the body in his own new tomb (Matt 27:59-60). Therefore, Y'shua was buried in a Jewish cemetery. He was also buried according to Jewish custom of the time (John 19:40). Without doubt, Y'shua died a Jew.

27:62-66 We remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again

"(62) Now the next day, that followed the day of the preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees came together unto Pilate, (63) Saying, Sir, we remember that that deceiver said, while he was yet alive, After three days I will rise again. (64) Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first. (65) Pilate said unto them, Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can. (66) So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch."

Numerous religious fears and political motives caused both the legalistic Pharisees and eventually the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to kill Y'shua. And for these reasons seven 'important security precautions' were taken to make sure Y'shua remained dead and buried.

Security precaution #1 – The complete trial

Y'shua was brought for trial before a Roman governor, Pontius Pilate. All available evidence shows Pilate to have been an extremely cruel and merciless despot. Philo reports that he had been responsible "for countless atrocities and numerous executions without any previous trial."

Security precaution #2 – The death by crucifixion

Death by crucifixion developed into one of the world's most disgraceful and cruel methods of torture. Cicero called it 'the most cruel and hideous of tortures'; even the Romans pitied the victims. Flavius Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote that when the Romans threatened to crucify one of the Jewish prisoners, the entire *machaerus garrison* surrendered in order to obtain safe passage.

Security precaution #3 – Solid rock precaution

The body of Y'shua was then placed in a new tomb, hewn out of a solid rock in a private burial area. Jewish tombs usually had an entrance 1m – 1.5m high. Most tombs of this period had a forecourt that led into a burial chamber. A rectangular pit in the center of the burial chamber enabled one to stand upright. Around the chamber were a number of *loculi* or couches upon which the body was placed, and often a raised section served as a pillow.

Early sepulchers had a groove (or trough) cut into the rock in front of them to hold the stone which sealed them. The trough was designed in such a way that its lowest part lay immediately in front of the entrance.

When the block holding back the stone was removed, the stone would roll down and lodge itself in front of the opening.

Security precaution #4 – the Jewish burial

A fourth ‘security precaution’ was the method of burial. The New Covenant is very clear that the burial of Y’shua followed the custom of the Jews, as I will explain.

4.1 Never overnight:

Y’shua was taken down from the crucifixion stake and covered with a sheet. The Jews were very strict about not allowing the body to remain all night upon the crucifixion stake. *‘If he is left (hanging) overnight a negative command is thereby transgressed. For it is written his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but thou shall surely bury him on the same day, for he is hanged (because of) a curse against God – as if to say why was he hanged? - Because he cursed the name (of God) and so the name of heaven (God) is profaned.’*

Y’shua’s body was immediately transported to the place of burial – to a private tomb near Golgotha where He was crucified.

4.2 Body preparation:

In preparing a body for burial, the Jews would place it on a stone table in the burial chamber. The body would first be washed with warm water. The Babylonian Talmud records that the washing of the body was very important to proper burial. According to the ancient customs of the Jews, the water required for the cleansing of the dead had to be warmed. The ceremonial of washing the corpse must not be performed by one person alone, not even in the case of a child. The dead must likewise not be moved from one position to another by fewer than two persons.

The corpse is laid on a board, with its feet turned towards the door and covered with a clean sheet. The corpse is now washed from head to foot in lukewarm water, during which process the mouth is covered so that no water should trickle down it.

First the dead lies with face lifted upward. Next, it is inclined upon the right side, while the left and part of the back are being washed. It is then turned on the left side, while the right side and remaining portion of the back are being subjected to the same treatment. The corpse is afterwards laid on its back. In some cases, the nails are cut; but generally, they are simply cleaned with a special kind of pin; while the hair is often arranged in the manner in which it was worn in life.

While this ceremonial is being carried out, some verses are recited by those who are officiating, concluding with the words:

“I will sprinkle clean water upon you to cleanse you from all your impurities, and from all your idols I will cleanse you.” (Ezek 36:25)

The board on which the corpse is laid is cleansed, and all the water that may have been spilt around about is cleared up so that no should pass over it. The overturning of the board is fraught with danger, and anyone might die in consequence within three days afterwards.

4.3 Use of aromatic spices:

It was the custom, as verified in the New Covenant, to prepare the corpse (after cleansing) with various types of aromatic spices.

In the case of Y’shua’s burial, nearly 50kg of spices were used. One might regard this as substantial, but it was no great amount for a leader. Josephus, the Jewish historian, records that when Herod died, it required five hundred servants to carry the spices. So 50kg was not unusual.

4.4 Strips of linen cloth:

After all the members of the body were straightened, the corpse was clothed in grave vestments made out of white linen. There could not be the slightest ornamentation or stain on the cloth. The grave linens were sewn together by women. No knots were permitted. For some, this was to indicate the continuity of the soul through eternity.

No individual could be buried in fewer than three separate garments. At this point, the aromatic spices, composed of fragrant wood pounded into a dust known as aloes, were mixed with a gummy substance known as myrrh. Starting at the feet, they would wrap the body with the linen cloth. Between the folds were

placed the spices mixed with the gummy substance. They would wrap to the armpits, put the arms down, and then wrap to the neck. A separate piece was wrapped around the head. I would estimate an encasement weighing between 55 and 60kg.

The myrrh used was a drug that adheres so closely to the body that the grave clothes could not easily be removed. The persons '*tallit*' (prayer shawl) was finally wrapped around his head. (See my Pictorial Teaching CD on '*The propheticness of Y'shua's tallit*' for the full teaching on this subject)

Security precaution #5 – A very large stone

Matthew records in his writings that a large stone was rolled against the front of the tomb. Mark said the stone was extremely large. Just how large was that stone?

5.1 Twenty men could not move it:

In Mark 16:4 portion of the Bezae Manuscript in the Cambridge Library in England, a parenthetical statement was found: '*and when he has laid there he (Joseph) put against the tomb a stone which 20 men could not roll away*'.

5.2 One-and-a-half to two tons:

The kind of stone used in the time of Y'shua and calculated the size needed to roll against a 1m – 1.5m doorway. A stone of that size would have to have a minimum weight of 1½ to 2 tons. No wonder Mathew and Mark said the stone was extremely large. 1½ to 2 tons! 20 men! Only angels could move it!

One might ask, "If the stone were that big, how did Joseph move it into position in the first place?" He simply gave it a push and let gravity do the rest. It had been held in place with a wedge as it sat in a groove or trench that sloped down to the front of the tomb. When the wedge was moved, the heavy circular rock just rolled into position.

Security precaution #6 – The Roman security guard

Jewish officials panicked, because thousands were turning to Y'shua. To avoid a political problem, it was to the advantage of both the Romans and the Jews to make sure Y'shua was put away for good. So the chief priest and Pharisees gathered together and said to Pilate, "*Command therefore that the sepulchre be made sure until the third day, lest his disciples come by night, and steal him away, and say unto the people, He is risen from the dead: so the last error shall be worse than the first.*" (Matt 27:64)

Pilate said to them "*Ye have a watch: go your way, make it as sure as ye can*" (Matt 27:65) and so "...*they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch*". (Matt 27:66.)

Some people would argue that Pilate said, "look, you have your temple police, go and make it secure."

6.1 The Temple police:

Now if you want to say it's a Temple guard, you need to realise who made up that guard. It consisted of a group of ten Levites who were placed on duty at different places at the Temple. The total number of men on duty was two hundred and seventy. This represented twenty units of ten each. The military discipline of the Temple guard was quite good. In fact at night, if the captain approached the guard member who was asleep, he was beaten and burnt with his own clothes. A member of the guard also was forbidden to sit down or to lean against something when he was on duty.

6.2 A Roman guard:

However, I am convinced it was the Roman guard that was placed at the grave of Y'shua to secure it. The phrase is in the present imperative and can refer only to a Roman guard, and not the Temple police. Pilate literally said, 'have a guard'. The Latin form '*koustodia*' occurs as far back as the oxyrhynchus papyrus in reference to the Roman guard. The Jews knew Pilate wanted to keep the peace, so they were sure he would give them what they wanted.

What was the Roman guard?

A Roman 'custodian' did a lot more than care for a building. The word 'custodian' represented the guard unit of the Roman legion. This unit was probably one of the greatest offensive and defensive fighting machines ever conceived!

6.3 The force of the Roman guard:

A Roman guard unit was a 4-to-16-man security force. Each man was trained to protect a two metre square piece of ground. The sixteen men in a square of four on each side were supposed to be able to protect twelve metres against an entire battalion and hold it.

6.4 High priest offers bribe:

Even Matthew records that it was a multi-man force when he wrote, “*Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.*” (Matt 28:11)

They came to the high priest because he had influence with the Roman authority and because it was the only possible way to save their necks. Normally, they would receive the death penalty because the story was to be that they had fallen asleep while guarding the tomb.

Security precaution #7 – The Roman seal

Matthew records that, “*So they went, and made the sepulchre sure, sealing the stone, and setting a watch.*” (Matt 27:66)

This could be placed on the stone only in the presence of the Roman guard who were left in charge. After the guard inspected the tomb and rolled the stone in place, a cord was stretched across the rock. This was fastened at either end with sealing clay. Finally, the clay packs were stamped with the official signet of the Roman governor. A parallel in this is seen in Daniel.

7.1 Purpose of the seal:

Seals in antiquity were actually considered as a mode of authentication. This seal on Y’shua’s tomb was a public testimony that Y’shua body was actually there. In addition, because the seal was Roman, it verified the fact that his body was protected from vandals by nothing less than the power and authority of the Roman Empire.

Anyone trying to move the stone from the tomb’s entrance would have broken the seal, and thus incurred the wrath of Roman law and power.

Summary of what we’ve covered:

Numerous religious fears and political motives caused both Jews and the Roman governor, Pontius Pilate, to kill Y’shua. To make sure he remained dead and buried, seven important security precautions were taken: Y’shua went through 6 trials: 3 Jewish and 3 Roman trials.

Y’shua was put to death by crucifixion – one of the most effective, cruel and hideous methods of execution ever devised.

The body of Y’shua was buried in a solid rock tomb.

Y’shua was wrapped with more than 50kg of spices and linen according to precise Jewish burial custom.

The stone rolled in front of the tomb entrance weighed about 2 tons.

A Roman security guard, one of the most effective fighting units devised, was positioned to guard the tomb. The tomb was sealed shut with official authority and signage of Rome.

Summary of Y’shua being crucified on the Passover

“*And it was the preparation of the passover, and about the sixth hour: and he [Pilate] said to the Jews, Behold your King! But they cried out, Away, Away! Crucify him! Pilate said to them, Shall I crucify your King? The chief priests answered, We have no king but Caesar. Then delivered he him therefore to them to be crucified. And they [the soldiers and the Priests] took Jesus, and led him away.*” (John 19:14-16 KJV)

These verses are extremely important because they document that Y’shua would be executed on the same day that Passover lambs were being sacrificed.

On the Crucifixion Stake:

While Y’shua hung on the crucifixion stake and the people watched, there were a number of prophecies concerning the Messiah as the Lamb of YHWH that were fulfilled (Only a few will be detailed here):

(33) “*And when they were come to the place, which is called Calvary, there they crucified him, and the malefactors, one on the right hand, and the other on the left.*

(34) *Then said Jesus, Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do..."* (Luke 23:33-34 KJV)
(See also Mark 15:27-28.)

"And he was numbered with the transgressors; and bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors". (Isaiah 53:12 KJV)

"And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?" (Matt 27:46 KJV)

Death:

Death is an experience that no person can totally share with another. Each must pass from this life to death unaccompanied by friends or loved ones. Death is the most lonely and solitary experience that anyone can experience.

Although there were many people watching the crucifixion, *Y'shua* was totally alone in his innermost thoughts; there was no one with whom he could share his pain, his agony, or his thoughts – he was totally alone in his moment of death.

Y'shua had always had the comfort of knowing that he had access to the Father; he could always call upon the limitless power of the Holy Spirit as he performed his ministry and he could command the angels to defend and protect him. But now, because He had committed to giving His life in exchange for the forgiveness of sin, He was as any other human; He was without the power to stop the progression of events that would lead to his death. *Y'shua* was going to die alone just like any other human.

As His physical pain increased and the realisation that He was totally alone sank deep within His consciousness, *Y'shua* felt the overpowering emotion of being alone. In this moment of great need of comfort and support, He cried out to his Father for encouragement:

"My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?"

Yes, the Father had forsaken Him in the moment of his death. Not even YHWH the Father can accompany a person in death (Matt 22:32). The Father could not reach down in this moment of His Son's greatest need and save Him. If he had done this, *Y'shua* would not have suffered death as other humans suffer it and he would not have totally understood the human experience. But *Y'shua* did die as a human dies; therefore, we now have a high priest who truly understands us in every way.

(9) *"But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angles for the suffering of death, crowned with glory and honor; that he by the grace of God should taste death for every man."*

(10) *"For it became him, for whom are all things, and by whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the captain of their salvation perfect through suffering".* (Heb 2:9-10 NIV)

(14) *"Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death (that is, the Devil)*

(15) *and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death.*

(16) *For surely it is not the angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants.*

(17) *For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people".*

(Heb 2:14-17 NIV)

"Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted". (Heb 2:18) (See also Heb 5:6-8; Phil 2:5-8.)

The Unbroken Bones:

"Now it was the day of Preparation, and the next day was to be a special Sabbath. Because the Jews did not want the bodies left on the crosses during the Sabbath, they ask Pilate to have the legs broken and the bodies taken down". (John 19:31 NIV)

It is important to understand why the Jews were in a hurry to have the bodies removed and buried.

During that time in history, the Jews believed that it would defile the Sabbath or a festival day to leave a body unburied on one of these days. Therefore, the Jews were very anxious to remove the bodies and bury them before sunset, as the very next day was a 'high holy day' – one of the seven high holy Sabbaths that fell in the mid of the week (will discuss it later on).

This hurried removal leads to the fulfillment of two more prophecies concerning Y'shua as the Messiah and the Passover Lamb.

Y'shua was stabbed:

- (32) "The soldiers therefore came and broke the legs of the first man who had been crucified with Jesus, and then those of the other.
- (33) But when they came to Jesus and found that he was already dead, they did not break his legs.
- (34) But one of the soldiers with a spear pierced his side, and forthwith came there out blood and water.
- (35) And he that saw it bare record, and his record is true: ...that you might believe.
- (36) For these things were done, that the scripture should be fulfilled, A bone of him shall not be broken.
- (37) And again another scripture says, They shall look on him whom they pierced". (Joh 19:34-37 KJV)

These verses show that the prophetic symbolism of the Passover lamb's sacrificial blood and unbroken body were fulfilled in the body of Y'shua when he was crucified:

- (27) "And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, Drink you all of it;
 - (28) For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins". (Mat 26:27-28 KJV)
- "He keeps all his bones: not one of them is broken". (Psalm 34:20 Para) (See also Exod 12:46; Num 9:12.)

The Father's Lamb:

The death of Y'shua is the final fulfillment of the prophecies concerning YHWH the Father's sacrificial Passover Lamb. The Israelites of the first Passover received physical salvation from death because of the protective blood of the sacrificed lamb. The blood was a sign to YHWH that those symbolically under it were to receive his protection from the death angel. Now, those who accept the sacrificial blood of Y'shua can claim its protection from eternal death:

"Behold the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world". (John 1:29 KJV) (See also verse 36.)
"For even Christ our passover is sacrificed for us". (1 Cor 5:7 KJV)

The Veil of Separation is torn:

- (37) "And Jesus cried with a loud voice, and gave up the spirit.
- (38) And the veil of the temple was torn in half from the top to the bottom". (Mark 15:37-38 KJV)
- (28) "After this, Jesus knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the scripture might be fulfilled, said, I thirst.
- (29) Now there was set a vessel full of vinegar: and they filled a sponge with vinegar, and put it upon hyssop, and put it to his mouth.
- (30) When Jesus therefore had received the vinegar, he said, It is finished: and he bowed his head, and gave up the ghost". (John 19:28-30 KJV)
- (50) "And when Jesus had cried out again in a loud voice, he gave up his spirit.
- (51) At that moment the curtain of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom.
- (52) The earth shook and the rocks split. The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life". (Matt 27:50-52 NIV)

Consider the enormous significance of this monumental historical event. Picture Y'shua's loud and painful cry "it is finished" (John 19:30); and at the same instant, the Temple veil tears apart as a powerful earthquake shakes Jerusalem. Furthermore, picture the high priest who, having just condemned Y'shua to death the night before, was splashing the blood of Passover lambs against the altar of YHWH.

In these Scriptures, we see three other things of extreme importance to the fulfillment of prophecy; then, now, and in the future.

The curtain of separation torn from top to bottom.

The tombs opened and the dead rose to life.

Y'shua acknowledged as the Son of YHWH.

Curtain of Separation:

The tearing of the curtain of separation from top to bottom forever opens the way for all humanity to eventually fellowship directly with YHWH the Father.

This curtain separated the holy place where the presence of YHWH dwelled on the mercy seat from everyone but the high priest. This curtain was a constant reminder to the Israelites that their access to

YHWH depended on another physical human, and that this access was only granted through the physical works of the sacrificial system.

When Y'shua cried out "*it is finished*" and the curtain tore, the relationship between YHWH and humanity was altered forever.

This is the moment in time that Y'shua spoke to the woman of Samaria when he foretold that the existing worship system would be abolished, and that those who wanted to worship YHWH would no longer need to travel to a specific location to worship:

- (19) *The woman said to him, Sir, I perceive that you are a prophet.*
- (20) *Our fathers worshiped in this mountain, and you say that in Jerusalem is the place where it is necessary to worship.*
- (21) *Jesus said to her, Woman believe me that an hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither in this mountain nor in Jerusalem... (John 4:19-21 Para)*
- (23) *But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth" (John 4:23 Para)*

No longer would a physical man be required to offer animal sacrifices for sins. Any who truly worship the Father can now stand before Him and present their own cause to Him, knowing that He will hear and consider their prayer because of the sacrifice of Y'shua.

- (11) *Wherfore remember, that you being in time past Gentiles in the flesh, who are called Uncircumcision by that which is called the Circumcision in the flesh made by hands;*
 - (12) *That at the time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope, and without God in the world:*
 - (13) *But now in Christ Jesus you who sometimes were far off are made near by the blood of Christ.*
 - (14) *For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us;*
 - (15) *Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in the ordinances; for to make in himself of two one of new man, so making peace;*
 - (16) *And that he might reconcile both to God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby".*
- (Eph 2:11-16 KJV)

All who worship YHWH (whether Jew or non-Jew) have access to the throne of mercy by the one and final sacrifice of Y'shua, the Lamb of YHWH, because of the tearing of the curtain.

(See Heb 4:15-16; 6:18-19; 9:1-15; 10:19-22.)

"For through him we both have access by one spirit to the Father. Now therefore you are fellow citizens with the saints, and of the household of God". (Eph 2:18-19 KJV)

The dead raised:

The earthquake and resurrection of the righteous dead at the death of Y'shua pertains to a number of prophetic events for that time and the future.

This event was evidence that YHWH had fulfilled his promise contained in the many prophecies about the redemption of humanity. A way was now open for all who would truly worship YHWH to have victory over sin and death. This event also pointed toward the future when a great earthquake will shake the entire earth before the return of Y'shua to gather the righteous dead of all ages to meet him in the air. (1 Thes.4:16-17.) This resurrection of the dead shows the following:

Y'shua's blood is life-giving as pictured in the blood of the Passover lamb; and the blood of Y'shua has now wiped away the penalty of death (Rom 6:23) for all those who only had their sins covered by the sacrifice of animals.

There will be a time when all those who have or will have lived a righteous life will be given eternal and immortal life at the return of Y'shua. (See my Pictorial Teaching CD on "Understanding the Mysterious Spirit World" on the various resurrections and the return of Y'shua.)

The great enemy, death, has lost its power over humanity through the sacrificial blood of Y'shua.

The future:

Speaking of the resurrection of the dead and the transformation to eternal and immortal life at the return of Y'shua, the apostle Paul said:

"So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ". (1 Cor 15:54-57 KJV) (See also Psalm 98:1-2; Isaiah 25:8.)

The Son of YHWH:

"Now when the centurion, and they that were with him, watching Jesus, saw the earthquake, and those things that were done, they feared greatly, saying, Truly this was the Son of God". (Matt 27:54 Para) (See also Luke 23:47.)

The legalistic Pharisees had rejected Y'shua as the Messiah and murdered him as their fathers had murdered many others whom YHWH had sent to teach them his laws and ways of life. To their shame, it was a Roman centurion, not an Israelite, who recognised and acknowledged Y'shua as the Son of YHWH. (See Psalm 118:22-24; Jer 8:9; Matt 13:57; 21:42.)

Summary:

There are many important truths revealed in the Passover study; however, the greatest of these truths is that the Creator Elohim of all humanity loved his creation more than his own life; and this immortal being who had existed throughout eternity, willingly gave his life so we can be forgiven for our lawlessness through His shed blood by applying what He did to our hearts.

Y'shua stood in our place and paid the penalty for our individual sin. For this sacrifice, we owe Him our life, gratitude, praise, and loyalty forever.

SECTION X

CONCLUSION OF EARTHLY MINISTRY

MATTHEW 28:1-20

TEXT:

- (1) *"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre.*
- (2) *And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for the angel of the Lord descended from heaven, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it.*
- (3) *His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow:*
- (4) *And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men.*
- (5) *And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified.*
- (6) *He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay.*
- (7) *And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you.*
- (8) *And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word.*
- (9) *And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him.*
- (10) *Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me.*
- (11) *Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done.*
- (12) *And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers,*
- (13) *Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept.*
- (14) *And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you.*
- (15) *So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day.*
- (16) *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*
- (17) *And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.*
- (18) *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.*

(19) Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

(20) Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen."

28:1 In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week

"In the end of the sabbath, as it began to dawn toward the first day of the week, came Mary Magdalene and the other Mary to see the sepulchre."

As noted, Y'shua and His followers remained in the faith of Israel and its *Torah*; and this observed the Sabbath on the "last" day of the week; i.e., from sundown Friday to sundown Saturday. The Biblical method of counting the "days of the week" is Day 1, Day 2, etc., through Day 6 – followed by the Sabbath.

The change from keeping YHWH's Sabbath to worshipping on Sunday is discussed in the article, *Not Subject to the Law of God?* in the YashaNet library.

Overview on the week leading up to the crucifixion and the resurrection

Western Days	Time	Hebrew Days	Nissan Dates	Activity
			1 st	The New moon starts the month Nissan – exactly 14 days later is Passover according to Exod 12:1-14.
Friday		6 th Day	9 th	6 Days before the passover, Y'shua came to Bethany. (John 12:1)
Saturday		Sabbath	10 th	The next day a great multitude that had come to the Passover Feast heard that Y'shua was coming to Jerusalem - they took branches of palm trees and went out to meet him. (John 12:12-13)
Sunday		1 st Day	11 th	
Monday		2 nd Day	12 th	2 Days before Passover, Y'shua is in the home of Simon the leper (jar maker) and the woman pours perfume on his head. (Matt 26:2, 7)
	18:0 0	3 rd Day	13 th	Jewish day start at 18:00 when the sun goes down,
Tuesday	00:0 0			And not as the Western day 6 hours later at midnight.
	06:0 0			
	12:0 0			
	18:0 0	4 th Day	14 th Passover starts Tuesday night 18:00	Now on the first day of the Feast of the Unleavened Bread (Passover), the 14 th of Nissan when the sun went down and the Passover day started, the disciples came to Y'shua, saying to him, <i>"where do you want us to prepare for you to eat the passover?"</i> (Matt 26:17-18). They started with the meal shortly after sundown as per the Hebrew custom. (Matt 26:19-20)
Wednesday	00:0 0			It is customary to eat the Passover meal till normally just after midnight - Y'shua and disciples then left for the Garden of Gethsemane to pray. Whilst praying, the soldiers came and took him to Caiaphas where He was tried in the early hours of the morning before sunrise.
	06:0 0			At sunrise, Y'shua was taken to Pilate and Herod where he was sentenced to death; and at exactly 09:00 he was nailed to the stake. (Mark 15:25)
	12:0 0			At 12:00, Y'shua cried out <i>"my God my God why have you forsaken me"</i> (Mark 15:34) and darkness came over the land till 15:00 (Mark 15:33) when Y'shua died (John 19:30). From 15:00 to 18:00, Joseph pleaded for Y'shua's body from Pilate; and then it was removed from the stake, washed, prepared and put in the tomb (Matt 27:57). All this had to be done before the next day which started 3 hours away at 18:00; as the next day was a

			high holy day, a special High Sabbath Feast day (John 19:31), and that has nothing to do with the weekly Sabbath. Y'shua died on Wednesday on the 14 th of Nissan at 15:00.
	18:0 0	5 th Day	15 th At 18:00 Y'shua was in the tomb, which is also night 1 in the tomb.
Thursday	00:0 0		High
	06:0 0		Sabbath Day 1 in the tomb.
	12:0 0		
	18:0 0	6 th Day	16 th Night 2 in the tomb.
Friday	00:0 0		
	06:0 0		Day 2 in the tomb After the (High Feast) Sabbath (the 15 th) was over, after 18:00 or the next morning, the women brought spices to prepare the body for at a later stage. (Mark 16:1)
	12:0 0		Before the (weekly) Sabbath the women prepared the spices and rested on the (weekly) Sabbath, which starts at 18:00. (Luke 23:56)
	18:0 0	Sabbat h	17 th Night 3 in the tomb.
Saturday	00:0 0		
	06:0 0		Night 3 in the tomb exactly as He said in Matt 12:40.
	12:0 0		
	18:0 0	1 st Day	18 th Earthquake takes place and Y'shua rises from the dead anytime from
Sunday	00:0 0		after 18:00 till early before sunrise ± 04:00 Sunday morning, the first day of the week, when Mary arrived before sunrise. (Matt 28:1-6; Mark 16:2)
	06:0 0		
	12:0 0		
	18:0 0	2 nd Day	19 th

Y'shua rose from the dead after the Sabbath ended at 18:00, during Saturday night, as he said he would, which makes it exactly three days and three nights!!!

28:2-7 The angel of the Lord descended from heaven

"(2) And, behold, there was a great earthquake: for **the angel of the Lord descended from heaven**, and came and rolled back the stone from the door, and sat upon it. (3) His countenance was like lightning, and his raiment white as snow: (4) And for fear of him the keepers did shake, and became as dead men. (5) And the angel answered and said unto the women, Fear not ye: for I know that ye seek Jesus, which was crucified. (6) He is not here: for he is risen, as he said. Come, see the place where the Lord lay. (7) And go quickly, and tell his disciples that he is risen from the dead; and, behold, he goeth before you into Galilee; there shall ye see him: lo, I have told you."

The Elohim who died

Y'shua is the Creator of all things (John 1:1-3; Col 1:15-20). Before becoming human, Y'shua was an immortal spirit-being who inherently possessed the highest form of existence: life that springs forth from itself, never dying or decaying. The Creator Elohim emptied himself of his glory, power, and immortality to become a mortal man who was subject to death. Then He allowed His creation to murder him. He voluntarily gave up his life, and for a short time, ceased to exist:

- (6) "Who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God:
 (7) But made himself of no reputation and took upon him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men:
 (8) And being found in the fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient to death, even the death of the cross". (Phil 2:6-8 KJV)

Y'shua died and ceased to exist. All that remained of Him was the physical and spirit record of His existence, which could have been completely destroyed and erased if the Father had not resurrected him from the dead. See Matt 10:28; Luke 12:4-5; Gal 1:1; Acts 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30.

Alpha and Omega:

In the first chapter of the Book of Revelation, the apostle John records his encounter with Y'shua who says he is the Alpha and Omega:

- (4) "John to the seven churches which are in Asia: Grace be unto you, and peace, from him which is, and which was, and which is to come; and from the seven Spirits which are before his throne". (Rev 1:4 Para)
 (17) And when I saw him, I fell at his feet as dead. and he laid his right hand upon me, saying to me, fear not; I am the first and the last [Alpha and Omega];
 (18) I am he that lives, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, amen, and have the keys of hell and of death". (Rev 1:17-18 Para) (See also Rom 6:8-10; Acts 2:24-32; 3:15, 26; Heb 2:9; Rev 2:8.)

The Greek Interlinear Bible translates the phrase, "was dead" in verse 18 as 'I became dead'. The Greek word used for 'dead' here is 'corpse', which means that the 'Alpha and Omega' says He was a dead body; but now, he is alive forever. Y'shua explains that he was totally dead, not only dead in the flesh as some people believe.

The resurrection of Y'shua

"Not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father, who raised him from the dead". (Gal.1:1 KJV) (See also Acts 4:10; 5:30; 10:40; 13:30.)

In his letter to the Church at Corinth, the apostle Paul records that Y'shua was the first human to be resurrected from the dead as a spiritual Son of YHWH. Moreover, in his letter to the Church at Colosse, he states the same thing and adds that it was Y'shua who created all things.

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and became the first-born of them that slept". (1 Cor 15:20 KJV)

In verse 20, Paul says that Y'shua is the first of humanity to have passed from the human life-form to the spiritual; then, in verses 22-23, he says that others will follow:

- (22) "For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive.
 (23) But every man in his own order. Christ the first-fruits, Afterwards, they that are Christ's at his coming". (1 Cor 15:22-23)

The reason Y'shua was described as the first-born from the dead and the first-born of many brothers is that he was literally the first of his kind to be created. He was the first of the New Creation: the first-born spiritual Son of YHWH the Father:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation—for all things were created in him, the things in the heavens, and the things on the earth; the visible and the invisible; whether thrones, or lordships, or rulers, or authorities, all things have been created through him. And he is before all things, and all things consist in him. And he is the Head of the body, the church; who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that he be preeminent in all things". (Col 1:15-18 Para) (See also Acts 13:33-35; Rev 1:5 KJV.)

28:8-16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee

"(8) And they departed quickly from the sepulchre with fear and great joy; and did run to bring his disciples word. (9) And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, All hail. And they came and held him by the feet, and worshipped him. (10) Then said Jesus unto them, Be not afraid: go tell my brethren that they go into Galilee, and there shall they see me. (11) Now when they were going, behold, some of the watch came into the city, and shewed unto the chief priests all the things that were done. (12) And when they were assembled with the elders, and had taken counsel, they gave large money unto the soldiers, (13)

Saying, Say ye, His disciples came by night, and stole him away while we slept. (14) And if this come to the governor's ears, we will persuade him, and secure you. (15) So they took the money, and did as they were taught: and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day. (16) Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them."

In the Gospel accounts, we see the disciples assembling once more in the Galilee at the request of Y'shua. Where else but at the old fishing hole would Peter probably decide to go fishing once again? After all, he had denied Y'shua three times; and in his apparent discouragement, he seemed to be returning to his old occupation once again. However, during the night of fishing, Peter and the disciples who joined him caught nothing.

In the morning, they were amazed to see their risen Master on the beach. He had already prepared a meal of fish and bread for them. He then directed the tired fishermen to cast their nets once more on the other side of the boat. In so doing, they caught a great number of fish – a hundred and fifty three in all. With this, Peter seems to have permanently forsaken any idea of fishing. From that point on, he would become a true "fisher of men".

There were several miracles that morning in the Galilee. It was a miracle that Y'shua was risen from the dead and present again with the disciples. It was a miracle that He had prepared a breakfast for them. It was also a miracle that they suddenly caught so many fish after fishing empty-handed all night. It was another miracle that the nets didn't break with so many fish in them. Lastly, it was a miracle that the fish couldn't see the nets in the daytime. In ancient times, with the absence of synthetic fibers, fish could see nets in the light of day and it was thus necessary to fish at night. Traditions abound that all these miracles happened at Tabgha.

The reinstatement of Peter

It was at Tabgha where Y'shua reinstated the disciple Peter (John 21:1-24). He had denied Y'shua three times, and it is interesting that Y'shua also tested his love and devotion three times as explained below. Y'shua then walked away from the area with a renewed and restored Peter following close behind him.

Is it not interesting that 'seven' were present here at the sea where they were fishing. It was also Y'shua's seventh appearance since his resurrection. Let's now see how Y'shua tested Peter.

Peter's love tested

After they had eaten, Y'shua asks Simon Peter:

"Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (John 21:15)

His reply was that he loved Him and Y'shua said:

"...feed my lambs" (also in verse 15).

The word "lovest" here in verses 15 and 16 is the Greek verb 'agapao', which means: *Supremely or perfectly*.

Simon's reply in verses 15 and 16 is, "*I love thee.*" And here the Greek verb 'phileo' for "love" is used meaning: *To like, to be fond of, or friendship.*

Y'shua answered Peter "feed my lambs" (in verse 15). The Greek word for feed in "feed my lambs" is 'bosko,' meaning: *Tend to the 'flock', take care of, guide, lead, and defend.* Y'shua also used the Hebrew word 'taleh' (he was speaking Hebrew, not Greek) for lamb, which means *baby lamb*.

In verse 16 the Greek wording is changed when Y'shua says "feed my sheep" and not "lambs." And "feed my sheep" can be translated as lost men or saved men. In other words, it could read, '*and feed the lost men*'.

The third time Y'shua asks him "Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these?" (verse 17), Peter is becoming confused because of the close questioning; remember he had denied Y'shua three times just a few days earlier. Y'shua is actually making Peter confess three times without his knowing it.

When Y'shua says "feed my sheep", the English words are identical to verse 16, but the KJV uses the Greek word 'bosko' for "feed" so it reads: '*Tend to my sheep*' or '*tend to the lost men*' (verse 17.) And here Y'shua lifts Peter up again to continue the good work. He restores him in his ministry.

The prophetic nature of the number “153”

On the shore here at the Sea of Galilee, Y’shua gave these professional fishermen a spiritual lesson about fishing. It is the remarkable depiction of His plan to spread the Gospel.

Here in the passage, the Sea of Galilee is called by its Gentile name, “*the sea of Tiberias*” (John 21:1). This foreshadows the going forth of the Gospel into the Roman Empire and the Gentile world at large.

The brief description of fishing at night is a remarkable symbol of things to come. Then and even today, it is not uncommon for fisherman to spread their nets at night, using lantern light to attract their fish.

Why 153? Why that number?

The Bible never wastes important information. Numbers in particular are loaded with meaning. 1 is the Creator; 2 is division; 3 the Godhead; 4 the kingdom; 5 is grace; 6 the number of man; and 7 the statement of completion, etc, etc. But 153, what is this number?

There are 153 kinds of fish, meaning that all kinds of men are enclosed in the Gospel net. There were also 153 nations at that time – representing the entire earth. Also, the sum of all the digits up to and including the number 17, beginning with 1+2+3..., and so on up to $15+16+17=153$. This emphasises the number 17.

Amazingly, the Old Covenant “sons of God” contains the same mystical number. In the case of “sons of God” in Hebrew ‘*b’nai ha’elohim*’, the letters of the Hebrew numbering adds up to exactly 153! This expression is nothing less than “the number of the sons of Elohim”. Since we are called “*joint-heirs with Christ*” in Rom 8:17, we are also to be seen as the sons of YHWH.

Furthermore, amongst the multitudes who received direct blessing from Y’shua, there are recorded exactly 153 individual cases.

It is also interesting to note that the word “Zion” is used 153 times in the KJV Bible.

28:17-18 Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth

“(17) And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted. (18) And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.”

“I saw in the night visions, and, behold, one like the Son of man came with the clouds of heaven, and came to the Ancient of days, and they brought him near before him. And there was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom, that all people, nations, and languages, should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.” (Dan 7:14)

The authority of Y’shua

- (16) “Then the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had appointed them.
- (17) And when they saw him they worshiped him: but some doubted.
- (18) And Jesus came and said to them, saying, All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth”. (Mat 28:16-18 Para)

The English word “authority” in verse 18 is translated from the Greek word ‘*exousia*’ which means ‘ability to perform an action’; ‘the right, authority, or commission conferred by a higher court’; and it denotes external power. The Father has delegated to Y’shua the authority and power over all the physical and spiritual dimensions of existence in order for him to carry out the work that he has been charged with throughout the Kingdom of YHWH. Only the Sovereign Father is above Y’shua in authority and power, because the Father is the Sovereign in whom and from whom all authority and power resides and emanates.

The Father has given Y’shua all authority and power (1 Pet 3:22); the authority comes from the Father. In other words, Y’shua is second in authority to Avinu the Father and he is directly responsible to him for all things. The Father has authorised Y’shua with full discretionary use of his spirit-power, but other physical and spirit-beings (good and evil) are limited in their use of his power.

Note: It is quite impossible to properly appreciate the significance of the words “*all power*”. Yes, Y’shua is omnipotent. He has unlimited power of every kind. All power! Just pause and think awhile about that staggering statement. Also remember that it extends to heaven and earth and all creatures under the earth.

At best, we can only begin to understand what He is talking about; but one day we shall really know the details!

28:19 Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost

"Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost".

Y'shua, says to baptise "*in the name of...*" This means, "*in the authority of*" the person, place or thing being referred to. The same 'authority' that has just been explained under verses 8-18.

Note that there is also a significant change of "direction" with this verse regarding the offer of salvation. Here we have Y'shua telling His disciples to go out to the nations (*goyim*), not just the children of Israel (compare to His words in Matt 10:6, where He told them not to go to the nations). Something significant and deeply mystical happened with the death of Messiah which enabled the Gospel to go out to the non-Jewish world.

The "Trinity" teaching

This verse is often used to teach the Christian "trinity" – a concept contradictory to a Hebrew understanding of the Scriptures, as Christianity limits Elohim to three forms only. According to Hebrew understanding, Elohim does indeed emanate in the forms of Father, Son and Holy Spirit (*Ruach haKodesh*); but also as the *Shekinah*, Kingdom, the "voice of YHWH", the "face of YHWH", *Tzaddik* ("Righteous One"), New Jerusalem, the *Bat Kol* (voice from heaven), Wisdom, Understanding, Mercy, Judgment, Prophecy, etc.

It is often overlooked that YHWH is also revealed in some distinctly "feminine" forms. These include the *Ruach haKodesh* (Holy Spirit), *Shekinah*, Kingdom and "New Jerusalem" (which is also called, "*Jerusalem above*" and referred to as our "*mother*" in Gal 4:26) and *Bat Kol* (literally, "daughter of the voice"). All of these terms are feminine in the Hebrew – grammatically; and at a deeper level, theologically. We even see Y'shua speaking of Himself in "female" terms in Matt 23:37. Recall that we are made in Elohim's image and that image is both male and female (Gen 1:27).

It is extremely uncomfortable for a Christian to come to grips with the Hebrew understanding of Scriptures that Elohim is not limited to three parts of a "trinity", nor are any of these emanations solely a distinct "person" (i.e., "God the Father," "God the Son," "God the Holy Spirit"), as YHWH is One (*echad* – Deut. 6:4, The Shema/John 10:30). Such doctrines are attempts to put "YHWH in a box", as many people don't consider themselves to have strong faith unless everything is "black and white" and they have a "tidy answer" for anyone that asks them to explain their faith.

Judaism recognises that YHWH is a bit more complex than we often "wish" Him to be. He reveals Himself in His *Torah*, and that *Torah* is infinite.

28:20 Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you

"(20) *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*" (Matt 28:20)

Once again, we see that the *Torah* is for everyone, Jew and non-Jew – as what He "commands" is obedience to the Word of YHWH.

His Kingdom

The Hebrew Scriptures:

(7) "*I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.*

(8) *Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.*

(9) *Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.*"
(Psalm 2:7-9)

"The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool." (Psalm 110:1)

The Rabbinic Writings:

"Our Rabbis taught, *The Holy One, blessed be He, will say to the Messiah, the son of David (May he reveal himself speedily in our days!), "Ask of me anything, and I will give it to thee", as it is said, I will tell of the decree etc. this day have I begotten thee, ask of me and I will give the nations for thy inheritance."*" (Babylonian Talmud, Sukkah 52a)

The New Covenant:

(16) *Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them.*
(17) *And when they saw him, they worshipped him: but some doubted.* (18) *And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.* (19) *Go ye therefore, and teach all nations,* baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: (20) *Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.*" (Matt 28:16-20)

- (32) "This Jesus hath God raised up, whereof we all are witnesses.
(33) Therefore being by the right hand of God exalted, and having received of the Father the promise of the Holy Ghost, he hath shed forth this, which ye now see and hear.
(34) For David is not ascended into the heavens: but he saith himself, **The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou on my right hand,**
(35) **Until I make thy foes thy footstool.**
(36) Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly, that God **hath made that same Jesus, whom ye have crucified, both Lord and Christ.**" (Acts 2:32-36)

Y'shua was resurrected a Jew

Y'shua the risen Jew told his Jewish disciples to go out and teach all *the Gentiles* (Matt 28:19, Strong's #1484), the lost sheep of the House of Israel absorbed into the Gentile nations.

Then after eating, talking and walking with His disciples, Y'shua "*lifted up His hands and blessed them*" (Luke 24:50). What blessing is spoken with lifted hands? The Aaronic Benediction (Num 6:24-26) is given in Synagogues and in Churches even to our day, and in the Synagogues it is still given as it was more than a thousand years before the resurrected Yahudi Y'shua gave it: with lifted hands. In fact, another name for the Aaronic Benediction is "*The Lifting up of Hands*". (See, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life in the Days of Christ*, Ch. XVII A. Edersheim. Eerdmans pub.)

Rav Sha'ul (Rabbi Paul) tells us that while he was on the road to Damascus, Y'shua spoke to him from heaven *in Hebrew* (Acts 26:14). Sha'ul, a Jew who was born a Roman citizen (Acts 22:27-28), was fluent in Greek (Acts 21:37) and possibly many other languages; but Y'shua spoke to him in Hebrew, the language of the Jews.

Sha'ul did not become a believer until well after Y'shua's death and resurrection; yet an important part of his message is that Y'shua is a descendant of the Jewish king David (2 Tim 2:8). Many years after His resurrection, Y'shua testified that He is the root and offspring of King David (Rev 22:16); and in a time yet future, two of His titles will be *Lion of the tribe of Judah*, and *Root of David* (Rev 5:5).

In Matt 24:20, He told the Jews to pray concerning the coming tribulation that they would not have to flee on the Sabbath. And in Matt 26:27-29, Y'shua told the disciples that He will celebrate the Passover Seder anew with us in His Father's kingdom.

The standard He will use at the judgment is the Law YHWH gave the Jews. To those who are disobedient, He will say, "*Depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness*" (Matt 7:22-23, Strong's #458, #459).

In Heb 13:8, we are told Y'shua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today and forever. So, if He was born a Jew, He was resurrected a Jew; and He is one to this day.

He was born a Jew, He lived a Jew, He died a Jew, and He was resurrected a Jew. He is alive and Jewish now, and forevermore the same. HalleluYah!

End of Section X - CONCLUSION OF EARTHLY MINISTRY

SUMMARY

Some of you may be wondering, "Is it important to understand the very distinct Hebrew roots of our faith?" The answer is absolutely, yes!

Each Believer's goal should be to be as Biblically accurate as humanly possible. Understanding the Hebraic roots of our faith is a crucial part of understanding the Word of YHWH.

Where Is the Church Y'shua Built?

Shortly after the death and resurrection of Y'shua, we find a dynamic evangelising church spreading YHWH's truth throughout the world. However, as dynamic as this church was, it virtually disappeared from history after the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70. From A.D. 70 to A.D.120, there was very little recorded about the true church of YHWH. When historians began to write about the church again, they wrote of a dramatically different church from the one that embraced the teachings of Y'shua and the apostles. Today, we find churches that call themselves Christian, yet the vast majority does not even faintly resemble the early church.

Today, Christianity is one of the world's largest religions. There are literally thousands of Christian organisations and congregational associations that claim to be Christian. Moreover, they claim to worship and serve the YHWH of the Bible. Each professes to follow the teachings of Y'shua as expounded in the pages of the Bible and each believes that they have a keen understanding of the Bible and YHWH's will for humanity.

In this age, Christian organisations and congregational associations offer a variety of religious experiences. Whatever one's approach to religion, there is a Christian organisation or congregational association that can be found in order to fill one's desire for religious expression.

The choices of Christian churches range from one extreme to another: from small personal groups to large crowds, from a quite scholarly and intellectual atmosphere to the noisy frenzy of Pentecostalism, from giant cathedrals to the evangelistic tent. There seems no end to the choices a person has when seeking a religious experience.

Most of these Christian organisations and congregational associations are separated by major doctrinal differences about subjects that are extremely important to one's salvation. There are many differing philosophies and concepts about how to worship the Elohim of the Bible, and there is much confusion about what Yah expects of each person who wants to worship and serve him. These doctrinal differences, as well as certain incompatible attitudes and behaviours between these various Christian groups, should cause anyone who is truly serious about their salvation to seriously question why there are so many different, competing Christian churches and philosophies.

The problem is not with having enough choices; the problem is which choice is the right choice. There are tens of thousands of separate Christian organisations and congregational associations and philosophies that profess to follow Y'shua. But, how do you know that the church of your choice is Yah's choice?

Many people frankly admit that they attend a specific church because their friends also go there, or because of its size, its standing in the community, its location, or its parking facility.

Only a small number of people who attend Christian churches claim to have spent some time researching what the early church taught before choosing the church to attend, and few wonder whether the doctrines of the church that they attend truly conform to what the early church taught.

Different Perceptions

It seems very strange indeed that most of the various Christian groups use the same Bible on which to base their beliefs and life styles, but they all differ in how they perceive what is written in this book.

Professing Christians often say, "It really doesn't matter what you believe, just as long as you believe in God and the Bible." But, it must matter somewhat because not all professing Christians hold the same beliefs. Can all of these conflicting Christian beliefs and philosophies be right? Logically, if any one of them is right, the rest must be wrong.

Obviously, everyone who professes Christianity believes that their particular religious philosophy will get them to heavenly bliss more quickly and efficiently than all of the others. If one does not believe this, they are settling for second best. Is one Christian philosophy or religious practice just as good as any another? So, where is the church that Y'shua built?

Does the church that Y'shua built after his death and resurrection exist on earth today? And if it does exist, is it doing the same work that Y'shua commissioned the early church to do? If such a church does exist, one will have to look outside popular Christianity; because a short study into the beliefs and teachings of the early church will reveal that most popular Christian beliefs conflict with the teachings of the early church.

Why different Christian denominations?

Today, there are tens of thousands of church organisations and congregational associations who call themselves Christians, but they do not faintly resemble the early church. The majority of them are in direct competition with each other, teaching many different confusing and contradictory philosophies about Messiah and the Bible.

To understand why there are so many different Christian denominations today and how this situation came into existence, we must answer the following questions:

If Y'shua is not divided, as the apostle Paul said, then why are so many Christian organisations and congregational associations in direct competition with each other?

Why do the various Christian organisations and congregational associations teach so many different confusing and contradictory philosophies about Messiah, the Bible, and how to worship YHWH?

Why do the tens of thousands of Christian organisations and congregational associations call themselves Christians when they do not even faintly resemble the early church?

Rebellion against YHWH

The first reason for so many different Christian denominations is rebellion against YHWH. Adam and Eve rebelled against YHWH in the Garden of Eden. The children of Israel rebelled against YHWH in the wilderness, after he had delivered them from slavery in Egypt. Mankind has been rebelling against YHWH from Adam until now. See Ezek 20:12-13; Isaiah 30:9-10; 66:3.

Y'shua said, "I will build my church" and he did build it; however, Y'shua did not build or sanction the tens of thousands of different competing denominations that claim to follow him. Y'shua inspired the apostle Paul to write the following:

"There is one body, and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one Faith, one baptism, One God, and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all". (Eph 4:4-6)

For some reason people seem to think they can worship YHWH any way they want. Notice that Y'shua called the legalistic religious leaders of his day hypocrites because they were teaching their own philosophies and traditions in place of Yah's truth (Matt 15:7-9).

Because some of Yah's elect children fall into this category of rebellion. Paul warned the young evangelist Timothy:

- (2) "Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine.
- (3) For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears;
- (4) And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables". (2 Tim 4:2-4 KJV)
- (1) "Now the Spirit speaks expressly, that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils;
- (2) Speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron". (1 Tim 4:1-2 KJV)

Rebellion can come in many forms and always separates the rebellious people from YHWH the Father and Y'shua, no matter what organisation or congregational association people align themselves with.

Satan's Deception

The second reason for so many different Christian denominations is Satan's deception. In the early days of the church, Satan started his Master Deception and tried to destroy the true church from within.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2 Cor 11:13-15).

Yes, Satan has ministers and even churches designed to counterfeit Yah's true church (Rev 2:9; 3:9). Moreover, there are many pseudo-Christian ministers who truly think they are serving the true Elohim, but are themselves deceived into serving as ministers of Satan.

The reality is that the vast majority of professing Christians today are deceived into thinking they are worshiping the true Elohim because of Satan's deception:

"And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him". (Rev 12:9 KJV)

Y'shua knew this would happen and warned, "Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall deceive many". (Matt 24:4-5 KJV)

Gal 1:6-9 makes it very clear what Y'shua was saying. He was prophesying the time when Satan's ministers would preach another Gospel in His name, and many would be deceived into thinking they were following Him.

Y'shua's prophecy has come true. Most professing Christians today believe and preach a false Gospel and false doctrines; not because they have predetermined to do so, but because Satan has deceived them. Satan is indeed the master deceiver. Moreover, deceived people do not know that they are deceived; otherwise, they would not be deceived.

It is obvious that the early Church was not divided into many different denominations. It is also obvious that if all professing Christians submitted to YHWH's rule in their lives, denominations would disappear.

Contrary to what most believe, Y'shua does not sanction the many different competing church organisations and congregational associations that exist today. Y'shua said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt 16:18 KJV). He did not say he would build many different competing churches – he said that he would build his church (assembly of called-out ones) and it would endure.

After being crucified and resurrected from the dead, Y'shua instructed his disciples on how he wanted his church to be constructed:

"Therefore, you go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world". (Matt 28:19-20 KJV Para)

Y'shua told his disciples to teach the things that he had commanded. Y'shua was not only referring to the things he had taught during his earthly ministry in human form. He also meant for them to teach the things he had taught Israel when He was their Elohim before He became a human being.

Hated by Popular Christianity

There are tens of thousands of different competing groups and organisations that profess to follow the teachings of Y'shua; actually, there are over 37,000 and counting as of 2012. All of these feel that their particular interpretation of Jesus' teachings and the Bible is acceptable to YHWH.

Because both the Old and New Testaments record that there is only one faith and one method of worship that is acceptable to YHWH; logically, if any one of these thousands of different groups is correct in their worship of YHWH, then all the others are incorrect and stand condemned as worshiping a false god.

Those who truly follow the teachings of YHWH the Father and Y'shua teach that there is only one way to worship the true Elohim and only one way to obtain salvation, and that those who teach another way of worship and salvation are worshiping a false god.

The vast majority of counterfeit Christians hate the Father's true children because their belief, practices, and teachings are a condemnation of counterfeit Christianity. Just as the legalistic Jews of Y'shua's day professed to believe in YHWH and hated Y'shua for what he taught, so it is in this age. YHWH's people will be hated for believing and teaching the truth as Y'shua taught it (John 17:14).

Again, it is very easy to understand why popular Christianity would hate those who truly believe in Avinu the Father and Y'shua.

Hated by Judaism

Those of the various Jewish sects (for the most part) believe that Y'shua was a prophet or a good man; but don't believe that he was the Creator or the Son of Yah, nor do they believe that he was the Messiah. However, a major part of the Gospel message teaches that Y'shua is the Creator and the Son of Yah; and that Avinu the Father sent Y'shua to bring a renewed covenant.

Therefore, it is no wonder that those of the various Jewish sects feel that any who believes in and follows the teachings of Y'shua are their enemies and worshippers of a pagan god.

Hated by all Religions

Those who truly believe that the biblical record is the printed word of YHWH should also believe the biblical teaching that there are only two religions in the world: The faith of YHWH the Father who is Sovereign of all that exists; and all other religions, including Quasi-Christianity.

Because of this belief, it is little wonder that those who truly believe that they are the only true worshippers of the only true Elohim and his Son will be hated by all religions of the world today. It is interesting that this is the same basic reason that the ancient nation of Israel was hated and persecuted by other nations.

Persecution

Why was Y'shua crucified for preaching the Gospel message? Why were most of the apostles, along with many of the early church, martyred? And why will many be murdered just before the return of Y'shua for preaching the truly astounding message that Y'shua taught?

Y'shua gives the answer:

"If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you" (John 15:20 Para.). "And all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution". (2 Tim 3:12 Para) (See also Mark 13:13; Luke 21:17.)

The persecution of the elect of YHWH is a self-fulfilling prophecy, because of their obedience to the command of Y'shua to proclaim the Gospel message. The elect of YHWH will be hated and persecuted because they will be doing as Y'shua instructed. They will be preaching and teaching the Good News message of repentance from evil, true belief in YHWH the Father and Y'shua and the soon-coming Kingdom of YHWH in addition to how to walk in Torah.

The Gospel message that Y'shua brought from the Father is a message that is so dynamic, so powerful, and so diametrically opposed to what has been taught by this world's religious leaders and philosophers, that the vast majority of people will reject it when they hear it and hate and persecute those who live it and teach it.

Y'shua says to let one's light shine (Matt 5:14-16). When we do this, we cannot help but bring persecution upon ourselves.

Today, just before the return of Y'shua to conquer the earth and establish his Father's religion and government over the earth, the true servants of YHWH must proclaim Yah the Father's Good News just as Y'shua did centuries ago.

How to find those who truly follow Y'shua

In this world of confusing Christian denominations, how does a person go about finding the Father's elect children who truly serve him and his Son Y'shua? How does one find a group of true Believers? It should be obvious that Y'shua is not the founder of the tens of thousands of competing Christian organisations and congregational associations, so how can a person find people who truly serve the Sovereign Father and his Son?

Are there identifying marks, signs, or something that we can observe that will help us to recognise true Believers? The answer is yes! True Believers can be identified and separated from those who are not. The following are some major points to look for when determining if someone is being guided by Y'shua and the Father's Holy Spirit:

Obedience to Yah's laws.

Brotherly love.

Observance of Yah's seventh-day Sabbath.

Observance of Yah's commanded observances and festivals.

Non-participation in pagan worship systems, such as Christmas, Easter, etc.

Distinctly separate from other religions.

Preach the Kingdom of YHWH.

Understand the purpose of the called-out assembly.

Understand YHWH's plan of salvation for humanity.

Yah's people obey his laws, precepts and principles (Torah). His people recognise that He has set in motion laws which will bring blessings in every area of their lives if they are obeyed. Yah's people will boldly proclaim that his laws, precepts and principles are not abolished; but they have been expanded to cover every aspect of human activity (Isaiah 42:21; Mat 5:17-18). Yah's people say with King David, "Your word is a lamp to my feet, and a light to my path" (Psalm 119:105); and they recognise that YHWH's Torah is one of his greatest gifts to humanity.

The apostle John has a stinging rebuke for those who say they know YHWH and do not keep his law:

"He that says, I know him, and does not keep his commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him". (1 John 2:4)

YHWH's people recognise that a requirement for maintaining a harmonious relationship with the Father and Y'shua is keeping the commandments. Moreover, YHWH's people show their love for YHWH and their concern for each other through keeping the Father's Torah:

Y'shua said, "If you love me, keep my commandments". (John 14:15)

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments; and his commandments are not grievous". (1 John 5:2-3)

Brotherly Love

"By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if we have love one to another". (John 13:35)

Although love for those within the body of Y'shua may not seem to be a major sign of Yah's people, it is nonetheless. In a world torn with strife, war, divorce, murder, anger, hatred and violence, true love and concern for another person is rare indeed; and it is truly a sign of the people who follow the one who loved the world enough to give his life for it.

The Seventh-Day Sabbath

YHWH's people observe his seventh-day Sabbath, his commanded observances, and his holy convocations:

(15) "Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the Lord: whosoever does any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death.

(16) Wherefore the children of Israel shall keep the sabbath, to observe the sabbath throughout their generations, for a perpetual covenant.

(17) It is a sign between me and the children of Israel for ever: for in six days the LORD made heaven and earth, and on the seventh day he rested, and was refreshed". (Exod 31:15-17)

"Moreover also I gave them my Sabbaths, to be a sign between me and them, that they might know that I am the Lord that sanctifies them". (Ezek 20:12)

"And hallow my Sabbaths; and they shall be a sign between me and you, that you may know that I am the Lord your God". (Ezek 20:20)

Other observances and holy convocations that Yah's people keep are the New Moons, the Passover, and the Annual Festivals. These are statutes to be kept forever and are signs of Yah's people. See Exod 13:9; Lev chap 23; Isaiah 56:1-6; 58:13; and 66:22-23.

YHWH's people and Paganism

Yah's people do not observe pagan festivals and holidays, such as Christmas, Easter, and Halloween or rituals and traditions appropriated from this world's religions. Although many professing Christians will say there is nothing wrong with observing and practicing other religious festivals, holidays, rituals and traditions, they do admit they are pagan in origin. The prophet Jeremiah gave this warning from YHWH concerning satanic practices: "Do not learn the ways of other nations, and don't be terrified at the signs of heaven as other nations are. For the customs of these people are vanity; for one cuts a tree out of the forest, with an ax it is the work of the hands of the craftsman. They adorn it with silver and gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers, so they don't move". (Jer 10:2-4 Para) (Also see Deut 12:29-31.)

"Don't go after other gods to serve them, and to worship them, and don't provoke me to anger with the works of your hands; and I will not harm you". (Jer 25:6 Para)

Paul warns YHWH's people at Corinth not to bind themselves with other people who are unbelievers and practice Satan's worship systems:

"Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers: for what fellowship have righteousness and unrighteousness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what concord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols?" (2 Cor 6:14-16)

Separate from Other Religions

The apostle Paul instructed the elect at Corinth to avoid mixing paganism with truth (2 Cor 6:14-16). He also told them to separate themselves from the religions of that day:

"Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing, and I will receive you". (2 Cor 6:17)

YHWH's people must remain separate from this world's religions, because participation in them leads to spiritual adultery. The true church (assembly) will be the Bride of Y'shua; and its people today are representatives of the Father's holy nation as its citizens, ambassadors, kings, and priests (2 Cor 5:20).

The Kingdom of YHWH

"Now after that John was put in prison, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of the kingdom of God. And saying, The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand: repent you, and believe the gospel". (Mark 1:14-15 KJV) (See also Matt 24:14; 28:19- 20.)

YHWH's people proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as the solution to humanity's problems as well as the other good news messages that Y'shua and the apostles taught concerning the Father's plan for the salvation of humanity and entrance into his family and kingdom as a spirit being.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, if any man preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let him be accursed". (Gal 1:8-9)

These are strong words! But it does show just how important it is to the Father that his people proclaim the right message. The Gospel that Y'shua proclaimed is a far cry from the teachings of popular Christianity today. The True Good news messages are so dynamic, so powerful, so diametrically opposed to what is taught in most churches around the world today that most people reject it:

"Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long-suffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables". (2 Tim 4:2-4 KJV)

The Purpose of the Assembly

The early church was not established to become a large and powerful organisation in order to challenge Satan for world rule and make this world a better place in which to live under its present leadership. Instead, Y'shua established the early church for the following four basic reasons:

To prepare a people to reign with Y'shua over the world.

"And has [i.e., Y'shua has] made us to our God [i.e., God the Father] kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth". (Rev 5:10) (See also 1 Thes 3:13; Rev 3:21; 20:4-6.)

To proclaim the Good News of the soon-coming government of YHWH.

"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come". (Matt 24:14)

To teach Avinu the Father's message of repentance and salvation.

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit, teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you". (Mat 28:19-20)

"Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit". (Acts 2:38)

To provide a teaching place for those whom the Father calls during the Gospel age of salvation (John 6:44) to grow in grace and knowledge (2 Peter 3:18) and to learn and perfect godly ways in their lives so they will be able to fulfill the purpose for which they were called (Rev 5:10).

YHWH's People Understand the Plan of Salvation

Avinu the Father has a plan by which humans can be born into his spiritual family. This plan involves repentance, the forgiveness of sin, water baptism, and full redemption and salvation. Only people whom the Father adopts into his royal family and holy nation during the Gospel age of salvation truly understand his plan for the salvation for humanity. See Mark 4:10-12; 1 Cor 2:1-8.

The apostle John wrote, "Beloved, now we are the sons of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is". (1 John 3:2) (See also Rom 6:1-5; Phil 3:21; Rev 21:6-7.)

To summarise, there are only two religions on earth: the Sovereign YHWH's worship system, which is administered by his Son Y'shua that leads people who practice it to eternal life; and Satan's counterfeits of the Sovereign's worship system which leads people to the irrevocable termination of their life in the Lake of Fire. Therefore, the two following questions and their answers are extremely important to anyone whom Avinu the Father is calling to salvation during this age.

Does it really matter what one believes about YHWH and the Bible?

Does it really matter which Christian organisation or congregational association one attends?

If there is no Elohim, and the Bible is not his word, it does not matter what a person believes about YHWH and the Bible or with whom one associates to worship Adonai. If, in fact, there is no Sovereign El to whom one is accountable, why waste time and effort with religion? The problem is that there is abundant proof that Avinu the Father and Y'shua do exist and that the Bible is their word and instruction manual to the human race.

If a person is truly seeking to be in harmony with the Sovereign of all that exists and wants to be given eternal life by him, that person should be extremely concerned that his/her life measures up to his expectations.

YHWH's True Church Does Exist

The Sovereign YHWH's worship system and the spiritual organism (His adopted sons--the assemble) which His Son rules has existed from the day he established it through His Son and His Holy Spirit in A.D. 30. His body of true believers have endured the test of persecution, martyrdom, and time and this body still exists

today as a spiritual organism wherever members of His royal family and holy nation worship and serve Him and His Son (Matt 16:18; 18:20).

The true Church of YHWH is a single spiritual organism consisting of people who worship and serve the Father and his Son as instructed by Y'shua and the apostles:

"There is one body, and one Spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all". (Eph 4:4-6)

Somewhere on earth, there are people who truly worship and serve the Sovereign Father and his Son either individually or as a collective group. YHWH's true church does exist. It is here on this earth right now! It is doing the same work Y'shua commissioned it to accomplish, it has the same spirit, the same attitude, the same goals and objectives as the early apostles and the church that they ruled and served! However, if a person is going to find the true church, they will have to look outside this world's religions and look into the Bible for its description, doctrines and policies; because one will not find YHWH's true church among the popular religions of today. This is because the true church that Y'shua built is not a part of this world.

Where is the true Church today?

The true church is a spiritual organism, and it is wherever you find an individual or a group of people believing, teaching, and practicing the same worship system that the early church believed in, taught, and practiced. It is the church that understands the Hebraic roots of their faith.

CONCLUSION

Is it not amazing that we are together in believing in the Messiah of the doctrine, but remain divided on the doctrine of the Messiah? Why the existence of all of these doctrinal dilemmas and futile attempts at resolving them? Why cannot preachers and theologians agree on what the Bible teaches?

You must know there has to be a fundamental cause for this situation! The answer is simple. We are not using the same tools. We have resorted to more Greek or Hellenistic tools than Hebrew tools for interpretation. It is largely the result of our forsaking or denial of the foundational principles of Biblical Judaism. It is a fact that many scholars and church leaders fail to see the importance of getting to the Hebraic Roots of the faith. For the average Christian, that sounds like over simplification; or maybe to the contrary, puzzling and complex. But YHWH is speaking this warning to the hearts of many Christians today.

"(12) Therefore all things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets.

(13) Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to destruction, and many there be which go in thereat:

(14) Because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.

(15) Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves.

(16) Ye shall know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs of thistles?

(17) Even so every good tree bringeth forth good fruit; but a corrupt tree bringeth forth evil fruit.

(18) A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit.

(19) Every tree that bringeth not forth good fruit is hewn down, and cast into the fire.

(20) Wherefore by their fruits ye shall know them.

(21) Not every one that saith unto me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven."

(Matt 7:12-21)

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

In the world of theology and religion, there is a phenomenon known as "the pendulum principle". A pendulum swings as far as it can go in one direction, and then swings as far as it can go in the opposite direction. Some believers are pulled like a pendulum from one extreme to the opposite extreme. When they realise that they have been in extreme error about some doctrine, they swing like a pendulum to the opposite extreme and sometimes end up in an equally dangerous error.

The whole objective of studying and understanding the Hebrew Roots is to bring us into a closer relationship with our Saviour, to know as much about Y'shua as we can through the people and time period in which He lived.

Many Messianic believers who now honour the Torah started out as pork-eating, Sabbath-breaking, Bible-believing Christians, as I did. By the grace of YHWH, we saw that Christianity was in error concerning the Torah. We realised that the Church had "diminished from it" by eliminating the Sabbath, Feast Days, and dietary laws, and had thereby disobeyed the warning in Deut 4:2 not to "diminish ought from it". The same verse that warns us not to "diminish ought from" the Torah also warns us to "not add to" the Torah.

Those of us who have been enlightened to see the error of "diminishing from" the Torah need to be careful that we do not allow ourselves to be drawn to the opposite extreme of "adding to" the Torah. We need to be aware of the fact that this is the very error which Satan will attempt to draw us into. If he can draw us into the opposite extreme of "adding to" the Torah, then this error can be used to discredit the entire Torah restoration movement. Bible-believing Christians who might otherwise be open to Torah will throw out the proverbial baby with the bathwater and reject the entire message.

Y'shua is the door to this relationship. Torah is the path beyond this door – for all who wish to put their trust in Him. Sadly, most will not end up on the right path, even after learning of Him.

It is a fact that a renaissance of First Century Judeo-Christian teaching is occurring within the Church in our time. It is revolutionising Christian theology. It will impact all Christian believers. Like the computer age, it is challenging but unavoidable. Why not be on the cutting edge?

Let us therefore:

"... grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Y'shua HaMashiach"
(2 Peter 3:18);

"Study to show thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth"
(2 Tim 2:15);

and

"receive the word with all readiness of mind, and search the scriptures daily, whether those things were (are) so."
(Acts 17:11)

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GLOSSARY OF WORDS AND PEOPLE

Hebrew /Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
Abad		Word translated "labour" in Exod 20:9. It means "to do", "to serve".
Abiyah		Abia.
Adonai		Lord, Master.
Aggadah		Y'shua's general practice of teaching was done in a style called "Aggadah". The Aggadic style employed stories and parables, which were directed towards teaching the student to understand a concept of truth or a principle of moral behaviour.
Aharon		Aaron.
	Akoloutheo	To follow.
	Akuros	Is without authority, null and void. It is a late verb, akurow, and substantive occurrence in legal phraseology like cancelling a will, etc.
Amen		Means "firm, faithful, truly, verily"; and is generally used as a confirmation that one agrees with what has just been stated.
Amidah		Today, these are known as the last three prayers of the Eighteen Benedictions. Along with the Shema, these prayers are a part of the most intimate portion of the modern Synagogue service.
	Aphiemi	Abandon, leave, disregard, keep no longer or omitted.
	Artos	Or "psomi" – sweet bread. See lechem.
Asher		Blessed.
Avadah		To do service.
Avelut		Is observed only by a parent and lasts for twelve months after the burial. For eleven months of that period, starting at the time of burial, the son of the deceased recites the mourner's Kaddish every day.
Aviad		Father of Eternity.
Avinu		Our Father.
Avram		Who became Avraham – Abraham.
Baal Shem Tov		The Besht, Rabbi Israel ben Eliezer. A.D. 1700-1760. The founder of Chasidic Judaism. Although many books of his teachings exist, the Besht himself wrote no books, perhaps because his teachings emphasised the fact that even a simple, uneducated peasant could approach YHWH (a radical idea in its time, when Judaism emphasised that the way to approach YHWH was through study). He emphasised prayer, the observance of commandments; and ecstatic, personal mystical experiences.
Bahir		One of the oldest texts in Hebrew mystical literature.
Bais Hamikdosh		Temple.
Barabbas		Aramaic term Bar Abbas, meaning "son of the father".
Bat Kol		In Rabbinic literature, a reference is made to "a voice from heaven" called "Bat Kol", which literally means a "daughter of a voice". The Bat Kol, Shekinah, and the Ruach haKodesh are all feminine in the Hebrew.
Batlanim		A scholarly teacher who was either independently wealthy or on some kind of support so he would be available to provide the congregation with accurate academics and answers. There had to be at least ten batlanim in every congregation of one hundred and twenty members. There was even a tradition that a synagogue service could not commence without ten men present.
Beit-Lechem		Beit or bet – Home, house or place. Lechem – Raised bread. Known as Bethlehem – Y'shua's place of birth.

	Bema	A portable chair or throne for a very important person.
Bet Midrash		A house of study.
Beit Din		Rabbinical court house, at times also written as Bet Din.
Ben		The usual Hebrew word for "son", whereas bar is Aramaic.
Ben Zavdai		Son of Zebedee.
Bethabara		House of the ford. Aramaic verb "abar" found in Bethabara. Abar (eber in Hebrew) indicates a movement, "the thought that one person CAUSES or MOTIVATES another to move".
Hebrew /Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
Birkat Hamazon		This blessing is recited at the conclusion of the circumcision meal.
Boanerges		Means "sons of thunder" as Yaakov (James) and John were called by Y'shua.
Brit		Or Bris, meaning pact or covenant.
B'rit Chadashah		Renewed Covenant or New Covenant.
Brit Milah		Covenant of circumcision.
Chadashah		New.
Challah		Bread
Chanukah		Lights or also Dedication (also written as Hanukkah) The Feast of the Dedication of Lights.
Chatzitzah		Judaism stresses that the entire body must come in contact with the water of the mikveh. To insure the immersion was valid, no clothing or individuals could touch the candidate. Any such intervention that prevented the water from reaching a part of the body was known as Chatzitzah and rendered the immersion invalid.
Chayav		The Hebrew word for debts, meaning guilt for which one is held accountable, a debt to be paid.
Chazzan		See sh'liach tzibbur.
	Chiasmus	Semitic poetry in a form called a) where verses are repeated but in reverse order. The verses follow an A-B-C-B-A order.
Chukim		The third group of laws often has no explicit reason given for their existence except for Israel's identification as YHWH's chosen people to the other nations (Deut 4:6). This group of laws is known as Chukim, and is literally translated as decrees.
Chuppah		Canopy, representing heaven.
Cohen		Priest – also written as kohen.
Cohanim		Priests – also written as kohanim.
Daka		Means 'to fatally wound', 'bore through', or 'pierce'; and to 'be crushed', 'contrite', or 'broken'.
Davar		Word.
Dah-vid		David.
	Dia	By.
	Dikaioma	A noun meaning "righteous acts" or "righteousness".
	Dunamis	Full power, unhindered power.
Dwron		Gift.
Echad		One, a unity.
Edah		Congregation, which refers to the collective people who are gathered – particularly at the tent of meeting. See ekklesia.
Edos		The rituals and festivals which reawaken us to important religious truths such as Sabbath, holidays, the Tefillin and the Mezuzah that remind us of YHWH's presence are known as Edos, and are literally translated "witnesses".

Hebrew /Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
	Ekklesia	<p>The word 'church' is derived from the Greek word kuriakos, which means "belonging to the Lord". The word 'church' must be understood, however, in the light of the New Testament Greek term ekklesia, which refers to an assembly or gathering of people. In classical Greek, the word 'ekklesia' meant an assembly of the citizens of a city (polis) with the understanding that those who were of this assembly had the right to vote on civic issues. Ekklesia is derived from the verb, which means "to summon forth". Hence, it has been said to mean "the called out". The full import of this meaning cannot be deduced from the Greek word ekklesia alone. For an understanding of the word 'church', we must go behind the Greek text of the New Testament and return to the Hebrew in which the words of the apostles were either written or thought. In essence, we must return to the Hebrew foundations of believing faith in order to arrive at a proper definition of the one word that most often denominates the community of believers in Y'shua. These scholars used the Greek word ekklesia to translate the Hebrew word qahal which means, "congregation, assembly". The Hebrew word qahal has the same root, but with a different vowel pointing and means to "call together" or to "assemble people" when used in the hiphil. Both words are derivatives of the word for voice (qol) and ultimately refer to the summoning of an assembly or to the act of assembling. This term is generally used biblically to refer to the congregation of the people of Israel (e.g., qahal Yisrael—congregation of Israel); (qahal Yahweh—congregation of Yahweh); and (qahal haElohim—congregation of YHWH). It often denotes the general assembly of the people—men, women, and children. The Jewish people are sometimes referred to as the qehillah, from this same root. The word is usually rendered ekklesia in the Septuagint. A second Hebrew word that is translated "congregation" is ('edah), which refers to the collective people who are gathered, particularly at the tent of meeting.</p>
El		The Sovereign God.
El Elyon		The Most High God.
Elisheva		Elizabeth.
El melekh ne'emah		"God, Faithful King". The first letters of these three Hebrew words spell the Hebrew word amen.
Emunah		Translates as the English concept of trusting faithfulness.
	Engiken	Means "about to appear" or "is almost here".
Eloah		The singular word for "Elohim".
Elohim		God – in the male and plural form.
El Shaddai		God Almighty.
	Epignosis	Knowledge, meaning to have full discernment.
Eretz Yisrael		The land of Israel.
Erev Pesach		The day in which Pesach begins at nightfall.
Eved		Servant.
	Exousia	Meaning, 'only what is allowed to have'.
	Flagellum	The instrument of punishment was called a flagellum, and was a short piece of wood which had several strips of leather attached to it on which were tied small pieces of bone, chain, or metal. When the lictor brought the flagellum down hard upon the victim, it would bruise, cut and tear the flesh – causing internal and external bleeding.
Gabbatha		Stone Pavement.
Gabbay tzedikah		See Parnasin.
Gadosh		Holy in our English Bibles is qadosh or qodesh. Besides meaning "sacred", this word means to "separate" to "set apart".
Gahal		Congregation or assembly. See ekklesia.
Galil		Galilee.
Gamla		Aramaic word means rope and camel, possibly because the ropes were made from camels' hair.
Gan Eden		Garden of Eden.
Gar'ba		Aramaic word for leper.
Garaba		Aramaic word for jar maker or jar merchant.

Gavri-El		Gabriel.
Hebrew/Aramaic	Greek/Latin	Written in English
Gemora		Means completion. It was compiled by the generation of Jewish scholars called the Amoraim between A.D. 200 and A.D. 400. Unlike the Mishnah, which was written in Hebrew, Gemora is written in Aramaic with a mixture of Hebrew. It is an enormous amplification of the Mishnah carried out by scholars in Babylon and Palestine. The combination of Mishnah and Gemora is called the Talmud. All total, there are 5,894 folio pages printed in 12 large volumes, the pagination of which is kept uniform in all editions. Of the 63 tractates of Mishnah, 36 are included and interpreted in the Babylonian Talmud. A separate Jerusalem Talmud was also published, this one dealing far more extensively with the rules and regulations of living in Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel.
Golgotha		The place of a skull.
Ha		The.
HaBin		The firstborn.
Ha Davar Elohim		The Word of God.
	Hades	Translated as Hell in most places in the Bible. A more accurate translation would be "a compartment in the underworld". The English Bible and other translations sometimes use the word 'hell' for 'hades', and at times 'hell' is also used for the 'bottomless pit' or 'tartarus'. This is very misleading and causes the student to be confused, and it does not give the reader an accurate and true picture of the underworld.
Hagah		Means to murmur, to mutter, to growl.
Hag		Feast.
Haggim		Festivals.
Hag haMatzah		The Feast of Unleavened Bread.
Halacha		The way one walks.
Halakhic		Jewish legal. To teach in the halachic method involved expounding on various points of law as found in the Torah and in the oral traditions.
Halal		Means to be wounded and bruised.
Hanukkah		Lights or also Dedication – also written as Chanukah months after the burial. For eleven months of that period, starting at the time of burial, the son of the deceased recites the mourner's Kaddish every day.
HaSatan		Previously known as Lucifer, or Halal. Halal in Hebrew means to be clear, to shine or to be bright, indicating that he was anointed with the Shekinah of HaShem. HaSatan also means "the adversary".
HaShem		Literally, "the Name" in reference to YHWH.
Hazan		Originally meaning "overseer".
	Hemerobaptists	Daily bathers.
Het		In the Encyclopedia Judaica listed under sin, we find over seventy word references; but only three major categories for sin: the words "Het", "Pesha", and "Avon" (Avon).
Hillel and Shammai		These two great scholars , born a generation or two before the beginning of the Common Era and are usually discussed together and contrasted with each other, because they were contemporaries and the leaders of two opposing schools of thought (known as "houses"). The Talmud records over 300 differences of opinion between Beit Hillel (the House of Hillel) and Beit Shammai (the House of Shammai). In almost every one of these disputes, Hillel's view prevailed. Rabbi Hillel was born to a wealthy family in Babylonia, but came to Jerusalem without the financial support of his family and supported himself as a woodcutter. It is said that he lived in such great poverty that he was sometimes unable to pay the admission fee to study Torah, and because of him that fee was abolished. He was known for his kindness, his gentleness, and his concern for humanity. One of his most famous sayings is "If I am not for myself, then who will be for me? And if I am only for myself, then what am I? And if not now, when?" Rabbi Shammai was an engineer, known for the strictness of his views. The Talmud tells that a Gentile came to Shammai saying that he would convert to Judaism if Shammai could teach him the whole Torah in the time that he could stand on one foot. Shammai drove him away with a builder's measuring stick! Hillel, on the other hand, converted the Gentile by telling

		him, "That which is hateful to you, do not do to your neighbour. That is the whole Torah; the rest is commentary. Go and study it".
Hebrew/Aramaic	Greek/Latin	Written in English
	Homologeo	The word "confess". This is a compound word derived from homou (meaning "the same" or "akin to") and logos. The term logos in its simplest meaning denotes "something said". We know, however, that it also has to do with Divine Expression such as we see in chapter 1 of John's Gospel, where Y'shua is called the logos.
Hosheanu		Hosanna is "save us".
Hosheana Rabba		Meaning "the great save us". To the "son of David" – a Messianic title.
	Kamēlos	Destroy, tear down, abolish or to overthrow completely.
	Kamilos	Cable or rope.
Kannah		Cana.
Kanaph		Is a word that specifically means the fringe-like feathers or edges of a bird's wing, not the whole wing (see Kraspedon).
Karav		A verb means "to come up to", "to be where something or someone is". Kanaf also refers to the wing (of the Temple).
Kashrut		Kosher.
Kfar Nahum		Village of Nahum, known as Capernaum. The present name of the site, Talhum in Arabic or less correctly Tell Hum, seemingly arises from its name in medieval Jewish manuscripts, Kefar Tanhum, or simply Tanhum, for there is no real "tel" on the site. One scholar proposed that the word "tell" may come from teloneion, the Greek word for "customs house".
Khesed		Loving-kindness, mercy or grace.
Khomer		The Hebrew word for weightiest is khomerim, the plural of khomer (heavy, strict). The first rule of Hillel is kol v'khomer (light and heavy). This concept in Judaism recognises, for example, that some mitzvot (commandments) hold greater weight than others. This is important, because at times two commandments conflict and we must determine which one has priority.
Kippur		Derived from 'kaphar', which means to cover. And 'atonement' means to be 'at-one-ment', when we are one with YHWH.
Kishmo ken hu		Like his name, so is he.
Korban		Sacrifice.
	Koustodia	Occurs as far back as the Oxyrhynchus Papyrus that is a reference in Latin for Roman guard.
	Kraspedon	Known as "hem" in the King James Bible. This is the same word that is used in the Septuagint, the ancient Greek translation of the Hebrew Scriptures, to translate tzi·TZIT (see below) (the singular of tzi·tzi·YOT). The same word used in Num 15:38 for "border" are used in Mal 4:2 for "wings". With this understanding in mind, an ancient Jew under the prayer shawl could be said to be dwelling in the secret place of the Most High and under His wings (Psalm 91:1-4). The Hebrew word for "wings" used in this passage is kanaph, which is a word that specifically means the fringe-like feathers or edges of a bird's wing, not the whole wing. All of us have seen an eagle or hawk circling in the summer sky and have seen these fringe-like feathers. This word, therefore, had two meanings and could be translated wings, or tzitzit (see tzitzit).
	Kunaria	Little dogs.
	Kuri'n	Masters.
	Kuros	Means force or authority.
Kvatter		Godparent.
Kvatterim		Godparents.
Lashon Hara		Or lashan hara – speaking "Evil Tongue" against a person – whether it's a true or a false report. It is taught in Judaism that tzarrat was directly associated with the sin of an evil tongue.
L'avdah		The Hebrew word for "serve" transliterated into English. The word for "servant" in Hebrew is from the root eved, which is the same root word for the verb "to serve".
Lechem		Sweet Bread.

Lêistēs		Robber.
	Lepra	The word for leprosy, from the root lepis, meaning a flake or Scale.
Levi		Levite.
Hebrew/Aramaic	Greek/Latin	Written in English
Leviim		Levites.
	Lictor	The Roman scourging was so deadly that it was supposed to be administered by a specially trained man called a lictor.
	Liéstai	Thieves.
	Lêistēs	Thief
	Logos	In its simplest meaning, denotes "something said". We know, however, that it also has to do with Divine Expression such as what we see in chapter 1 of John's Gospel where Y'shua is called the logos.
	Louo	To bathe.
Ma'amados		The twenty-four Temple service shifts throughout the year.
Magdala		In the Talmud, it is called by its Aramaic name, Migdal Nunaiya. This name gives us a clue to the basic enterprise going on in the area, since the name means "Tower of Fish". Magdala was famous for its skill in processing fish. In the First Century, the town was called by another name, illustrating this. In the Greek language, it was called Tarichaea; again, referring to it as a place of salting or processing fish.
Maggid		A migratory evangelist of the First Century who spoke to various congregations.
Malkut Shammayim		If you were born a Jew, that is sufficient for entrance into the Kingdom.
	Manthano	An ancient Greek verb to denote the process by which one acquired theoretical knowledge. The two primary terms relative to discipleship are the verb 'to follow', and the noun 'disciple'. A disciple was a learner. A man was known as a mathe'te's or disciple when he bound himself to another in order to acquire his practical and theoretical knowledge. The word was sometimes nearly synonymous with the term apprentice. There was never a disciple without a master or teacher. In some Greek circles, the teacher was paid by his disciples.
Mamad		A Temple service shift – one out of twenty four.
Mattityahu		Matthew. The name means "gift of YHWH".
Matzo		Bitter Bread – eaten during Passover week as a reminder of the Exodus.
Mayim		The Hebrew word for water. According to a number of Jewish sages, mayim has the same root as the word "mah", meaning "what". This points out that when a person immerses in water, he is nullifying the fleshly ego and is asking, "What am I?"
Megrephah		The sound of the "organ" heard to the most distant parts of the Temple.
Me'kudeshet		During the engagement period, the bride is called a "me'kudeshet" when she will make herself ready with the gifts that the bridegroom gave her. She shows it by wearing a veil.
Menachem		Meaning "comforter".
Meturganim		The interpreter in a synagogue. This was a person skilled in languages who stood by the one reading the Torah or teaching in a Bet Midrash (a house of study) to interpret into the lingua franca of that day the Hebrew that was being spoken.
Mezuzah		An encasement of the Shema scroll fixed to the door post.
Middah k'neged middah		YHWH's punishment being "measure for measure".
Migdal		Tower.
Migra		Convocation, means "a calling together"; an "assembly".
M'haimna		The word used for "eunuch" in the Aramaic manuscripts is m'haimna, which can also mean "believer", or "faithful one".
Mikrah		A word used in connection with the festivals, which is translated as convocation in most Bibles. It literally means "rehearsal" or "recital".
Mikveh		To the ancient Jew, the mikveh was a process of spiritual purification and cleansing, especially in relation to the various types of ritual defilement when the Temple was in use. Ancient sages teach that the word mikveh has the same letters as Ko(v)Meh, the Hebrew word for "rising" or "standing tall"; therefore, we see the idea of being baptised "straightway".

Mikvaot		Immersion baths.
Milah		Circumcision.
Minim		A term usually applied to Judeo-Christians. In later rabbinic texts, Pharisaic rabbis referred to Capernaum as such an area.
Hebrew/ Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
Minyan		Ten Jewish men above age 13 – or in some conservative or reform traditions, 10 adult Jews will be present for the brit.
Miriam		Also written as Mara – Mary.
Mishkan		Tabernacle.
Mishmar		The dividing of the priestly families into twenty-four groups for “a course” or “division” named after the head of that particular family for the yearly Temple services.
Mishnah		The Mishnah is the Oral Law of how to accomplish the written Torah (Law). This Rabbinic work was compiled about 100 years after Josephus wrote the Antiquities. Mishnah means completion. The Mishnah was written in Hebrew, whilst the Gemora is written in Aramaic with a mixture of Hebrew. The combination of Mishnah and Gemora is called the Talmud. In total, there are 5,894 folio pages printed in 12 large volumes, the pagination of which is kept uniform in all editions. Of the 63 tractates of Mishnah, 36 are included and interpreted in the Babylonian Talmud. A separate Jerusalem Talmud was also published, this one dealing far more extensively with the rules and regulations of living in Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel. Although the expression “the law” was used of the five books of Moses, of the Ten Commandments and of the entire Old Testament, it came especially to be equated with the interpretations and traditions of the scribes. In the Third Century A.D., a written compilation of these oral traditions was completed known as the Mishnah, which contained 63 tractates on various subjects of the Law. In English, it equates to a book of about 800 pages. Later Judaism set itself to the task of interpreting these interpretations. These commentaries on the Mishnah are called Talmuds. Of the Jerusalem Talmud, there are 12 printed volumes; and of the Babylonian Talmud there are 60 printed volumes.
Mishpat		Means judgment or justice.
Mishpatim		The moral or ethical laws that are necessary for man to live in harmony are known as Mishpatim and are literally translated judgments.
Mitzvah		Commandment.
Mitzvos		Commandments.
	Mneemeion	Grave.
Mo'ed		A term in Hebrew used for festival or feast and it means a “set time” or an “appointed time”.
Moedim		Appointed times.
Mohel		Ritual Circumcisor.
Mohalim		Ritual Circumcisors.
Moshe		Moses.
Moshiach		Messiah.
M'tzitzah		The practice called after the circumcision when the incision is cleaned thoroughly.
My-yim		The Hebrew for seas in Psalm 26 is my-yim and should be translated as waters. The word for rivers is nih-hah-rote and is translated properly. It can mean, “current, stream...river”. The sentence is saying basically the same thing over again, but in a different way, substituting rivers for waters. All the words for ‘waters’ and ‘seas’ are my-yim the same word found for ‘seas’ in the Creation account of Psalm 24:2.
Nak'dimon		Nicodemus.
	Niptontai	The washing of the hands called for minute regulations. It was commanded to wash the hands before meals, and it was one's duty to do it after eating.
Naggar		Aramaic use of the term carpenter / craftsman.
Nasi		Term for the principle leader or president of a synagogue.
Natseret		Nazareth.
Navi		The word for prophet is Navi, which may come from the root Nava, meaning “to flow”, or “gush forth”. This would imply that a prophet is also a “channel” for bringing spiritual power from YHWH to bear on a certain situation.

Navium		Prophets.
Netilah yadayim		Washing of the hands.
Netsari/Nets arim		Nazarenes; the name of the first followers of Y'shua.
Hebrew /Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
Niddah		The state of a woman immediately after birth, when a woman is considered "unclean" and must remain sexually separated from her husband for a period of seven days after the birth of a male child and fourteen days after the birth of a female child; also a menstruating woman.
	Nipto	To wash up.
Oh-hah-zeem		Word for 'seize it' and means, "to seize...to take, catch, in hunting, to take or have possession" The verb also means "to take possession (of the land)" (i.e. Israel, Josh. 22:9), and it also speaks of an "eternal possession".
Olam haBah		World to come.
Ool'shamrah		Means "to guard". It comes from the root word shomer, which means to guard, to protect, or to act as a watchman.
	Parakletos	The only name by which we know the Holy Spirit is actually His job description; Comforter (KJV) or Counselor (NIV). This title is derived from the Greek word parakletos, which can also be translated intercessor or advocate.
Parnasin		The three men known as almoners who cared for the poor and distributed alms and were expected to be scholars of the Scriptures. Since they were also known as gabbay tzedikah, it may be from this function that we get the modern term deacon.
	Paul	See Shaul.
Perez		And Zerah were a foreshadowing picture of the two goats used on Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement).
Pirkei Avot		Ethics of the Fathers, a tractate of the Mishnah. It teaches that the oral tradition / oral laws were passed down from Moshe to Joshua, etc. And since they weren't codified into the Mishnah until about A.D. 200, it's pretty difficult to ascertain when the oral tradition first began. (This writer's own best guess is that the oral tradition began sometime during the Babylonian captivity).
Pesach		Passover.
Petach		Word is used for "opening" or "gate" in Micah.
Pharisees		The Pharisees were a Jewish religious group that claimed to follow carefully all Jewish laws and customs.
	Phylactery	This Scripture (Deut 6:8) is referring to the phylacteries worn during prayers. The word "phylactery" is derived from the Greek phylakterion, and literally means a protecting charm or amulet. "Phylacteries" is an unfortunate translation, as there is little if any evidence to suggest that they were regarded as amulets in Y'shua's day. Also see tefillin.
Pidyon HaBin		Redemption of the firstborn.
	Plerosai	Fill, complete, cause to abound, or consummate, to carry out, to do, to perform and obey.
Poretzet		The Hebrew word for "forcibly entered" (the Greek by-aides-zeh-tie), is poretzet and comes from the Hebrew verb paratz.
Port-zeem		Noun used for "violent men" and is the plural of one who tears down. These are breakers or breachers of a wall or fence.
	Praetorium	The official residence of Pilate.
	Proseuche	Synagogue; in the Greek versions of the Apocrypha they reference "proseuche" or "House of Prayer".
	Psichi'n	Crumbs (little morsels).
Qadôsh		YHWH's holiness ('Q' for Qoph in the Hebrew alphabet).
Qalal		Means to be clear, to shine or to be bright.
Queber		Grave.
Ra		Representing evil ('R' Resh in the Hebrew alephbet as in ra – 'evil').

Hebrew /Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
Rabbi Akiba ben Joseph		Approximately A.D. 15-135. A poor, semi-literate shepherd, he became one of Judaism's greatest scholars. He developed the exegetical method of the Mishnah, linking each traditional practice to a basis in the biblical text, and systematised the material that later became the Mishnah. Rabbi Akiba was active in the Bar Kokhba rebellion against Rome. He believed that Bar Kokhba was the Moshiach (messiah), though some other rabbis openly ridiculed him for that belief (the Talmud records another rabbi as saying, "Akiba, grass will grow in your cheeks and still the son of David will not have come".) When the Bar Kokhba rebellion failed, Rabbi Akiba was taken by the Roman authorities and tortured to death.
Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi		Approximately A.D. 135-219. The Patriarch of the Jewish community, Rabbi Judah Ha-Nasi was well-educated in Greek thought as well as Jewish thought. He organised and compiled the Mishnah, building upon Rabbi Akiba's work.
Rabbi Nachman of Breslov		A.D. 1772-1810. The great-grandson of the Baal Shem Tov Rabbi Nachman of Breslov (sometimes called Bratzlav, Breslau or Bratislava) was the founder of the Breslover Chasidic sect. Breslov is a town in the Ukraine where Rabbi Nachman spent the end of his life, but some say the name Breslov comes from the Hebrew bris lev, meaning "covenant of the heart". He emphasised living life with joy and happiness. One of his best-known sayings is, "It is a great mitzvah to be happy". Collections of his Chasidic tales (or tales attributed to him) are widely available in print. Do not confuse Rabbi Nachman with Ramban.
Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai		He was the youngest and most distinguished disciple of Rabbi Hillel (see above). He has been called the "father of wisdom and the father of generations (of scholars)" because he ensured the continuation of Jewish scholarship after Jerusalem fell to Rome in A.D. 70. According to tradition, ben Zakkai was a pacifist in Jerusalem in A.D. 68, when the city was under siege by General Vespasian. Jerusalem was controlled by the Zealots, people who would rather die than surrender to Rome (these are the same people who controlled Masada). Ben Zakkai urged surrender, but the Zealots would not hear of it; so ben Zakkai faked his own death and had his disciples smuggle him out of Jerusalem in a coffin. They carried the coffin to Vespasian's tent, where ben Zakkai emerged from the coffin. He told Vespasian that he had had a vision (some would say a shrewd political insight) that Vespasian would soon be emperor, and he asked Vespasian to set aside a place in Yavneh (near modern Rehovot) where he could move his yeshivah (school) and study Torah in peace. Vespasian promised that if the prophecy came true, he would grant ben Zakkai's request. Vespasian became Emperor and kept his word, allowing the school to be established after the war was over. The yeshiva survived and was a center of Jewish learning for centuries.
Raca		The expression is probably of Aramaic origin and one which reflects on the intelligence of the one so called. It could mean something like 'blockhead' or 'empty-head'. In our idiom, it might be expressed as 'idiot', 'stupid', 'lame brain', or some similar expression.
Rachatzah		The hand washing ceremony.
Rambam		Maimonides; Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon. A.D. 1135-1204. A physician born in Moorish Cordoba, Rambam lived in a variety of places throughout the Moorish lands of Spain, the Middle East and North Africa, often fleeing persecution. He was a leader of the Jewish community in Cairo. He was heavily influenced by Greek thought, particularly that of Aristotle. Rambam was the author of the Mishneh Torah, one of the greatest codes of Jewish law, compiling every conceivable topic of Jewish law in subject matter order and providing a simple statement of the prevailing view in plain language. In his own time, he was widely condemned because he claimed that the Mishneh Torah was a substitute for studying the Talmud. Rambam is also responsible for several important theological works. He developed the 13 Principles of Faith, the most widely accepted list of Jewish beliefs. He also wrote the Guide for the Perplexed, a discussion of difficult theological concepts written from the perspective of an Aristotelian philosopher.

Hebrew /Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
Ramban		Nachmanides; Rabbi Moshe ben Nachman. A.D. 1194-1270. Ramban was the foremost halakhist of his age. Like Rambam before him, Ramban was a Spaniard who was both a physician and a great Torah scholar. However, unlike the rationalist Rambam, Ramban had a strong mystical bent. His biblical commentaries are the first ones to incorporate the mystical teachings of kabbalah. He was well-known for his aggressive refutations of Christianity, most notably, his debate with Pablo Christiani, a converted Jew, before King Jaime I of Spain in 1263. Ramban could be described as one of history's first Zionists, because he declared that it is a mitzvah to take possession of Israel and to live in it (relying on Num 33:53). He said, "So long as Israel occupies [the Holy Land], the earth is regarded as subject to Him". Ramban fulfilled this commandment, moving to the Holy Land during the Crusades after he was expelled from Spain for his polemics. He found devastation in the Holy Land, "but even in this destruction", he said, "it is a blessed land". He died there in A.D. 1270. Do not confuse Ramban with Rabbi Nachman of Breslov.
Rashi		Rabbi Shlomo Yitzchaki. A.D. 1040-1105. A grape grower living in Northern France, Rashi wrote the definitive commentaries on the Babylonian Talmud and the Bible. Rashi pulled together materials from a wide variety of sources, wrote them down in the order of the Talmud and the Bible for easy reference; and wrote them in such clear, concise and plain language that it can be appreciated by beginners and experts alike. Almost every edition of the Talmud printed since the invention of the printing press has included the text of Rashi's commentary side-by-side with the Talmudic text.
Rav		Great man or teacher.
Rosh HaShanah		Feast of Trumpets, "the head of the year". YHWH calls this day "a day of blowing trumpets". The feast originally had no name and was simply called "Yom T'ruah", 'the Day of Blowing'. Also known as 'Feast of Clamour', or 'Feast of Acclamation'.
Rosh Hodesh		New moon.
Ruach HaKodesh		Holy Spirit. The Ruach haKodesh, Bat-kol and the Shekinah are all feminine in the Hebrew.
Sandek		The person who holds the baby on their knees during the actual circumcision.
Sane		Different Bible versions struggle with the phrase "hated" and some adopt "unloved" or "disliked" as softer phrases. However, the Hebrew word used in the second phrase is "sane", which in its more than 140 uses is always translated by 'hate' or by words indicating 'foe' or 'enemy'. In Aramaic, "sanah" can mean 'to hate' and 'to separate'.
Sanhedrin		A body of 71 leaders. YHWH established the first one under Moses and the body was active in Y'shua's time. It was discontinued before the Fourth Century. During the 6th century, Joseph Caro and Jacob Berab unsuccessfully attempted to revive ordination in Palestine and create a new Sanhedrin. The term 'Sanhedrin' also refers to the fourth Tractate in the Mishnah order of Nezikin. It deals with courts of justice and judicial procedure; it also contains a list of Sins which exclude a person from entering into the afterlife.
Semeion		Sign. A "sign" is a miracle that has special significance that points us to Y'shua.
Shabbat		Sabbath. The Sabbath is a day of rest from Labour.
Shalom Zakhor		Also known as Ben Zakhor: A celebration in the home on the first Friday night after a boy is born, to welcome the newborn.
Sha'atnez		The prohibition of wearing clothing made of any combination of linen and wool.
Shabuwa		The word 'week' is shabuwa in Hebrew and hebdomas in Greek, which means a period of '7 years' in Jewish language – in the same sense when we say decade for 10 years in English.
Shah-are		Word for gate and means, "to cleave, divide...an aperture, and then a gate".
Shaliach		Announcer. From this position we get the term apostle, meaning one who is sent forth to announce the Gospel – a role equivalent to that of our modern missionaries.
Shatz		Other terms found in the sources are sheliah tzibbur ("messenger of the congregation"), abbreviated to shatz (hence the Jewish surname Schatz) and hazan (originally meaning "overseer"), the name most frequently used.
Shaul		Paul. We know him as Saul before Yeshua changed his name to Paul. Sha'ul in Hebrew means 'to demand', and the name Paul in Greek means 'little'.
Shav		The root of the Hebrew word for repentance.

Hebrew /Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
Shavuot		The Feast of Pentecost, meaning fiftieth.
Shekinah		Also Shechina, meaning the Divine Presence or dwelling. The Shekinah, Bat-kol, and the Ruach haKodesh are all feminine in the Hebrew.
Shema		Means “to hear intelligently”. Shema is the very first word found in the great statement of faith, which is quoted directly from Deut 6:4. This statement/prayer is recited every morning and evening. The concept of it is to sit quietly and listen to one’s inner thoughts or to think deeply upon the subject, idea and emotion.
Sheol		Known in most places in the Tanach as Hell.
Shim'on Kefa		Simon Peter. Hebrew name was Shim'on. It is actually Simeon in English, and means “God hears”. Simon is the Greek form. Y'shua gave him a surname, that of Kefa (in Hebrew) or Petros (in Greek.) Both words mean a ‘piece of stone’. In Hebrew, the complete name would be Shim'on Kefa; in Greek it would be Simon Petros, while in English we call him Simon Peter.
Shiva		Mourning for the dead begins on the day of burial and continues until the morning of the seventh day after burial.
Sh'liah tzibbur		A knowledgeable person leading the congregation in prayer Initially filled by an ordinary lay person with greater knowledge, the role developed over time into a profession, the cantor or chazzan.
Shmitta		Sabbatical year.
Shomer		To guard, to protect, or to act as a watchman.
Shomrom		Samaria.
Shomronim		Samaritans.
Shoshevin		Is when specially selected friends of the bridegroom that took messages from the bridegroom to the bride and ministered to the joy of the occasion.
Siddur		Jewish prayer book.
	Simon	Shim'on Kefa.
Sotah		This procedure to bring a man's wife before the Bet Din to get a divorce finalised.
	Stavros	Meaning a "persecution stake". The Dutullet Hebrew Matthew has the word "gallows" in place of "cross".
Sukkot		Tabernacles, temporary dwelling, booths, - also written as Sukkoth, Succot and Succoth – The Feast of Tabernacles.
Synagogue		Assembly. In Sephardi it is called Esnoga, in Yiddish Shul, in Ukrainian kloyz, in Polish shtibl, in Judea and Babylon Bet HaKnesset, in Ezek 11:16 it is called “Little Sanctuary”.
Ta'anit		Fast.
Ta'anit bekhorim		The Fast of the Firstborn from sunrise to sunset.
	Tabgha	Apparently, it is a corruption of the Greek place name "Heptapegon" meaning "seven springs". In time, it was shortened to Et-Tapega and then simply to Tabgha.
Tahor		Clean.
Tallit		Prayer shawl or prayer mantel. Y'shua wore two garments, a ha-LUK (tunic) and a ta-LIT (mantle). The inner garment (the tunic) was a lighter robe, usually made of linen. The outer garment (the mantle) which was draped over the tunic, was a heavy garment – usually woven from wool. The ta-LIT was a rectangular piece of cloth. It was the equivalent of the Roman pallium or the Greek himation which were rectangular; not the Roman toga which was semi-circular.
Talmid		“Talmid” is disciple, which would be far better translated “student”.
Talmidim		Disciples, students or apostles.
	Tameion	Used for the storeroom where treasures might be kept – Closet.

Hebrew /Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
Talmud		The Mishnah is written in Hebrew and the Gemora is written in Aramaic with a mixture of Hebrew. The combination of Mishnah and Gemora is called the Talmud. In total, there are 5,894 folio pages printed in 12 large volumes, the pagination of which is kept uniform in all editions. Of the 63 tractates of Mishnah, 36 are included and interpreted in the Babylonian Talmud. A separate Jerusalem Talmud was also published – this one dealing far more extensively with the rules and regulations of living in Eretz Yisrael, the land of Israel. Talmud has its place: it shows how the rabbis originally interpreted some scripture; and it can help us understand idioms and traditions of the past. A Talmud text is unique in the scholarship of humankind. Each page has a unique "design". It is not written like pages in books today. Each page has a center portion defined by a border. This center portion is the Mishnah reference. Starting beneath the Mishnah is the discussion the Amoraim. Along the outside and bottom borders of the page are commentaries by Jewish scholars spanning centuries. Each commentary has a border of white surrounding it as well. The way the center text and the commentaries are arranged is different for each page. It was believed to be easier for Talmud students to remember a specific text when it was identified with a unique page design. Another interesting feature of Talmud is that it has no punctuation or separation of phrases, clauses or sentences. It is also interesting to note that every Talmud begins with page bet or 2. This is not a mistake. This practice reflects the philosophical belief that no matter how many times one learns the Talmud, there is always something still to be learned. Ultimately, one cannot learn it all. See Mishnah also.
Tamyim		Means “perfect” and does not refer to morally right but bodily perfect, without blemish or blot and of pure stock.
Tanach		The Old Testament of the Bible, the Hebrew Scriptures.
	Tarichaea	See Magdala.
Tchelet		The need for a blue string to be used as part of the 4 fringes in the prayershawl.
Tefillin		Deut 6:8 tells us, “You shall bind them as a sign upon your hand, and they shall be for a reminder between your eyes”. The Hebrew word is te·fi·LIN (the plural of te·fi·LAH, prayer) for leather boxes bound by a leather strap. Tefillin refers to either of the two small leather capsules containing tiny slips of parchment inscribed with the scriptural passages recorded in Exod 13:1-10,Exod 13:11-16,Deut 6:4-9, and Deut 11:13-21. Today, as in Y’shua’s day, the tefillin are strapped on the forehead and the arm. The arm tefillin (shel yad) consists of one compartment containing a parchment on which all four passages are written, while the head tefillin (shel rosh) is divided into four compartments, each of which contains a parchment with one of the four passages written on it. The parchments are hand lettered and may be executed only by an approved scribe. Also see phylacteries.
	Telos	End.
Teruah		Defined as: “clamour, i.e. acclamation of joy or a battle-cry; especially clangor of trumpets, as an alarm:—blow (-ing) (of, the) (trumpets), joy, jubile, loud noise, rejoicing, shout (-ing), (high, joyful) sound (-ing)”.
Teshuvah		The period of repentance of thirty days 30 days before the Rosh HaShanah feast every year, plus the 10 “Days of Awe” between Rosh HaShanah and Yom Kippur.
Tevilah		When a proselyte converted to Judaism, he was required to perform a ritual immersion as part of his “coming back to God”. To totally immerse, complete immersion (t’vilah).
Tikkun		Spiritual repair.
Tomeh		Unclean.
Torah		Commandments, Traditions, Instructions, Revelations or Law.
Torah shel biktov		The Written Tradition, Commandments, Instructions, Law or Revelations.
Tovelei shaharit		The Essenes taking regular immersions were called the "dawn Bathers".
Tôwbh- `ayîn		A good eye, to do good.
Turmah		Ritual defilement.
Tyrapeoen Valley		Also known as the Cheesemakers Valley.

Hebrew /Aramaic	Greek /Latin	Written in English
Tzarrat		A special sickness, only inflicted by YHWH as mentioned in Lev 13 and 14. Only YHWH could give and take away the affliction of Tzarret. Only YHWH knew of the hidden sin and also if the sinner was truly repentant in their heart. The disease would go away only upon true repentance. YHWH gave the priests specific instructions on recognising both the appearance and disappearance of tzarrat. Upon healing, it was recognised that the sinner had been forgiven by YHWH, and they would then have various rituals to perform prior to being allowed to re-enter the community.
Tz'dukim		Sadducees.
Tzemach		Branch or Shoot. In Greek it is Patai and means Rising.
Tzitzits		Tassels of fringes tied to the corners of the tallit (see Kraspedon).
Upsheren		By celebrating the upsheren, the Jews are showing how happy they are that they are Jews and distinct from all the other nations. The upsheren is the time when they start educating the child with other mitzvos (commandments) as well (tzitzits, yarmulke, brachos and more). This, too, is a cause for celebration.
	Via Maris	Located on the highway from the Mediterranean coast to Damascus, is the "Way by the Sea".
Ya'akov		Jacob, meaning "supplanter". Known in English as "James" in the New Testament, which is incorrect.
Yah		Abbreviated for Yahweh (God's true name).
Yarmulke		Head cover.
Yehovah		Name for God. Jewish national name of God.
Yerushalayim		Jerusalem.
Yeshivah		School.
Yetzer ha'r'a		Evil inclination.
Y'hudah		Jude; or also another English form of this name is Judah. In Hebrew, it is Y'hudah and means 'praise'. Judas Iscariot carries the same name. The difference in spellings and pronunciations can be attributed to derivations of the basic name Y'hudah. We have similar forms today. For example, someone named John might be called John, Johnny or Jack.
YHWH		LORD – YaHVeH or YaHWeH – God.
Yitzchak		Isaac.
Yochanan		John.
Yom Kippur		Day of Atonement. The biblical name is 'Yom HaKippurim' meaning: 'the day of covering or concealing' it was also called 'the day of fast' or 'the great fast' or simply 'the fast'.
Yom Tov		Holy Day.
Yoseph		Also written as Yoseif or Yosef – Joseph.
Yovel		The Year of Jubilee.
Y'shua		Also written as Yeshua, Yashua and Yashuah – rather than the Greek name "Jesus".
Y'srael		Israel, meaning "the one who overcomes the world through God".
Zachar'yah		Zacharias.
Zakenim		Elders.
Zakin		A word meaning "old", more in the sense of maturity than age. This person provided counsel to the people and was similar to a modern-day pastor or elder.
Zerah		See Perez.
Zohar		It is a collection of ancient Hebrew texts, much of which are Sod-level commentary on the passages of the Tenakh.

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