"...as it is written, He gave them bread from
heaven to eat."
Exodus 16:4, John 6:31

"I am the bread of life: he that cometh to me
shall never hunger; and he that believeth on me
shall never thirst."
Yeshua HaMashiach, John 6:35
“Then have the trumpet sound everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each of you is to return to your family property and to your own clan.”

(Lev. 25:9-10)

In Hebrew the fiftieth year is called Yovel, a celebration year, jubilee. It is the year of the blowing of the ram’s horn. Thus Yovel got its name from the shofar announcing the beginning of the year. The sound of the Yovel declares the beginning of a new era, the era of God’s favour towards Israel.

In Hebrew the word yovel can be read in two ways. Either "yovel", which means a ram or a ram’s horn like a shofar, or in passive voice "yuval", is led or was led, like in Isaiah 53: “he was led like a lamb to the slaughter... for the transgression of my people he was punished.”

Like a lamb which has a desire to follow its shepherd humbly, to be led, "yuval".

The three names of the shofar are like a road signs on our salvation path: Keren, which is the name including the personal calling, rose up in smoke with the sacrificed ram instead of Isaac (Gen. 22:13).

On Mount Sinai the Israelites heard the sound of that horn, Shofar, for the first time when it called the people to make the change, a turn a round, teshuva.

The nation learned the sound of the shofar when The Lord himself blew the horn (Ex. 19:16).

From that point on the Israelites were commanded to blow themselves on the shofar (Lev. 25:9), until The Sovereign Lord himself blows it, this time the shofar called Yovel (Zech. 9:14).

Then He will announce freedom, liberation, a jubilee to all nations, to all of those who will hear His voice.

Yeshua the Messiah, Jesus Christ, started his ministry in the synagogue declaring with the words of Isaiah 61:1-2 proclaiming good news to the poor, freedom for the captives, release from darkness for the prisoners and proclaiming the year of the Lord’s favor.

Proclaiming the jubilee, which is The Messiah himself. In Him is the heritage restored, the one we lost in the garden of Eden.

In Him is the essence of Yovel.

Markus Nurmesniemi

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The desperate shout of the headline (Galatians 3:1) is very familiar to all of us. Rav Sha’ul’s, a.k.a Apostle Paul’s words filled with concern and temper has ringed in the minds of believers for the past 2000 years. This particular sentence covers a lot of issues. Although it was written to the Galatians in the times long gone, the shout fits to hear for today’s believer, in fact for the believer in every generation. Paul was worrying how the foundation of the Gospel he laid was already crumbling away in Galatia. We can and should have that same concern in every generation as he had.

Every generation is tested. Every generation is threatened with deceit and the danger of walking to the wrong direction. The poor Galatians are our constant reminder of all that, and they remain to be that way through every generation.

Time is the ally of the deceit. In time, the sand, clay and dirt accumulating on the rock will alter the landscape into a different kind of view. In time that landscape can be transformed into almost unrecognizable. Paul warned about this truth twisting phenomenon. In Acts 20:29-30 he said that after his departing shall grievous wolves enter in among you, not sparing the flock, and that they will distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them.

What comes to the Yovel-publication, it is doing it’s part in removing the layers of the ground off the surface on the rock. The rock must stand as a clear and present landmark, without any layers of moss on it.

If we think about Holy Scriptures and their artificial division into “old” and “new” testaments, we’ll automatically arrive at the way of the western Christian thinking. When God sees His declaration as a whole, omnipotent message from the Bible’s first word to the last word, comes a human and dissects Creator’s Word into sections fitting to man’s purposes.

The term “New Testament” is completely an European term, almost without any biblical context. From the Hebrew Bible we can see, that the first covenant(s) made in “Old Testament”, are still valid and improved through the blood of Yeshua on the cross. So the better term here would be “The Renewed Covenant” instead of “New Covenant”, in case of the “New Testament”.

Instead of calling the later scriptures as the “New Testament” they could be called as “Apostolic Writings”. The books of Matthew through Revelation comprise a record by the apostles, or others under their auspices, of the events in the times and afterwards Yeshua walked on the soil of Israel. Yeshua was fulfilling the phrophesies introduced in the Holy Scriptures. So, the “Old Testament” could be called as it is in Hebrew: The Holy Scriptures, or as Tanakh (TaNaKh), an acronym for Torah (the Pentateuch, 5 books of Moses), Nevi’im (Prophets), and Ketuvim (Writings – historical and poetic books). Yeshua himself made use of this Jewish tradition of the three divisions of the Hebrew Scriptures (e.g., Luke 24:44).

Terms are important, because they describe the continuity in God’s plan. But, oh we foolish Galatians... One of the known and esteemed Hebrew roots teachers of all, mr. Eddie Chumney digs into the core of The Letter to the Galatians. For centuries the letter has been read through the glasses of western Christianity. These glasses have partially distorted the thinking concerning the theme of law and grace, and they have helped to create new doctrines out of it. The same goes for the other letters Paul wrote, but in the center of this Christian doctrine stands the interpretations of the letters to the Galatians and Romans. These interpretations are only but a natural consequence when you look at the actions of the early church fathers. They cut off all the doctrinal, cultural and personal ties to their Hebrew brothers. Time sure is an ally for the deceit when you look at these matters. Alongside with Bible teacher Chumney’s thorough article we can dive into these matters with Dr Clifford Denton’s in-depth article about the balance of law and grace. Also Keijo Lindeman’s wide coverage about the Feasts of The Lord is right in there, because the Feasts have also been mossed by the Christian traditions over time. Christian traditions have their roots in pagan celebrations (e.g. Christmas, the Easter, the Midsummer feast in some parts of the world, Thanksgiving Day, Halloween’s Day and so on...). But as Paul warned us that after his departing shall grievous wolves enter in.

I myself will digg into the Letter to the Hebrews with these topics at hand. The restoration of all things is of course a huge topic. Yovel-publication takes its own small steps in this work, step by step. We can be thankful that people like Chumney, Lindeman and Denton have been doing this for decades all ready, by the grace of our Father. I am thankful that this publication can be a part of all that.

The restoration process is a work for all of us. Everybody can ask The Lord what is one’s part in it. So many has done like so before us, and now The Spirit is leading us living in these ages to ask the same.

For my part I can say I’m happy that I’ve also been able to use my experience in the theatre in restoration work. So there are ways, and everyone advances with the ways The Lord gives.

May your autumn be richly blessed in Yeshua!

Markus Nurmesniemi
chief editor
Let us begin:

Throughout the Torah there are descriptions of the blessings which result from obedience, and the curses which are the consequence of disobedience. In a general sense, Galatians 3:13 is saying that Messiah has redeemed us from all of the curses. Specifically, it is referring back to the curse mentioned in verse 10, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” (Deut. 27:26)

In other words, if there is a Torah instruction I am not yet able to perform, or not yet aware of, or if I used to walk in God’s ways but have fallen away, or I’ve never walked in God’s ways, then I am under a curse and in need of redemption.

Yeshua took the punishments for our sin upon Himself. He redeemed us from the curses which are the consequence of our disobedience. But He never took away the blessings that result when we are obedient.

Yeshua has redeemed us from the curse, but not from the blessing, of the Torah!

For many believers in Yeshua / Jesus as the Messiah, one of their major stumbling blocks to embracing their Hebraic heritage in Messiah is trying to understand the meaning of the book of Galatians. For many believers in Yeshua / Jesus as the Messiah, GALATIANS IS THE BIBLE. In other words, what they THINK what Paul is saying in Galatians supercedes what is written in the Torah and the Prophets, supercedes what Messiah said in the Gospels and supercedes Paul’s testimony in the book of Acts that he himself kept the Torah (Acts 21-26).

In a previous HHMI newsgroup article, we saw how the phrase “works of the law” gleaned from the dead sea scroll writings referred to the “Oral Law” and MAN’S interpretation of how to follow the Torah. “Works of the law” did NOT mean following the WRITTEN Torah based upon the insights from the dead sea scrolls where this phrase was used.

In Galatians 3:8-13 it is written:

8 "And the scripture foreseeing that God would justify (made righteous / justify or save) the heathen through FAITH preached the GOSPEL unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

9 So they they which be of FAITH are blessed with faithful Abraham.

10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under a curse: for it is written, cursed is every one that continues not in all the things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

11 But that no man is justified (made righteous / justified / saved) by the law in the sight of God, it is evident: for, the just shall live by faith (Habakkuk 2:4, Romans 1:17, Hebrews 10:38).

12 And the law is not of faith: but the man that doeth them shall live in them (Lev 18:5, Ezekiel 20:11, 13, 21)

13 Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for as it is written, Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree (Deuteronomy 21:23)

When reading the text, it is important to read the text in CONTEXT. Secondly, we need to read the text with a Hebraic mindset and understanding.

What is the setting of these verses of scripture?

The issue is HOW is a person justified or saved in the eyes of God. Paul quotes from the JEWISH scriptures to make his point in the matter.

In Galatians 3:8, Paul quotes from Genesis 12:3.

In Galatians 3:10, Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 27:26

In Galatians 3:11, Paul quotes from Habakkuk 2:4

In Galatians 3:12, Paul quotes from Leviticus 18:5

In Galatians 3:13, Paul quotes from Deuteronomy 21:23

First, notice that Paul is NOT establishing new doctrine. He uses the Jewish scriptures and mostly the first five books of Moses to prove his position. Therefore, the Apostle Paul (Rav Sha’ul) is making a Torah based argument for his position. Rather than invalidating the Torah through the work of the Messiah, the Apostle Paul (Rav Sha’ul) shows how the Torah teaches that a person is justified in the eyes of God not by works but by faith (and the grace/mercy) of God.

Therefore, his doctrine is not new but it is Torah based and centered in the Jewish scriptures.

While Abraham was justified by faith in the eyes of God (Galations 3:9), he KEPT the Torah of God (Genesis 26:5).

James uses Abraham as an example to show us that he was justified by God by faith but his faith was made perfect (complete/full stature) by his works because Abraham acted on his faith because faith without works is dead (James 1:20-23).

The issue being discussed in Galatians 3 is HOW is a person SAVED in the eyes of God? Paul answers the question by quoting from the Jewish scriptures including the Torah and stating that a person is SAVED by God through faith in the work of the Messiah and not by his own works.
Christians often get confused and equate law (Torah) with salvation. This issue should become clear when we examine two Hebrew words, Law (TORAH) and Jesus (YESHUA).

Jesus (YESHUA) means “salvation” (Matthew 1:21)
Law (TORAH) means “instruction”.

When I think of “salvation”, I think of JESUS (YESHUA).
When I think of “instruction”, (how God wants me to live my faith AFTER I am saved by YESHUA / Jesus) then this is TORAH.

The Hebrew word, TORAH (Strong’s 8451) comes from the Hebrew word YARAH (Strong’s 3384) which means “to teach, to point out as aiming the finger”. INSTRUCTION is what a father (our heavenly father) gives to his children (those who are saved by faith in Messiah) in living a life which is pleasing to the father.

Torah DOES NOT save us but it was given by God to INSTRUCT us how to live our life AFTER we are saved. Yeshua / Jesus was/is the living Torah / Word of God made flesh. When He lived his life on this earth, He INSTRUCTED his followers how they were to live their lives on this earth in a way which would be pleasing to our heavenly father.

One of the Messiah’s most memorable instruction sessions is called within Christianity, the “sermon on the mount”. In Matthew 5:16, it is written:

“Let your light (Psalm 119:33:97,111 ... TEACH (YARAH -- 3384) me, O Lord, the WAY (Strong’s 1870 -- (Derek) -- a course of life or mode of action) of your statues and I shall keep it unto the end ... O how I love thy TORAH ... thy word (Torah) is a LAMP (light) unto my feet and a LIGHT unto my path)(Proverbs 6:23 ... For the COMMANDMENT is a LAMP : and the TORAH is LIGHT) so shine before men (by keeping the commandments of God) that they may see you GOOD WORKS and glorify your Father which is in heaven”

So, Jesus / Yeshua said that keeping the commandments (Torah) of God is LIGHT and GOOD WORKS (not talking about salvation).

In Matthew 5:17, Yeshua/Jesus continues by saying:

“THINK NOT that I have come to destroy the TORAH (a Jewish idiom which means to wrongly interpret and apply the meaning of the Torah to your life) but I have not come to destroy (wrongly interpret and apply to your life) but to fulfill (a Jewish idiom which means to correctly interpret and apply the Torah to your life) ...”

In John 14:15, Yeshua/Jesus said:
“"If you love, keep my commandments”
In Revelation 22:12:14 it is written: “And behold, I come quickly; and my REWARD is with me, to give every man according as his WORK (good works) shall be ... BLESSED are they that DO his WORK (good works) shall be his REWARD (in heaven”)...

Therefore, the first issue is to read the text in context. The context of Galatian 3 is HOW is a person saved? The answer is that salvation does not come by TRUSTING in keeping the Torah for your salvation but by the work of the Messiah through his death on the tree.

When we interpret this text from a Hebraic mindset, the CURSE of the law was NOT KEEPING the Torah. Messiah redeemed us from the CURSE of NOT KEEPING the Torah (for salvation sake).

The greatest commandment of God is given in Deuteronomy 6:3-7 as it is written: “HEAR (SHEMA) therefore, Israel and observe to DO it (keep the commandments and statues of God) that it may be WELL with thee (a blessing) that you might INCREASE MIGH-

TLY ... Hear (SHEMA), O Israel: the Lord our God is one Lord: and you shall love the Lord thy God with all thine heart and with all thy soul and with all thy might. And these words which I command thee this day, shall be in thine HEART (the Torah written upon the heart) and you shall TEACH them diligently unto thy children ...”

Yeshua/Jesus said that these words in Deut 6:4-5 is the GREATEST commandment (Matthew 22:36-38, Mark 12:28-30).

So, therefore, Yeshua/Jesus said that the GREATEST commandment is to love God and you show your love to God by keeping his commandments (Deut 6:3-7, John 14:15).

In Deuteronomy 28:1-14 is the BLESSING for KEEPING the commandments of God. In Deuteronomy 28:1-2 it is written:

“And it shall come to pass that if you will HEARKEN (SHEMA) diligently (Deut 6:4-7) unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe and to DO ALL his commandments which I command you this day that ... all these BLESSINGS shall come on thee and overtake thee ...”

In Deuteronomy 28:15-68 specifies the CURSES for BREAKING the commandments of God. In Deuteronomy 28:15 it is written: “But it shall come to pass, if you shall NOT hearken (SHEMA) unto the voice of the Lord thy God, to observe to DO ALL his commandments which I command you this day that ... all these CURSES shall come upon thee and overtake thee ...”

In Deuteronomy 30:15-19, God reiterates that BLESSINGS will come upon his people for KEEPING His commandments and CURSES for NOT keeping His commandments as it is written:

“See, I have set before thee this day LIFE and GOOD and DEATH and EVIL. In that I command this this day to LOVE the Lord they God (the greatest commandment ... Matthew 22:36-38, Mark 12:28-30) to walk in his ways (1870 = Derek ... which is a course of life or mode of action) and to KEEP his commandments and his statues and his judgments, that thou mayest LIVE and MULTIPLY ... BUT if your heart turns away, so that you will NOT HEAR (SHEMA) ... I will DENOUNCE you this day ... I call heaven and earth to record this day against you, that I have set before you LIFE (keeping the Torah and the commandments of God) and DEATH (breaking the Torah and the commandments of God) BLESSING (for keeping) and CURSING (for breaking): therefore CHOOSE LIFE (keeping the Torah and the commandments of God) that both you and your seed may live”

Therefore, the CURSE was for BREAKING the commandments of God. The BLESSING was for KEEPING the commandments of God. But, KEEPING the commandments of God DOES NOT SAVE you in the eyes of God. The Torah POINTS you and sets the standard of God to show your need for the Messiah while at the same time reveals and INSTRUCTS us how to live our lives in a way which is pleasing to God.

The Torah is The Tree of Life

In the Garden of Eden, there were two trees. One tree was called the TREE OF LIFE (Genesis 2:9). In Proverbs 3, we see that the TO- RAH is called a TREE OF LIFE. In Proverbs 3:17-18 it is written: “My son, forget not my TORAH but let thine heart KEEP my commandments ... her ways are ways of pleasantness and all her paths are peace. She is a TREE OF LIFE to them that lay hold of her: and happy is every one that retaineth her”

But one may say, isn’t Proverbs 3 also talking about wisdom? In Deuteronomy 4:1, 5-6 it is written:

“Now therefore HEARKEN (SHE- MA) O Israel, unto the statues and unto the judgements which I TEACH you for to DO them that you may LIVE ... Behold, I have taught you statues and judgments, even as the Lord my God commanded me ... KEEP
Hebraic mindset, the above truth does not negate the roll of the Torah in the life of a believer in Yeshua/Jesus as Messiah because God's word states over and over and Yeshua/Jesus himself states that the GREATER BLESSING that God will give to His people (apart from salvation) will be unto those who keep the Torah of God.

Galatians 3:13 begins, “Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the Law...” What could be clearer? The Torah is a curse and Christ has redeemed us from it. Isn’t that what it says?

Nowhere else in the Bible is the Torah called a curse. On the contrary, the very first Psalm begins, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the Torah of the Lord, and in His Torah he meditates day and night.”

And Shaul/Paul, even when writing about how sin had destroyed God’s commanding of the Torah to deceive us, nevertheless says, “Therefore the Torah is holy...” (Rom 7:12)

The Torah of the Lord cannot be both holy and a curse, so what is Galatians 3:13 saying?

Throughout the Torah there are descriptions of the blessings which result from obedience, and the curses which are the consequence of disobedience. In a general sense, Galatians 3:13 is saying that Messiah has redeemed us from all of the curses. Specifically, it is referring back to the curse mentioned in verse 10, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” (Deut. 27:26)

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In this article, we are going to try and study the meaning of the phrase: “... the law was added ...” KJV Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made; and it was ordained by angels in the hand of a mediator.

This verse is traditionally interpreted to mean that the “Law” was given at Mount Sinai until the coming of the Messiah. After the death of the Messiah on the tree, the “law” loses its purpose.

Is this really what Paul was trying to explain in Galatians 3:19 ??

Was the Law Added Because of Transgressions?

In order to understand whether is makes sense to interpret these words to mean that the LAW was ADDED because of TRANSGRESSIONS, we need to realize several things.

Is is possible for the law to be added because of transgressions?

WHAT IS TRANSGRESSION?

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

SIN = TRANSGRESSION OF THE LAW

IF the LAW was ADDED BECAUSE of TRANSGRESSION then it is NOT possible to sin! You can’t ever transgress / sin if the law didn’t exist prior to Mount Sinai because sin is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4). Therefore the LAW could NOT have been added because of TRANSGRESSION because the law needs to exist in order to sin which is the transgression of the law (1 John 3:4)

THE TORAH IS ETERNAL

KJV Psalm 119:44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

KJV Psalm 119:160 Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

KJV Isaiah 40:8 The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever.

TORAH = WORD OF YHVH

Many in traditional Christianity view that the Torah is separate from the Word of YHVH. Biblically, the Torah and the Word of YHVH are synonymous terms.

KJV Psalm 119:105 NUN. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

KJV Proverbs 6:23 For the commandment is a lamp; and the law is light...

WORD = LAMP = Psalm 119:105 COMMANDMENT = LAMP = Proverbs 6:23

WORD = LIGHT = Psalm 119:105 LAW = LIGHT = Proverbs 6:23

KJV Isaiah 2:3 And many people shall go and say, Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the LORD, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for out of Zion shall go forth the law, and the word of the
LORD from Jerusalem.
ZION = JERUSALEM
TORAH = WORD OF YHVH
ABRAHAM KEPT THE TORAH OF YHVH

KJV Genesis 26:5 Because that Abraham obeyed my voice, and kept my charge, my commandments, my statutes, and my laws.

MESSIAH HAS REDEEMED US FROM THE CURSE OF THE LAW
KJV Galatians 3:13 Christ hath redeemed us from the curse of the law, being made a curse for us: for it is written, Cursed is every one that hangeth on a tree:

If Messiah redeemed us from the CURSE of the law, what is the curse of the law? The curse of the law is the PENALTY for DISOBEDIENCE to the Torah.

KJV Deuteronomy 27:26 Cursed be he that confirmeth not all the words of this law to do them. And all the people shall say, Amen.

CURSED = NOT DO THE TORAH
DISOBEDIENCE TO TORAH BRINGS DEATH

What if we don’t obey the Torah? We deserve death.
KJV Romans 6:23 For the wages of sin is death...
For the wages of sin = transgression of the law (I John 3:4) is death.

MESSIAH DIED ON THE TREE TO FORGIVE US OF OUR SINS
Messiah died on the tree to pay the penalty for NOT obeying the Torah.
Because Messiah died on the tree to pay for the penalty of our sin, should we continue sinning (disobeying the Torah) ???
KJV Romans 6:1 What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound?
KJV Romans 6:2 God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein?

Works of the Law vs Hearing of Faith
KJV Galatians 3:5 He therefore that ministereth to you the Spirit, and worketh miracles among you, doeth he it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?

ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

KJV Galatians 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.
KJV Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.
So FAITH DIDN'T COME AFTER the law was given since Abraham was justified by faith.

THE WORLD WAS CREATED BY FAITH
KJV Hebrews 11:3 Through faith we understand that the worlds were framed by the word of God, so that things which are seen were not made of things which do appear.

ABEL WALKED IN FAITH
KJV Hebrews 11:4 By faith Abel offered unto God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, by which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts: and by it he being dead yet speaketh.

NOAH WALKED IN FAITH
KJV Hebrews 11:7 By faith Noah, being warned of God of things not seen as yet, moved with fear, prepared an ark to the saving of his house; by which he condemned the world, and became heir of the righteousness which is by faith.

MOSES WALKED IN FAITH
KJV Hebrews 11:24 By faith Moses, when he was come to years, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter;

BEFORE FAITH CAME ????
KJV Galatians 3:23 But before faith came, we were kept under the law
Is Paul really trying to say that faith didn’t come until after the law was given when the world was created by faith, Abel walked by faith, Abraham walked by faith, Noah walked by faith and Abraham walked by faith?

CONTEST .... CONTEXT ..... CONTEXT

Works of the law = Not of faith
KJV Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

THE LAW IS NOT OF FAITH?
KJV Galatians 3:12 And the law is not of faith: but, The man that doeth them shall live in them.
Did Paul really mean that the LAW is not of faith?

CONTEST .... CONTEXT ..... CONTEXT

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KJV Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is every one that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

FAITH = BELIEVING THE WORD / TORAH OF YHVH
KJV Galatians 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

THE PROMISE WAS MADE IN THE TORAH
KJV Genesis 17:7 And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee.

KJV Galatians 3:16 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.

MOUNT SINAI CAN’T ANNUL THE PROMISE IN THE TORAH MADE WITH ABRAHAM
KJV Galatians 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred
and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

THE PROMISE = JUSTIFIED BY FAITH THROUGH THE MESSIAH KJV Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

KJV Galatians 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

INHERITANCE = PROMISE = JUSTIFIED BY FAITH THROUGH MESSIAH KJV Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

THE PROMISE IN THE TORAH WAS MADE WITH ABRAHAM AND THE MESSIAH THAT THE SEED OF ABRAHAM WOULD BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH JUST AS ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH KJV Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

KJV Galatians 3:8 And the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the heathen through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed.

KJV Galatians 3:18 For if the inheritance be of the law, it is no more of promise: but God gave it to Abraham by promise.

KJV Galatians 3:7 Wherefore then serveth the law? If the law was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made ...

So what was added?

As mentioned earlier, the LAW was NOT ADDED BECAUSE OF TRANSGRESSIONS because the law has to exist in order to sin / transgress (Sin = Transgression of the law) (I John 3:4)

What is the TRANSGRESSION that CAUSED something to be ADDED that didn’t exist in the time of Abraham?

WHAT IS THE TRANSGRESSION?

It was the sin of the golden calf.

WHAT GOT ADDED AS A RESULT OF THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF?

The Levitical priesthood.

KJV Exodus 32:19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

KJV Exodus 32:26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’S side? let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

CONTEXT .... CONTEXT ..... CONTEXT

WHAT SERVES THE LAW?

KJV Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? Law = Levitical Priesthood

KJV Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions ...

The Levitical priesthood was added because of the sin of the golden calf.

THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD WAS OUR TUTOR TO BRING US TO MESSIAH

KJV Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The law = Levitical Priesthood which was added because of the transgression of the golden calf.

MESSIAH IS A PRIEST AFTER THE ORDER OF MELCHEZEDEK

KJV Hebrews 7:11 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? KJV Hebrews 7:12 For the priesthood being changed ...

KJV Hebrews 7:14 For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spake nothing concerning priesthood.

KJV Hebrews 7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.

KJV Hebrews 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

The New Covenant is the Torah written upon our hearts

KJV Hebrews 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

The Holy Spirit was GIVEN to help us to OBEY THE TORAH KJV Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Summary

WORKS OF THE LAW VS HEARING OF FAITH

In the book of Galatians chapter 3, Paul is comparing and contrasting being justified by “works of the law” (understood from the dead sea scrolls to mean MAN’S INTERPRETATION of the Torah (Oral Law) versus being justified by faith.

ABRAHAM JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

KJV Galatians 3:6 Even as Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.

SpirituAL CHILDREN OF ABRAHAM = JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

KJV Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

WORKS OF THE LAW = CURSE OF FAITH

KJV Galatians 3:10 For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse: for it is written, Cursed is everyone that continueth not in all things which are written in the book of the law to do them.

THE PROMISE IN THE TORAH WAS MADE WITH ABRAHAM AND THE MESSIAH THAT THE SEED OF ABRAHAM WOULD BE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH JUST AS ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

KJV Galatians 3:7 Know ye therefore that they which are of faith, the same are the children of Abraham.

Mount SinaI CAN’T ANNUL THE PROMISE IN THE TORAH MADE WITH ABRAHAM AND MESSIAH THAT THE SPIRITUAL SEED OF ABRAHAM ARE JUSTIFIED BY FAITH JUST LIKE HOW ABRAHAM WAS JUSTIFIED BY FAITH

KJV Galatians 3:17 And this I say, that the covenant, that was confirmed before of God in Christ, the law, which was four hundred and thirty years after, cannot disannul, that it should make the promise of none effect.

THE LEVITICAL PRIESTHOOD WAS ADDED BECAUSE OF THE SIN OF THE GOLDEN CALF

KJV Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions, till the seed should come to whom the promise was made ...

KJV Exodus 32:19 And it came to pass, as soon as he came nigh unto the camp, that he saw the calf, and the dancing: and Moses’ anger waxed hot, and he cast the tables out of his hands, and brake them beneath the mount.

KJV Exodus 32:26 Then Moses stood in the gate of the camp, and said, Who is on the LORD’S side? Let him come unto me. And all the sons of Levi gathered themselves together unto him.

Context .... Context ..... Context

What serves the law?

KJV Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? Law = Levitical Priesthood

KJV Galatians 3:19 Wherefore then serveth the law? It was added because of transgressions ...

The Levitical priesthood was added because of the sin of the golden calf.

The Levitical priesthood was our tutor to bring us to Messiah.

KJV Galatians 3:24 Wherefore the law was our schoolmaster to bring us unto Christ, that we might be justified by faith.

The law = Levitical Priesthood which was added because of the transgression of the golden calf.

Messiah is a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

KJV Hebrews 7:11 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?

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KJV Hebrews 7:17 For he testifieth, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchisedec.
KJV Hebrews 7:22 By so much was Jesus made a surety of a better testament.

THE NEW COVENANT IS THE TORAH WRITTEN UPON OUR HEARTS
KJV Hebrews 8:10 For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, saith the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people:

THE HOLY SPIRIT WAS GIVEN TO HELP US TO OBEY THE TORAH
KJV Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

Should believers in the Messiah follow Torah?

Therefore was Paul teaching in Galatians 3 that once Messiah came that we are no longer to keep the Word of YHVH / Torah? No.
Paul was teaching in Galatians 3 FROM THE TORAH that Abraham was justified by faith just as all believers in the Messiah and that the Levitical priesthood was added because of the sin of the golden calf to be our tutor to bring us to the Messiah so that we no longer would follow and trust in the “works of the law” (MAN’S INTERPRETATION of the Torah (Oral Law).

Under the Law?

KJV Galatians 4:21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law? While it is important to read ALL of scripture in CONTEXT, it is especially important to read the book of Galatians in context. Many Christian leaders and members of the body of Messiah believe that Galatians CONTRADICTS what was written by Moses and what was said by the Messiah. They attempt to reconcile this APPARENT contradiction by the doctrine of “progressive revelation”. Basically, “progressive revelation” teaches that one part of the Bible can supersede or do away with what was written or said in another part of the Bible.

The core of the problem with understanding the book of Galatians is the ASSUMPTION that it contradicts what is written by Moses and the teachings of the Messiah. When I was a teenager and attended a service at a Methodist church, the pastor made the statement that what Paul wrote contradicted what Messiah taught. He then made the statement that we should believe Paul over the Messiah because Paul had the “greater revelation” of the “mystery of the gospel”. Was the Methodist Pastor correct in having this view?
Of course the basic problem with the viewpoint of this Methodist Pastor was that he was trying to understand the writings of Paul through the CHURCH DOCTRINE which he had already established in his mind rather than allowing the Word of YHVH to interpret itself.

OBEYING YHVH IS BONDAGE?
When I sent out the last teaching article on Galatians, I had a Pastor write to me and tell me that Paul was saying in Galatians that obeying the Torah brought us into bondage. This Pastor also wrote and told me that he believed and taught the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation for over 30 years. What AMAZES me is that we have been so programmed in traditional Christianity to view the Bible (especially the book of Galatians) with an anti-Torah viewpoint that I wonder how we don’t THINK what we actually SAY and SAY we BELIEVE.
Do we really believe that OBEYING the word of YHVH brings us into bondage?
The Torah is the Word of YHVH. Does the Bible say that if we OBEY the WORD of YHVH / Torah that we get into bondage? Doesn’t the Bible say that when we SIN we get into bondage?

WHAT IS SIN?
KJV John 3:4 Whosoever committeth sin transgresseth also the law: for sin is the transgression of the law.
SIN = DISOBEYING TORAH
SIN = (DISOBEYING TORAH) = BRINGS US INTO BONDAGE
The Bible actually teaches us that SIN brings us into BONDAGE. However, traditional Christian leaders tell us that if we OBEY the Word of YHVH / Torah (which is NOT sinning ... I John 3:4) that we get into bondage.

OBEYING YHVH BRINGS FREEDOM
What the Bible really teaches is that OBEYING YHVH (which means obeying His Word / Torah) brings us freedom and sets us free.

THE LAW OF LIBERTY
James referred to the Torah as liberty which comes from OBEYING the Torah.
KJV James 1:25 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.

THE TRUTH SETS US FREE
KJV John 8:31 Then said Jesus to those Jews which believed on him, If ye continue in my word, then are ye my disciples indeed; KJV John 8:32 And ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.

THE TORAH IS TRUTH
KJV Psalm 119:142 Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth. KJV Malachi 2:6 The law of truth was in his mouth, and iniquity was not found in his lips: he walked with me in peace and equity, and did turn many away from iniquity.

JACOB IN BONDAGE FOR DISOBEYING TORAH
We are told in the Bible that the house of Jacob got into bondage (prison house) for NOT obeying the Torah.
KJV Isaiah 42:22 But this is a people robbed and spoiled; they are all of them snared in holes, and they are hid in PRISON HOUSES: they are for a prey, and none delivereth; for a spoil, and none saith, Restore.
KJV Isaiah 42:24 Who gave JACOB for a spoil, and Israel to the robers? did not the LORD, he against whom we have sinned? for they would NOT WALK in his ways, neither were they obedient unto his LAW.

TRUST IN YHVH OR TRUST IN MAN MADE TRADITION?
KJV Matthew 15:9 But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.
KJV Jeremiah 17:5 Thus saith the LORD; Cursed be the man that trusteth in man, and maketh flesh his arm, and whose heart departeth from the LORD.
KJV Jeremiah 17:7 Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD, and whose hope the LORD is.

UNDER THE LAW?
KJV Galatians 4:21 Tell me, ye that desire to be under the law, do ye not hear the law?
TEACHING FOR DOCTRINES THE COMMANDMENTS OF MEN = UNDER THE LAW
SIN = DISOBEYING TORAH
BONDAGE = DISOBEYING TORAH
LIBERTY = OBEYING THE WORD OF YHVH / TORAH
ABRAHAM HAD TWO SONS
KJV Galatians 4:22 For it is written, that Abraham had two sons, the one by a bondmaid, the other by a freewoman.
The son of the bondmaid was Ishmael. The son of the freewoman was Isaac.
KJV Galatians 4:23 But he who was of the bondwoman was born after the flesh; but he of the freewoman was by promise.
Ishmael and Isaac represent the two natures in man. Ishmael represents the flesh / sin nature. Isaac represents the walking in the spirit of YHVH.
KJV Galatians 4:24 Which things are an allegory: for these are the two covenants; the one from the mount Sinai, which gendereth to bondage, which is Agar.
Cast out the bondwoman

KJV Galatians 4:30 Nevertheless what saith the scripture? Cast out the bondwoman and her son: for the son of the bondwoman shall not be heir with the son of the freewoman.

How do you cast out the bondwoman (the flesh)? You crucify the flesh by walking in the spirit. KJV Romans 13:14 But put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfill the lusts thereof.

KJV Galatians 5:24 And they that are Christ’s have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts.

CHILDREN OF THE FREEWOMAN
KJV Galatians 4:31 So then, brethren, we are not children of the bondwoman, but of the free. If we are children of the freewoman (Isaac), we are born after the spirit. Those who are born of the spirit obey Torah.

BORN AFTER SPIRIT = OBEY TORAH

THE INDEWELLING HOLY SPIRIT = OBEDIENT TO THE LAW

KJV Ezekiel 36:26 A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you an heart of flesh.

KJV Ezekiel 36:27 And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and ye shall keep my judgments, and do them.

KJV Romans 7:22 For I delight in the law of God after the inward man:

KJV Hebrews 12:22 But ye are come unto mount Sion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, Ishmael = Flesh / sin nature = Mount Sinai = Torah written on heart of stone (disobey Torah) Isaac = walking in the spirit = Mount Zion = Heavenly Jerusalem = Torah written upon a heart of flesh (obey’s Torah)

UNDERSTANDING GALATIANS: THIS IS AN ALLEGORY:

KJV Galatians 4:24 Which things are an allegory ...

Because they try to interpret the book of Galatians through their own established church doctrines (the traditions of men), traditional Christianity has misunderstood the ALLEGORY that Paul speaks of in Galatians 4.

Paul was actually explaining the difference between someone who puts their trust in man-made tradition (church doctrines / oral law) and who disobeys Torah verses someone who puts their trust in Yeshua the Messiah and obeys Torah.

Man-made tradition / oral law brings us into bondage. Trusting in Yeshua as Messiah and obeying Torah brings us into liberty and freedom.

Galatians 5:1-4 says: Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Messiah (Christ) has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage.

Indeed I, Sha’ul (Paul), say to you that if you become circumcised, Messiah will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law.

You who have become estranged from Messiah, you who seek to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace.

To our modern ears, unfamiliar with the religious culture of Sha’ul’s time, this can sound like a warning against all Torah observance, and circumcision in particular. If we become circumcised, we will suddenly take on a debt that cannot be paid off. If anyone actually wants to do anything the Torah says, it is a sure sign they have come under bondage, fallen from grace, and become a stranger to the One who loves us.

But once we know that the Perushim (Pharisees) used circumcisions as the final act when converting a Gentile to their form of Judaism, and that it was a public commitment to keep the whole Torah, things begin to get clearer.

And when we understand that what the Perushim meant by “Torah” included not only the books of Moses, but also what Yeshua (Jesus) called “the tradition of men” (what later became the Talmud), things become clearer still.

Sha’ul wasn’t warning against the Biblical instruction of circumcision, or anything else written through Moses. Rather, he was saying don’t exchange the gift of a life-changing relationship with Messiah for our own “works of Law”: mere rule-keeping (especially rule-keeping by compulsion -- our own or others’).

Look at the word “again” in verse 1. The Galatians were primarily non-Jews. They didn’t observe Torah before being given faith in Yeshua. So the Torah couldn’t be the yoke of bondage they were again being entangled in (and similarly, the “days and months and seasons and years” dispersed in Gal. 4:9-10 are not the Biblical festivals, either). So what was that bondage? Perhaps they were again giving away responsibility for their own spirituality. Perhaps they were in danger of exchanging the Traditions of the Pagans for the Traditions of the Perushim. Or of trading one worship-by-appeasement for another, rather than finding rest in YHWH’s love.

Lastly, verse 4 doesn’t say that wanting to do what is written in the Bible is the problem, but seeking to be justified by doing those things. As they are written on our hearts, we do the things instructed in Torah, not in order to be saved, but because we delight in them.

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Written by: Markus Nurmesniemi

Among the Christians has for centuries persisted a narrow, polarized teaching concerning the relationship between law and grace. The teaching of the early church fathers, dismissing the Hebrew roots, often obscured and changed the concepts related to the Holy Scriptures, which can only be understood in their original context. This context is Hebrew culture, language, and history, as well as a Hebrew way of thinking and living out the Scriptures.

This doctrine, forged during centuries of Christianity, lives strong as regards to Hebrews as well. The most common interpretation of this letter is that it was meant as a warning to early Christians: don’t fall back under the law of Moses. Thus the entire Torah is nullified. This way of interpreting parallels with the way Christianity interprets the Letters to the Romans and to the Galatians, for instance: Gospel replaces the law, the Torah.

Most Christians think and teach that Hebrews repeats many times the same view Paul exposes in his letters, according to which grace has replaced law. Note that this is people’s interpretation of what Paul wrote, not Paul’s. If we were to ask Paul, he would tell us that he had written about how Torah should be obeyed now that Yeshua has come and we are saved by faith through grace. But when a certain doctrine has been hammered into the minds of the audience for many centuries, a mode of thinking and a presumption has been born, upon which everything else in the Bible has been built. This is true for the majority of Christendom.

Christians have read the Letter to the Hebrews without seeing the true context. That is why Hebrews is often referred to as “the most difficult book in the New Testament”. Some have even wished to remove it from the Bible. To be able to find the real message of the letter we have to go back to the beginning, to the true source of all nourishment. We have to go back to the Hebrew roots of faith and to the first century where the letter was written.

Who wrote this letter?

Some English translations put as foreword “Apistle Paul to the Hebrews”. This does not appear in all versions of the Bible, and it seems to have been added afterwards. There are, however, strong hints about the author of the letter. For instance, King James Version, chapter 10:34, says: “For ye had compassion of me in my bonds, and took joyfully the spoiling of your goods…”, whereas the Finnish translation of 1933/38 states the same lines: “For with prisoners you have suffered and with joy taken the spoiling of your property…”, and The Complete Jewish Bible: “For you shared the sufferings of those who had been put in prison. Also when your possessions were seized, you accepted it gladly.” The line of thought is different, but the KJV interpretation narrows the number of potential candidates. Furthermore, in chapter 13:23 the author writes: “I want you to know that our brother Timothy has been released. If he arrives soon, I will be able to see you with him” (Raamatu kansalle). We know the close relationship that existed between Paul and Timothy - so if Timothy comes to you, it is as if I (the author of Hebrews), through him, am able to see you and rejoice. Paul begins his first and second letter to Timothy: “To Timothy, my true son in the faith” and “To Timothy, my dear son.” We also know that Timothy was with Paul while Paul was a prisoner in Rome. Moreover, the author of Hebrews ends his letter by “Those from Italy send you their greetings.”

Among the authors of the New Testament only Paul had a deep and complete knowledge of Temple service and of the Feasts of the Lord. Paul was a learned Pharisee and member of Sanhedrin (the highest tribunal of the Jews). He had made his studies under the chief Rabbi Gamaliel with excellence. Paul knew by heart the Torah, i.e. the five Books of Moses, before his 20th birthday, if not already at the age of 12. Torah filled his life for years, he lived from it and from its teaching while the other authors of the NT were mostly common workmen and fishermen.

Why was the letter written and to whom?

When we study Hebrews it is of utmost importance to place it in its original context: to whom it was written, what the core message of it was, and in which era, and in which cultural and historical connection it was written. Let us consider these points as regards to Paul’s letters to Corinthians. These letters were written as an answer to the letter Corinthians had sent to Paul and where they exposed different problems and questions concerning faith and the right way to walk in faith. As Corinthians’ letter to Paul has not, however, been preserved, today’s readers miss the context almost completely. Different kinds of theologies and doctrines are built which have nothing to do with the issues Corinthians wanted to discuss, namely Torah, Judaism, Israel, and the writings of the prophets. These were the themes Paul wrote about, filtered via Yeshua. The same applies to Hebrews. Because Paul, as a learned Pharisee, used subtle hermeneutics as building material of his writings, some people find it difficult to understand the depths of his complex and rich thought. Today the result is clearly seen among the western Christianity in particular.

Peter has a word or two to say about Paul’s deep-going and complex reasoning that, for an unaccustomed reader, leaves plenty of room for misunderstanding and distortion. “Therefore, dear friends, as you look for these things, do everything you can to be found by him without spot or defect and at peace. And think of our Lord’s patience as deliverance, just as our brother Sha’ul [Paul] also wrote you, following the wisdom God gave him. Indeed he speaks about these things in all his letters. They contain some things that are hard to understand, things which the un instructed and unstable distort, to their own distraction, as they do the other Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:14-16, Complete Jewish Bible, D.Stern).

The fact that the letter to Hebrews is addressed to Jewish believers in Yeshua, or “Nazarens”, makes it clear that it was originally written in Hebrew, although only its Greek translation has been preserved to us. Remember that Yeshua spoke in...
To be able to understand more deeply the message and heart of Hebrews, it is essential to have more knowledge of the Torah, of its instructions concerning temple service, priestly ministry and feasts of the Lord (Leviticus 23). The feasts of the Lord are, in many ways, prophetic pictures of the good things to come, the coming fulfillment. If today’s reader does not understand the nuances of feasts and temple service the same way the people did to whom the letter was addressed in the first century, he or she misses a great deal of the message of Hebrews. We must bear in mind that the letter was written to Jews, who had been raised in a culture which was built around temple service and cycle of feasts.

A modern reader of this letter does well in dismissing from his or her mind all so called “Christian” interpretations and teachings, hard as it may seem. Hebrews is meat for mature people, strong food for believers, and not milk for babies. Let us therefore leave the rudiments of Messiah’s doctrine and advance into full maturity.

**Psalm 110 at the heart of the letter**

The third verse of Hebrews 1 states that the Son of God, after having provided purification for sins, sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. King David had had from God a vision that he describes in Psalm 110: “The Lord says to my Lord: “Sit at my right hand until I make your enemies a footstool for your feet.”” King David was a prophet, spokes-man of the Almighty. It was David who had the Ark of the Covenant brought to the City of David, and who designed the foundations for temple service even before his son Solomon built the temple. David ordered psalms to be part of the service, telling which psalms were to be sung and in which order. It was David who had the revelations of the Messiah and of His coming. Temple service with its various aspects points to the coming Messiah.

“The Lord said to my Lord” reads in Hebrew “JHWH said to my JHWH”. Zechariah 14:16 tells us that after the great final war all survivors from the nations that fought against Jerusalem will go up to Jerusalem, year after year, to worship the King, JHWH of hosts (Tsevaot), to celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. JHWH of hosts (Tsevaot) is the expression of God’s grace, His Son Yeshua, Lord of lords and Lord of hosts.

Psalm 110 goes on, verse 4: “The Lord has sworn, and will not change his mind: You are a priest [cohen] forever, in the order of Melchizedek” (melch=king, zadik=righteousness). This is the theme around which the Letter to Hebrews winds. Psalm 110 is a memory kick that keeps popping up. But these words of the psalm date back past David as far as to Genesis (14:18-20). Melchizedek, king of Salem, came to meet Abram who had overcome the heathen kings, and blessed him. God has had His plan for priesthood from the very beginning, and this is what Hebrews also points to.

Melchizedek brought bread and wine, and blessed Abram (high father), who a few verses later is called Abraham (father of a multitude of nations). The bread and wine Melchizedek brought was like a rehearsing, a picture of the Holy Communion of the Messiah and of His future work of redemption. Yeshua said Himself that Abraham rejoiced at the thought of seeing His day (John 8:56).

Levitical priesthood and sacrifice of animals were added to the Torah because of people’s trespasses (worship of the golden calf, Exodus 32). Levitical priesthood and sacrificial system served as substitutes until the future final atonement would take place.

The Covenant on Mount Sinai was sealed with blood (Exodus 24:6-8), and because people broke that covenant, the punishment was death. Only blood could atone for sins, but the future atonement was already waiting in the horizon, in the Messiah. The blood of sacrificed animals could never make atonement, but the blood of sacrificed animals would be a continual reminder of the debt of sin that would later be atoned for by Yeshua’s cross and blood.

**A renewed – not a new – covenant**

The priesthood was added so that all would be within the range of sacrificial decrees, until the arrival of the One who would give freedom, i.e. the Messiah. The first covenant was in no way bad or imperfect, the trouble was with people. People were not able to keep the covenant. People made the first covenant inadequate. Levitical priests were added to remind people of this. Human priesthood is incomplete, performed by carnal and limited people. Let us remember that what we see here is a divine picture, a rehearsal, a shadow, an appearance of all the good things to come in the Messiah.

Let us not forget either that the new covenant, about which Jeremiah also prophesied, and that is quated in Hebrews 8:8-12, is literally translated from original Hebrew “renewed” covenant. It means that it is not a brand new or entirely different covenant. Greek or English translations are without importance, what really matters are the original words and meanings. This goes for all that is written in the Bible.

We see a foreshadow of the renewed covenant (as well as of the whole revelation of the Bible) when Moses returns to Mount Sinai after he broke the stone tablets of the Testimony made by God, at the sight of the people worshipping the golden calf (Exodus 32:16,19). The second time God tells Moses to chisel himself the stone tablets, where God would rewrite the laws (Exodus 34:1). The laws are the same as the first time, but this time they are written in tablets chiselled by man, in the stone of man.

This is the original covenant which is renewed, or modified and adjusted. And it is done, even this time, with the tribes of Israel and Judah. Gentile believers, Christians, will partake in this covenant grafted in (Romans 11). The Church/Christianity has never replaced Israel nor will it ever replace it.

The roots of the new covenant lie on Mount Sinai where the covenant was originally made in connection of the giving of the Torah. At the same time Israel was given the authority to serve as a kingdom of priests to all nations, provided that it kept the covenant and its laws (Exodus 19:4-6). This takes us back to Genesis 10 which shows us the family lines of Noah’s sons who came to be the forefathers of all the nations of the earth (the earth was divided) after the Flood. Chapter 11 tells us about the tower of Babel. When God saw what people were doing He scattered them all around the world and gave each nation its own language. JHWH stopped Nimrod’s plans to create his own, unified, world order (cf. New World Order) and thus prevented also global worship of a Babylonian sun god. We shall read later that all this (division of lands, building of the tower of Babel ja different languages) occurred in less than 780 years after Noah and the Flood.

Deuteronomy 32:8-9 reads: “When the Most High gave the nations their inheritance, when he divided all mankind, he set up boundaries for peoples according to the number of the sons of Israel. For the Lord’s portion is his people, Jacob his allotted inheritance.” We see that this promise was given long before there were sons of Jacob. The plan of the Holy One of Israel was, however, that Israelites, as kings and priests, would return these scattered nations back to the only true God. This battle is going on still today, but first we
need to make Israel see the truth. Believers have a hard job trying to make Israel abandon their man-made rules and traditions, oral Torah and Kabbala and the like, and return back to the Word of God, and to be followers of the Living Torah, Yeshua, in order to fulfill the task given to Israel.

Yeshua, the High Priest

The Letter to Hebrews teaches us that the order of Melchizedek is a priestly order that precedes and exceeds Levitical priesthood. Hebrews 7:9-10 tells us that even Levi, who himself received the tenth, paid the tenth through Abraham (while in the body of his ancestor) to Melchizedek, to the one who, without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, is to be compared to the Son of God, and he remains a priest forever (7:3).

God Himself gave the oath that His Son would be a priest forever, whereas the Levites became priests without any oath given over them (7:20-24).

When we consider closer the order of Melchizedek, it is possible to assume that Melchizedek himself was not without father or mother, but this priestly order itself was without father or mother. Priesthood was passed on from the times of the foundation of the earth without genealogical succession. The first high priest was Adam, the eldest righteous man alive (before the Fall). Priesthood has ever since passed on to the eldest righteous man alive until Jacob. At his time division came about; he had 12 sons of who Judah (David – Yeshua) was to carry the kingly line (melek), and Joseph the line of righteous ancestor) to Melchizedek, to the one who, without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, is to be compared to the Son of God, and he remains a priest forever (7:3).

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Verses 8 to 12 of the first chapter of Hebrews quote the psalm 45, which is a song of praise in the king’s wedding. The author also quotes psalms 8, 102 and 34, and writings of Isaiah, which speak about the coming change: “In the beginning, O Lord, you laid the foundations of the earth and the heavens are the work of your hands. They will perish, but you remain...You will roll them up like a robe; like a garment they will be changed.” The author is all the time referring to the Holy Scriptures, that is, to the Tanach or the Old Testament.

What would be changed was temple service, priesthood and its various forms. The important message of Hebrews concerned all Jewish believers in Yeshua in the first century. When Hebrews starts to discuss this theme, Gentile believers have difficulties in understanding what is meant, as they have no understanding of temple service or service in the Tabernacle, and they often get it wrong.

Redemption of the Day of Atonement

This change had been prophesied beforehand. All this relates to Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement, in particular. (Leviticus 16:11 and 16:23.) This day is the holiest day of the year in Judaism. In Jerusalem, during the Temple period, offering was made in the temple for the people of Israel. It was the only day of the year the high priest was allowed to enter the Most Holy Place to perform the ritual atonement for sins. In times before there was any temple, the offering was made in the tabernacle. Yom Kippur represents national atonement, and Passover, Pesach, represents personal atonement.

According to the Torah the Aromanian high priest was to sacrifice a bull, take of its blood and go into the Holy Place, take incense from the altar, then enter the Most Holy Place and put the incense on the fire before the Lord so that the smoke of the incense would conceal the cover of the Ark of the Covenant lest the glory of God should blind him. The high priest dipped his right forfinger in the blood of the bull and sprinkled it on the right (right) corner of the cover seven times (Leviticus 16:13,14). This was the atonement of sins committed by the high priest and by his household.

Two chosen goats were waiting outside, male, not yet one year old. The Rabbies say the goats had to be twins, that is, identical. The idea being that when you look at one of them, you will see the other one, too. The priest was to cast lots: one of these goats was to be dedicated to God, YHWH, the other one to Aazael (which means “scapegoat”, a goat that carries away the sins, which in this context is probably the right meaning, but it also refers to a spirit that was believed to live in the desert). (Leviticus 16:8-10.)

The high priest then put his hands over the goats confessing over them the sins of the people. The high priest slaughtered the goat dedicated to YHWH by cutting its throat and taking its blood in a bowl. Then he returned to the Most Holy Place proceeding the same way as before and sprinkling the blood (Leviticus 16:15). We have no idea if the priests understood why all this was done, but no one dared depart from what they were told to do. They were aware, though, that it was a divine rehearsal, and they might have had a hunch that it was a picture of what was to come later.

Let us approach the situation mentioned above step by step through following examples. We remember how, in the desert, YHWH told Moses to strike the rock to get living water spring out of it (Exodus 17:1-6). The next time God told Moses to speak to the rock (‘speak of the rock’ in some Hebrew manuscripts), but, instead, Moses in a fit of rage, struck the rock again (Numbers 20:7-12). God graciously let the water spring again, but because of his behaviour Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land. This rock was of course the foreshadow of the Messiah, Yeshua, who was struck once (crucified) and whose gospel was to be proclaimed next. Moses violated the divine rehearsal, the picture of what was to come, and was punished for it.

The significance of the Ark of the Covenant in redemption

In the tabernacle and later in the temple of Solomon, the Ark of the Covenant represented the heavenly throne of the Almighty. It was the most sacred altar in the whole world. During the period of the Second Temple the Ark was no more in the temple. It had disappeared, but we will see it, according to Revelation 11:19, in the heavenly temple, after the sound of the seventh trumpet, when the Lord’s saints have been gathered together.

According to the books of Macabees in the Apocrypha the prophet Jeremiah had the Ark transferred into safety from Solomon’s Temple (the first temple 962 BC-586 BC) when the Babylonians were sieging Jerusalem.

Second Macabees 2:4-8: “The same records also tell us that Jeremiah, acting under divine guidance, commanded the Tent of the Lord’s Presence and the Covenant Box to follow him to the mountain where Moses had looked down on the land which God had promised our people. When Jeremiah got to the mountain he found a huge cave and there he hid the Tent of the Lord’s Presence, the Covenant Box, and the altar of incense. Then he sealed up the entrance. Some of Jeremiah’s friends tried to follow him and mark the way, but they could not find the Cave. When Jeremiah learned what they had done, he
During the First Temple Period, the high priest had sprinkled the blood of sin offering seven times on the east corner of the Ark. During the Second Temple period (516 BC – 70 AD) it wasn’t possible any more.

They had to get a “substitute” for the Ark, so they chose a goat. The priest laid his hands and the sins of the people upon this scapegoat that then was led out of the city to the desert and thrown down from a cliff. As the journey was longer than one Shabbat journey, the job was carried out as a relay race, so that nobody needed to walk more than what was allowed on a Shabbat.

At the same time, the scarlet red ribbon that had been round the goat’s neck was hung on the main door of the Jerusalem Temple. Rabbinic tradition tells us that when the goat had fallen from the cliff in the desert, the red ribbon hanging on the temple door turned white as snow. This way God let the people know He had accepted the sin offering and wiped off the people’s sins. The same was repeated year after year. Something changed, though. According to the writings of the Rabbies (Talmud, Tractate Yoma 39b) during the last 40 years of the Second Temple (destroyed in 70 AD), the red ribbon of the scapegoat stopped turning white. Every year thousands, tens of thousands, maybe hundreds of thousands of people gathered to Jerusalem to witness this Yom Kippur offering. Everybody knew about that ribbon and the offering and what it meant for them; how God forgave His people and wiped off their sins. But when Yeshua had completed His work on earth, on the cross, the ribbon ceased to change colour. Some understood the connection, but those who didn’t were shocked when the red ribbon didn’t turn white. It is easy to imagine the agitation it caused when it happened for the first time: the Feast of Tabernacles was approaching, people were getting ready to go up to Jerusalem, and everybody was stirred up. The ribbon had remained red. Only those Jews who believed in Yeshua understood and went on living with Shalom peace in their hearts. Instead, the scribes, pharisees and sadducees searched fervently for what had gone wrong. What had changed?

Indeed, what had changed?

Finally the rabbies decided that prayer, good works, and donations to the poor and the widows would replace the temple worship and bring atonement. This decision is valid in Israel even today. The thought might be noble, but the rabbies refuse to see the change Yeshua brought about with His work on the cross and His resurrection. Only faith in Yeshua and the Holy Spirit can make one understand this change.

Returning to the message of Hebrews, it is enlightening to know this rabbinic story about the scapegoat and the red ribbon. The rabbies have, without knowing or wanting, given us additional light as we seek to understand the letter. Tertullian (approx. 155-230), one of the early church fathers, discussed this issue in his earliest writings, and although his original texts have been destroyed, other early historians and theologians have quoted his texts.

Yeshua’s Holiness and Authority

Yeshua was born as a human being through virgin birth. The seed came from the Holy Spirit. The blood came from a holy source, The Father God Himself, because life is in the blood (Leviticus 17:11), and Adam’s, a human being’s, blood had become pure at the Fall. Yeshua had His carnal being from a woman, His virgin mother, Miriam. The seed comes from the father and with the seed comes the blood. Everybody has his or her blood from the father’s side. The foetus, and the child, grows in the mother’s womb, but the foetus gets its blood already in the seed that comes from the father. At the beginning the foetus takes nutrients from the mother’s blood, but the data stored in the seed, the information from the man’s blood, is what forms the blood of the child that the foetus will be.

This is an earthly picture of the heaven, of course. Our high priest Yeshua overcame the temptations as a human being (though He was perfect God at the same time), and thus fulfilled the Torah. I emphasize: He did not abolish the Torah, He fulfilled, or completed, the Torah.

“Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law and the Prophets [Torah]; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished” (Matthew 5:17,18, NIV).

Hebrews 1:4 tells us how Yeshua became so much superior to the angels “as the name he has inherited is superior to theirs”. If we have studied Hebrew culture, we understand the authority in Yeshua’s name. In ancient Israel, and the whole area of the Middle East, earned reputation and authority constituted the authority and power of the name’s bearer. Acting or working under a name of great authority, or within its influence, opened doors and opportunities for the one acting under that name. The name “Yeshua” means salvation, deliverance and redemption, and because this name was given by heavenly authorization, praying and acting in that name means authority over all evil powers.

Only priesthood and temple service changed

Levitical priesthood underwent changes due to Yeshua’s resurrection. Yeshua became our eternal high priest who redeemed us from our sins once for all; who was tempted as a man like men are, but who remained sinless and pure. Yeshua completed the law, and the laws concerning priests were changed according
to the order of Melchizedek. The change does not, then, concern the entire Torah, it only concerns priesthood and temple service (Hebrews 7:12). It is a grave error to claim that the change concerns the Torah, the law, as a whole. Although we have freedom in Yeshua, we are not allowed to commit adultery or to kill (‘murder’ in original Hebrew) or give false testimony against our neighbour etc, are we?

God’s Signature in His Word

There is an awesome, symmetrical, message woven in the Torah that you can only see if you read it in the Hebrew language. This message is God’s personal seal, evidence of Torah’s eternity. Take every 50th letter (the number 50 represents e.g. time of rejoicing and salvation, and the year of Jubilee, Yovel) in Genesis and in Exodus, and you will get the word T O R A H over and over again. In Numbers and Deuteronomy you’ll get the word Torah backwards: H A R O T. These two first and two last books point to the book in the middle, the third book, Leviticus. In Leviticus, take every 7th letter (number 7 represents God’s perfection) and you will get God’s name YHWH over and over again (יהוה). This is something only the Almighty Creator can do. It is like the Author’s signature which proves that He is behind the Holy Scriptures. And His Word will never disappear. His Torah will never disappear.

Hebrews was meant as a vital information about the change of the priesthood. This letter was addressed to the first century Nazareans who, wavering in their faith, had returned to the offering rituals of the first covenant. Thus they ignored the omnipotence of Yeshua’s blood sacrifice, “crucifying the Son of God all over again and subjecting Him to public disgrace” (6:6). Why did this happen to them? We’ll find the answer in Acts, e.g. The centuries long tradition and religious structure was so strong in Israel that new-born Christians may have felt pressure and oppression to return to the way of fathers in religious matters. Furthermore, the Acts tell us that false brothers had infiltrated the community of believers to coax Nazareans who “belonged to ‘the Way’” back to observe the traditional Torah rituals trying to make of the Torah (especially oral Torah) the source of salvation. These false brothers caused confusion also among the converts, Gentiles who had converted into Judaism, and then received Yeshua as their Saviour. All this was apt to cause in Gentile believers a negative attitude towards the Torah and Israelites.

The most controversial subject of that time was if the observance of the Torah in itself leads to salvation, or if one should observe the Torah out of obedience after having been redeemed by grace through faith in Yeshua. Or was faith in Yeshua enough? This is the issue still among today’s believers (cf. Western Christianity versus Messianic Believers).

Encouraged by the Heroes of Faith

The Letter to the Hebrews has explained us the change in priesthood; now the born again, royal, priesthood (1 Peter 2:9) offers thanksgiving, prayers, worship and adoration to Him. This includes repentance. There is no need for animal sacrifice; Yeshua made it useless once for all. Let us then offer to God continually a sacrifice of praise, fruit of the lips that confess His name. Let us not forget to do good and to share what we have, for with such sacrifices God is pleased (13:15-16).

Chapter 11 focuses on men of God, examples of strong faith. Through their example the author of the letter encourages those weak in faith and inclined to return to rituals, to keep the faith in Yeshua, the one perfect sin offering. And in chapter 12:1-2 he admonishes them (and us): “Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us throw off everything that hinders and the sin that so easily entangles, and let us run with perseverance the race marked out for us. Let us fix our eyes in Jesus, the author and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy set before him endured the cross, scorning its shame, and sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

A couple of verses later he draws once more a warning picture, comparing Esau and those Hebrews who would return to sacrifices: “See that no one is sexually immoral or is godless like Esau, who for a single meal sold his inheritance rights as the oldest son” (12:15-16). “You have not come to a mountain that can be touched and that is burning with fire...But you have come to Mount Zion, to the heavenly Jerusalem, the city of the Living God...to Jesus, the mediator of a new [renewed] covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel” (12:18,22,24).

Levitical priesthood was inadequate; it showed us that there was like a great debt which needed to be paid in full once for all. Levitical priesthood was a divine rehearsal, a shadow of the good that was coming in the Messiah.

We need to understand this when we hear Christians speak scornfully of the Levitical priesthood and consider it as a carnal act, a ritual done under the law. All in all it was the thing God had ordered them to do, given in the Torah. The purpose of Levitical priesthood was to help people understand the meaning and purpose of heavenly things. The Torah was given by YHWH, the Israelites observed it seeking to do everything according to YHWH’s will. In the course of time the Israelites added their own rules and traditions to the service, thus spoiling it. It is written that a veil covers the hearts of the Israelites until the time set by God comes (Romans 11:8,25-27).

The word of the Bible in its wholeness, from the first to the last letter, points, veiled and directly, to the Son of God, Messiah Yeshua. To Him who is the Living Torah, to Him who during His earthly life showed how to live according to the Torah, in the way the Word tells us. This way of life springs from the core message of the Torah: Love the Lord, your God, with all your heart and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and your neighbour as yourself. On these two commandments hang the law and the prophets. (Matthew 22:40)

“Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him” (John 14:21).

Post Scriptum: the Ark of the Covenant and the Blood of Yeshua

“Seventy ‘sevens’ [weeks] are decreed for your people and your holy city to finish transgression, to put an end to sin, to atone for wickedness, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy and to anoint the most holy” (Daniel 9:24).

When Yeshua died on the cross, the Gospels tell us that there were earthquakes. According to the late archeologist Ron Wyatt, a deep crack opened in the ground through which Messiah’s blood ran straight upon the Mercy Seat of the Ark, on the western (left) corner of it, to be precise. This way the renewed covenant was sealed. How was this possible?

As we have pointed out before, the prophet Jeremiah transferred the Ark into safety from Solomon’s Temple when the Babylonians sieged Jerusalem in 586 BC. Evidently Solomon had had a secret underground chamber net dug in the neighbourhoods.

It seems, based on Ron Wyatt’s discovery, that God had it arranged that Yeshua’s work on the cross was made perfect 600 years later: the Messiah’s holy blood could drip all the way through the crack in the ground straight upon the Ark of the Covenant. At the light of the Torah this was
how a perfect sin offering was to be completed: the atoning blood was sprinkled on the Ark. We saw this rehearsed in Leviticus 16 when the priest, at Yom Kippur, having slaughtered the animal sacrifice didn’t let the blood fall into the ground but took it in a bowl. He then took the blood of the animal to the Most Holy Place, where the blood was sprinkled on the eastern corner of the Ark.

Ron Wyatt, who died in 1999, says that he had a word of knowledge that guided him to the hiding place of Temple treasures on Mount Moriah, outside the wall of Jerusalem on the grounds of the Garden Tomb.

Wyatt recalls having said, out of the blue and to his and his friend’s astonishment, on these grounds in 1978: “That’s where Jeremiah’s Grotto (cave) is and that’s where the Ark of the Covenant is.” Near the Garden Tomb is a place called the Place of the Scull (Golgotha), Gulgolta in Hebrew. There has been much controversy about the places of crucifixion and burial, but this evidence proves, according to Wyatt, that the place is the right place. In 1842 a German scholar named O. Thenius came to the same conclusion.

We are told in the Word that “at the place where Jesus was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb, in which no one had ever been laid” (John 19:41).

According to the Israeli Archeology Authorities “digs were made on the area in 1883 by the British General C. Gordon, and the General recognized the place as Golgotha. In 1980s Ron Wyatt made digs on the area and found underground chambers. R.Wyatt made in the 80s digs and many underground cavities were discovered.” (www.hadas-hot-esi.org.il/report_detail_eng.aspx?id=327&mag_id=111)

General Gordon wrote his memoirs concerning his digs in Golgotha: “I suspect that the Ark is in Jeremiah’s Grotto. According to Jewish tradition the Ark would be under the Dome of the Rock, but I believe it is under the real altar, the Scull, where they say Jeremiah wrote the Lamentations. The Ark of the Covenant is there.”

Ron Wyatt, for his part, says that on January 6th 1982 he reached through a borehole a narrow cave chamber that was about 6 meters below the probable place of Yeshua’s crucifixion. At the place of crucifixion he found a crack made by an earthquake, and the crack led to a chamber where he saw the Ark and other items of the treasures of Solomon’s Temple, such as the Menorah, gold-plated acacia wood frames, and the big sword of Goliath (1 Samuel 21:9).

The Ark was put in a stone sarcophagus or chest to keep it safe from humidity, but the cover of the chest had a crack in it through which Yeshua’s blood could run on the Ark. It is very likely that the Ark can’t be brought up from the depths of the rock. The diggings have collapsed in many places, and in spite of supporting constructions, progress in them is impossible.

This is very convenient to Israeli Government as the Ark of the Covenant is an explosive issue in a country as tense politically and religiously. The situation in Jerusalem is especially strained.

Was what happened to Cain and Abel a shadow of the ground opening to receive the blood of Yeshua on Golgotha: “Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground which opened its mouth to receive your brother’s blood from your hand” (Genesis 4:11), and of the exile of the Jews in 70 AD? Remember what Yeshua said: “Moses wrote about me” (John 5:46).

You can find plenty of documents and material about Ron Wyatt and the Ark of the Covenant on internet. Or you can go to the website of the Museum bearing his name, www.wyattmuseum.com.

Let us remember that everyone should study and assess these things in the Spirit. Everything must be tested before the Lord, of course.

One thing is sure, though: “the Messiah came as high priest of the good things to come, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not part of this creation... He entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption” (Hebrews 9:11-12). Everything will be revealed and put to place with His coming.

(The Book of Hebrews quoted from New International Version, NIV.)
Law and Grace

Do We Ask The Right Question?

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Written by:
Dr Clifford Denton

The law of Moses is often set against the grace of God as if they are in opposition. It is true that we can read the New Testament as if this were so. For example, John writes, “For the law was given through Moses; grace and truth through Jesus Christ” (John 1:17). Paul writes, “For he (Jesus) himself is our peace abolishing in his flesh the law with its commandments and regulations” (Ephesians 3:3-15). Paul also writes “Christ is the end of the law so there may be righteousness for everyone who believes” (Romans 10:4). In particular, Paul seems to support the view that the law should be put aside in an age of grace, when he writes, “for sin shall not be your master, because you are not under law under grace” (Romans 6:14).

The book of Galatians can appear to argue against the law so much that believers in Jesus Christ should put it out of their minds completely. Yet Paul, who wrote the letter to the Galatians, also explains in another letter, “So then, the law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good” (Romans 7:12), and James, another Apostle, lifts the law high when he states, “But the man who looks into the perfect law that gives freedom, and continues to do this, not forgetting what he has heard, but doing it - he will be blessed in what he does” (James 1:25).

Does Paul contradict himself? Is James in opposition to Paul so much that they are seen as teaching different things? Has Paul got a message of freedom for the Gentiles while James is concentrating on the Jews to whom the law still applies? Are believing Jews different from believing Gentiles in this respect? How does this link with David’s great psalms of delight in God’s law? - “Oh I love your law! I meditate on it all day long” (Psalm 119:97). Does the New Testament reader only need to give a passing glimpse, at what seem to be matters of little relevance today, as he reads these psalms? What about the book of Leviticus? Is this ancient history or relevant reading?

The Church in a State of Lawlessness

If there is something about the life of grace, within the New Testament context, which leads to freedom, then why can so much still go wrong in the church? Indeed, what message does the church have to a world which is sinking ever deeper into lawlessness? By what standards does a nation honour God and what will lead to His blessings on a nation? How does one train a child in an age of permissiveness? When and where do we need to apply principles from the law of Moses? If our principles of life are not based on this law then what principles should we apply?

Moreover, have we understood, in this very important phase of history, when the Jewish people are returning to the Land of Israel, how law and grace relate to one another in the plan of salvation and the purposes of God as worked out through history? What, indeed, is the full Gospel message to the Jew and to the Gentile? What reference is to be made to the law, or which parts of the Old Testament teaching should be emphasised and for what reason?

We must be careful to ask the right questions concerning law and grace. If we contrast law with grace as if acknowledgement of grace implies that the law is to be totally disregarded, or if we teach that meditation on the law of God (which was administered through Moses) implies that the grace of God is not sought after or acknowledged, then I would suggest that the wrong question has been asked, or that there is some confusion about the New Testament message.

Paul’s letters do not lead to the conclusion that an age of grace has come which makes the law totally irrelevant. This conclusion could cause Christians to neglect the teaching of the Old Testament and be one of the causes for our separation from the roots of our faith. This was not Paul’s intention, and misunderstanding of the New Testament message of Paul could even lead to deceptive influences arising in the church, and these influences could give licence for many wrong things in the name of freedom.

With no parameters by which to check our lives then the whole list of sins of the flesh of Galatians 6:19-21 would simply creep upon us. There can be an even more subtle deception wherein a so-called life of grace is lived within legal constraints. Even the deep principles of Christian living, including grace, faith, praise, worship, prayer, humility and unity can be lived in a framework of bondage which is associated with legalism.

The reason is that it is not so much the life of grace and law that is to be contrasted as the life of flesh with the life of the spirit. Even praise of God and attendan-
the Gospel message by personal revelation, as well as his commission to be an Apostle to the Gentiles. He was astonished that the message which he had brought to the Galatians had been perverted through the teaching of false apostles.

**Law Doesn’t Save, Only Faith Does**

We see here the danger of wrong emphasis of the law. The Galatians had been persuaded by certain legalistic Jews (Judaisers) that they had to obey the law of Moses (particularly circumcision) if they were to be saved. Paul makes it quite clear (and this is his main point in the whole letter) that there is no salvation to be found in the keeping of the law, but only by faith in Christ (Chapter 2:15-21).

He emphasises his point by reminding his readers that the Holy Spirit was given to them as a seal of their salvation when they believed, not as a result of obeying the law (Chapter 3:1-5 with cross reference to Ephesians 1:13-14). Paul’s exhortation (Chapter 3:1), which conveys the urgency of the letter, should leave us in no doubt that there is no legalistic route to salvation. It is by our failure to obey the law, and everyone has failed (Cross reference to Romans 3:11-18), which establishes our need of salvation through the atoning blood of Jesus Christ, and it is a perverted message which inclines us to think that working harder to obey the law can result in salvation.

Paul goes on to point out how the law was intended to lead us to Christ, like a schoolmaster (a person who accompanies us to school; Chapter 3:24-25). The emphasis is on the saving faith in Jesus Christ, this faith being the same for both Jews and Gentiles. This faith, as Paul shows clearly (Chapter 5), leads to freedom. This freedom is to be found in Christ and not in works of the law. Clearly, as discussed by way of the parable of Hagar and Sarah (Chapter 4), Paul exhorts his readers that attempts to achieve salvation through works of the law bring bondage and not freedom. Paul then goes on to say (Chapter 5:16-26) that believers should live by the Spirit. It is in this section that he contrasts not law and grace, but the acts of the flesh and of the Spirit. He urges his readers to live a free and successful life by the Spirit. Life in the Spirit brings right fruit and not bondage to law, a bondage which also results in failure.

In other words, the law is not the conscious influence on those who truly live by the Spirit, not because the law is negated but because the fruits of the Spirit are automatically pleasing to God, while a life in the flesh is a life that can only be controlled by corrective laws, against which the flesh wars. The life of the Spirit, however, is not a life of lawlessness, but one which pleases God because the whole outlook on life has changed, and because one is in fellowship with God, step by step through life.

Desires are different, direction of life is different and it is possible to live this life in freedom. This is the high objective set by Paul. Yet he also goes on to point out that believers can sin (Chapter 6:1), wherein there is also a gentle remedy to be applied by the spiritually mature.

Sin, of course, is identifiable by the works of the flesh which in turn are identifiable by the principles of the law. Thus the emphasis of Paul’s letter is on the way of salvation which leads to freedom and life in the Spirit, not on bringing down the value of the law, which he actually upholds. It is a simple faith in Christ which is accompanied by the gracious gift of God’s Holy Spirit which is Paul’s major and magnificent emphasis. But the value of the law in identifying sin is not at stake here. Neither are the high principles of the law.

Indeed, the message to the Galatians would not contradict the view that a truly Spiritual life would be in accordance with essential aspects of the law which do apply to believers and do please God, but which cannot be achieved by fleshly striving.

A study of the book of Hebrews makes it clear that the ceremonial aspects of the law (the Temple, the sacrifices, the High Priesthood and even the higher meanings of the Feasts, including the Sabbath rest) are all fulfilled in Jesus. The book of James complements Paul’s message, upholding the value of the moral aspects of the law as a mirror to our heart’s condition (James 1:22-25). There is no contradiction in these things, merely particular facets of truth.

The law cannot save us, but it can give us a conscience and identify sin so that we can be led to Christ, where we can grow to maturity without condemnation. In this growth to maturity, the law will continue to identify the right path.

**Freedom in The Lord Doesn’t Mean Lawlessness**

On the right path there is freedom and security as we live a life in the Holy Spirit. We can come off this right path when we are not fully able to hear or obey the inner promptings of the Holy Spirit. Off the path, our sins are covered by the mighty sacrifice of Jesus Christ, though there is something more to be said by Paul in the book of Romans on this matter, namely that we would be mistaken to interpret this as freedom to sin in careless ways (Romans 6:1). The amazing grace of God is that, through Christ, we are able to fail as we grow while having our hearts set on a life of the Spirit, which is itself free of failure when lived to the utmost. The rights and wrongs of the law are not reduced but enforced in this way.

Does Paul emphasise the merits of grace through faith in Jesus Christ, leaving us to guess whether he would have anything good to say about the law? We have shown that he emphasises the heart of the Gospel message, his main concern, but that it is not in contradiction to the message of James, who was an Apostle to the Jews and has the matters of the law close to home. The whole of the New Testament provides the comprehensive message and so James and Paul stand side by side, as well as with the writings of others. Paul certainly stood against legalists and even against Peter when he slipped back into legalism, but he also upholds the value of the law and there is no ambiguity in the whole message (the whole truth) of the New Testament.

Indeed, there are occasions on which Paul specifically acknowledges aspects of the law which are relevant to him at a particular time (For example, Acts 15, 1 Timothy 5:18, Acts 16:3, Acts 21:22, Acts 18:18). In none of these places do we read that the law can save, of course, which would be in contradiction to Paul’s clear teaching elsewhere.

In the Epistle to the Romans Paul develops the major theme of salvation through faith and is incisive in his message that there is one means of salvation for both Jews and Gentiles and that this is through the same saving faith. Again, as in Galatians, he shows that the contrast is between the life of the flesh and the life of the Spirit. These are the two real issues to be addressed. Chapter 6 describes the struggles with sin (the flesh life), while Chapter 8 describes the glorious free secure life of the Spirit, which is the goal of believers. Again, as in Galatians, it is not so much grace that is set against law, as if one cancelled the other in principle, it is the grace of God which removes the curse of the law (Galatians 3:13) a curse which is upon those who cannot obey the law by works, yet try to do so, and that is everyone who has not received the gift of the Holy Spirit.

In other words, Paul’s message is concerned with the effects of the law on us not on the content of the law. Time and again he reminds us of the value of the law. It is holy, righteous and good (Chapter 7:12, 16). While showing that there is no favouritism in the plan of salvation (Chapter 3:29), both
Jews and Gentiles being part of one body, he also emphasizes that God will be faithful to His covenant with the Jews (Romans 9,10,11). Here we see the height and depth of God’s love and faithfulness and we enter into the awesomeness of what has been accomplished in Christ. No wonder Paul’s emphasis is on the plan of salvation through faith and grace, and no wonder we can miss lesser emphasis on the standing of the law among believers.

The path to the spiritual life is opened and seen to be a life without condemnation while the believer is seeking to grow to maturity. The attitude that believers should have to one another is to be non-legalistic while encouraging spiritual growth. The emphasis of Romans 14:1-8 like Colossians 2:16-19 might appear to cancel injunctions of the law which were previously upheld as good. This is not the case. The emphasis is on the freedom to grow to maturity in Christ, rather than a specific agenda (though the items on the agenda are not presented as unimportant, of course). If one person has grown into the life of faith beyond another this is no reason to condemn the other person, who through grace is given room to grow. Growth is important, but the learning process is one borne out of freedom to grow and not condemnation in immaturity.

Paul is confident that we should encourage one another towards spiritual maturity and this in freedom. He is confident that the Holy Spirit will lead into all truth (John 16:7,13). Correction through love is, of course, to be taught (2 Timothy 3:16), and the teaching of the law is as relevant as ever, being a full part of Scripture.

Of course, there is to be no ambiguity about the fact that Jesus Christ has brought an end to the need for sacrifice for sins as laid out in the Books of Moses. The letter to the Romans contains a similar thread to that of Galatians. We see that a main pointer is towards the believer’s life in the Spirit, the result of saving grace. Yet neither in Romans nor Galatians, nor anywhere else in Scripture, are we to suppose that the law is to be put away by us or will not be brought to our remembrance by the Holy Spirit. It still has value and is to be a mirror to our lives and a check on our path, without condemning us, while we are growing to maturity.

### The Value of Word Studies

The Old Testament has been translated from Hebrew (and a little Aramaic). It was written by authors who conveyed information from a world that was quite different from most of the present day world, and with a language that had particular emphasis and meanings. The early Apostles, including Paul, were all from this background and even though the New Testament comes to us in Greek there are thought patterns to be discerned which relate to the Hebrew mind.

Thus when we read our translations of the Bible, while being in absolutely no danger of missing the fundamental truths of the faith, we are wise to study or be tutored in some of the background meanings which are otherwise hidden. The richness of the message of Scripture can be sought in this way and understanding can be deepened.

Thus some of the misconceptions about topics, including law and grace, can be removed by deeper studies of the meaning of words and the message which they were intended to convey. It is wise to begin with Old Testament (Hebrew) word studies because many of the New Testament Greek words will relate to meanings of the Hebrew equivalents.

We can come to some very speedy conclusions about the background meanings of law and grace when this is begun, which help with our overall perceptions. In particular we are conscious of a God who does not change, and whose love and grace are embroidered over the whole of history.

The “Old Covenant” was given by no less loving and gracious God than the God of the “New Covenant”. The “Old Testament” pointed to Jesus Christ no less than the “New Testament” reveals Him.

### Israel as an Example for the Nations

Thus we see that it was an act of grace which brought the law to the people of Israel. “He has revealed his word to Jacob, his laws and decrees to Israel. He has done this for no other nation; they do not know his laws.” (Psalm 147:19-20). What an astounding fact the psalmist understood, that God had selected a nation to show the right path and begin to work through them to what we, in our day, would see completed in the plan of salvation through Jesus Christ.

God showed them not only His righteous requirements but also the way of forgiveness through sacrifice, foreshadowing the atonement through the blood of Jesus. It was grace that made provision in the Old Covenant for what would be fulfilled completely through Jesus. God’s holy requirements of the law, simply stated but profoundly difficult for human flesh to keep, were declared with provision for the sin that would be exposed through these very same laws. All of this was a work of grace that God should even begin to work like this among men.

### The Word “Law” Doesn’t Explain It All

When we took into the meanings of the words behind our translations all of this can be richly revealed. We can see clues to it from our translations. Psalm 19, for example, demonstrates that there is a wide spectrum of meaning to be attached to the requirements of God, which are not just contained under the one word, “law”. In English we use the various words law, statute, precept, command, ordinance (verses 7 - 9) to show there are shades of emphasis on these legal entities pronounced and taught by God. This goes well beyond the normal division of the law into Ceremonial, Moral and Judicial. We see that there was a giving out of God’s heart to man which showed both His holiness and His desires for holiness among men. Certainly there is a legal framework, but we must be careful that we don’t impose upon our understanding the characteristics of the legal framework of the Gentile nations, such as the Romans, and misunderstand that a righteous, holy God was behind His own revelations to mankind, but also a loving God who was already prepared, at the giving of the Commandments at Sinai, for the sacrifice of His own Son centuries later.

Moses, himself knew of the different elements of teaching in what God had revealed through him, and at the time of Moses, more words were needed to describe these elements than simply “law”. The English translation of Deuteronomy 4:13-14 illustrates this, using the words covenant, Ten Commandments, decrees and laws. As we read Paul we must have in mind the different aspects of the teaching brought to Moses. Indeed, the general word that is translated from the Hebrew as “law” is “Torah”, which carries the meaning of teaching or instruction, a much softer emphasis than the legalistic framework which is often associated with it and probably was applied by the legalistic Jews who had gone into error in Paul’s day.

The characteristic of God which echoes through the pages of the Old Testament is “hesed” which is translated with many hints of meaning, such as love, kindness, loving-kindness, mercy as well as being one of the words that mean grace. It was God’s loving-kindness that brought the Torah and who through His same character brought salvation through His Son and sent His Holy Spirit. The New Testament uses words based on the Greek “Charis” to convey the qualities of God in this plan of salvation, but we must be careful to
understand the character of God through His works and the words used to describe Him in both Old and New Testaments. Otherwise we revert to the meanings of words as they are translated into our own language and miss the depth of meaning of the Bible’s message, whether through Paul, or Moses, or David.

We see a grace that is deep and loving that transcends one particular application of a word, and covers the whole of God’s work including the giving of the Torah as well as the message of Paul. The Torah shows us God’s heart by His grace as well as having the potential to reveal the heart of man.

Jesus’s Attitude to the Torah

We have argued that the New Testament teaching of Paul is chiefly concerned with the way of salvation and he does not teach followers of Jesus to be antinomians (those who would say that the law was of no effect and completely ignore it, thus tending to encourage lawlessness). We should free ourselves, therefore, from any self imposed bondage which prevents us from meditating on the law in order to discover what benefits this might have. If this reasoning is correct then we would expect this to conform to the teaching of Jesus.

Jesus came into the world, in His humanity, as a Jew, totally identifying with the Jewish customs. He was circumcised on the eighth day, went to the Jewish Feasts, taught His disciples as recorded in the New Testament than to the Old Testament accounts. To read the Old Testament accounts alone could lead us to the legalism that Paul warned the Galatians about. Nevertheless, Jesus did not encourage us to neglect the teaching of Moses. He taught us that we should understand and follow its deeper meanings, not legalistically but under the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The Christian life is not a careless life of ease, but a disciplined life of learning. However, Jesus has broken the yoke of bondage that the law requires, through the finished work of Calvary. Surely Paul assumes that we will read and learn from all of Jesus’s teaching in the Gospel accounts while also reading from His own letters. There is no contradiction.

If there is any doubt about Jesus’s attitude to the law then we should remember that Jesus is the King of the Jews (Luke 23:3-4), and that there are specific attitudes that the King must have to the law (Deuteronomy 17:14-20).

“It is to be with him, and he is to read it all the days of his life.”

True Freedom

In the ordinary sense of the meaning a prisoner would view freedom as being the ability to resume his normal life, to make his own decisions, to do just what he wanted. However, the carnal man’s desires pull him towards sin. Thus the normal understanding of freedom is sin. Thus we must be careful to understand just what freedom from the curse and bondage of the law should mean in our lives. Indeed, even in the normal sense, we should ask if there are bounds to freedom, for if one man is free to do what he desires then this is likely to restrict the freedom of another.

The understanding of true freedom is important for the believer. It is possible to seek spiritual freedom in Christ yet, in reality and out of misunderstanding, use it as licence for sin, perhaps assuming that Christ covers careless or deliberate sinning for us. Paul put it this way: “What shall we say, then? Shall we go on sinning, so that grace may increase? By no means! We died to sin; how can we live in it any longer? Or don’t you know that all of us who were baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into his death? We were therefore buried with him through baptism into death in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may live a new life.” (Romans 6:1-4).

Thus freedom in Christ cannot be freedom to break the laws of God (though our mistakes as we seek to grow to maturity are covered, of course, or we are not free of the curse of the law). Indeed, it is a strange kind of freedom for the carnal man, because it is a freedom that leads to death! However, there is the promise of life into which we are freed through our death in Christ and this is the freedom that He brings us. This is the life that Jesus promised that would be lived to the full (John 10:10).

The true freedom that is for the believer is, then, freedom that is found in the spiritual life which the Holy Spirit brings. Anything else is a counterfeit and is bondage to the carnal nature. Even the Christian religion can be carnal, and hence sinful and in bondage, unless the spiritual life is lived to the full and the carnal nature is put to death in Christ.

Thus the freedom that we are talking about is not licence to follow the carnal nature. That sort of “freedom” is really bondage to sin and hence to the law which exposes sin. That sort of “freedom” is a counterfeit and can manifest itself in many ways including counterfeit spirituality, legalism, sinfulness and legalistic religion.

A clue to the motive behind true freedom comes from the story of the Exodus from Egypt. The Hebrews were in physical bondage to the Egyptians and then God, through Moses, led them out to freedom. The message that Moses was given to take to Pharaoh...
James says, “Whoever keeps the man heart is prone to sin, and as but bound to fail because the hu actual law. This is a logical idea from getting near to breaking the law, hence protecting Jews strict than the literal demands of making the rules for life more “put a fence around the law” by this is the teaching that comes than Moses originally taught, and Later generations of Jews have re text of new life in Jesus. meaning of freedom in the con ness, and it is a relevant messa from the Israelites in the wilder ness soon after the Hebrews left the law was given in the wilder the struggling over fine details of the law and yet being blind to general failure was expressed by Jesus as “straining out a gnat but swallowing a camel.” (Matthew 23:24). This failure of the law to bring righteousness must not be misjudged, however. It pointed to the new heart that was requi red (Ezekiel 36:24-27) but in the context of the new heart and the giving of the Holy Spirit there would be a desire and ability to follow God’s laws: “I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my Spirit in you and move you to follow my decrees and be careful to keep my laws.” (verses 26-27).

The laws still remain the bounds within which true freedom is exercised. The failure of the hu man heart does not change this. The result is that the law reveals sin but is powerless to save. True freedom will be outworked within the laws of God, which act as a boundary fence, but is made possible only through spiritual rebirth (John 3:3). The essence of this freedom is just the same as was intended (and still is) for the Hebrews coming out of bondage, that we might worship God.

There is no other purpose to our freedom in Christ, which has brought us life in all its fulness.

One of the climaxes of Paul’s message in the book of Romans points this out, that, “If you live according to the sinful nature, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live, because those who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive a spirit that makes you a slave again to fear, but you received the Spirit of sonship. And by him we cry, ‘Abba, Father.’” (Romans 8:13-15).

This is true freedom, freedom to come close to God and worship Him. True freedom is freedom in the Holy Spirit, with the flesh in submission. True freedom is spiritual in nature and there will be no true freedom outside of Christ and unless the Holy Spirit has gracio usly come to live in a person.

Meditations on the Law

Having discovered what true freedom is and having been released from the bondage of the law to grow to maturity is there any merit in meditating on the law? Psalm 19 is a wonderful hymn of praise to our God who has put or der and beauty into His creation, leading on to a meditation on the wonderful order to which the law leads a person in his physical life, and pointing towards a repentan ce from the heart and worship to God. Surely such a psalm is very relevant to the worship from the free spirit outlined in the last sec tion. It is worship that is based upon the right attitude to the law, which leads us to God and know ledge of His ways.

Surely we are able to capture the heart of David that was also expressed in Psalm 119, which over and over again praises God because of His ways which have been made known to men: “Oh, how I love your law! I meditate on it all day long.” (verse 97). Su rely our liberty in the Holy Spirit results in our meditation on all of God’s ways as an exploration of Him and brings us to worship Him. As we grow to maturity in freedom, our praise is towards Him for taking the bondage away while leaving His ways to be explored.

Why are Jewish children introduced to the book of Leviticus at an early age? It is so that they will be taught the way to go that all will go well with them (Proverbs 22:6, Deuteronomy 6 etc). The Jewish leaders who brought bondage through their teaching missed the real reason for meditating on God’s word, a thing which David did not miss and one which we are equipped to take up through the grace of our Lord. Thus the reading of Leviticus should bring

Picture: A replica for the reading platform of the Torah in the ruins of an ancient synagogue in the village of Migdal. The Torah was read on these platforms in every Shabbat.
delight and praise, not bondage. When approached in this way it is discovered to be a rich treasure store.

Take, for example, some of the simple treasures like Leviticus 19:32, “Rise in the presence of the aged, show respect for the elderly and revere your God. I am the Lord.” How wonderfully simple. Take a look at modern youth in the secular world and you will see just the opposite in the context of rising crime against the elderly, and more general lawlessness. Surely, we can see that somewhere behind God’s injunctions, at the heart of the matter are safeguards for societies. If one were inclined towards God’s ways then such simple injunctions would be natural consequences. How simply God might have led us to Himself through these issues, that anyone can understand. Oh, how I love your law!

Take the simplicity of dealings with crops and land shown in Leviticus 25. What nation has ever done this? A Jubilee year is set aside and rent is reckoned in proportion to the number of years to the jubilee. After all it is not the land that is rented, but the facility to grow crops (verse 16), and anyway God owns the land (verse 23). With this principle, we are God’s tenants, there is right order to our transactions and God is with us to enable the harvest (verses 18-19). There are libraries of books written on economics, but not one system is as simple and effective as this, which is written into a few verses of one chapter of the book of Leviticus. Look at the nations in disorder through greed. With a right heart and a right seeking after God’s ways, which are held together in the principle of loving one another and loving the Lord, how simple it would have been to live our daily lives. The Hebrews could have been a light to the nations and taught us this profound simplicity. No need for economics degrees, it is all contained in a short chapter of Leviticus. Of course, it will never be seen on this earth outside of an established millennial kingdom, but, nevertheless, the Lord’s perfect ways have been revealed in their profound simplicity. What a wonderful meditation on what might have been. Oh what an insight into the mind of God! Oh how I love your laws!

What about Leviticus 24:17, which echoes Genesis 9:6, “If anyone takes the life of a human being, he must be put to death”? It is made clear elsewhere (Deuteronomy 13:11) that the principle of deterrence is included in the law structure. We cannot say how effective this principle of deterrence can be in isolation from the need for complete obedience to all God’s laws, but what we do know is that God expects such laws to lead to the good of a society and that He would bless societies who sought to obey Him. If we take away God’s laws, lawlessness increases rather than remains in check; the whole world situation of today declares this.

This is an immense subject for meditation, but also has important practical application. This meditation must be at a mature level, however. Take, for example, the situation recorded in John Chapter 8, of the woman caught in adultery. No-one was able to stone her because of their own guilt. This draws us into the depth of the principles of the law, in which we see the community aspect of sin. It takes righteous representatives of a righteous nation to administer God’s justice. There is a corporate nature to the law as there is a corporate nature to sin. God’s laws are simple in their statement but deep at the heart, and only meditation upon them will reveal this depth. Oh, how I love your law!

Paul makes an interesting reference to Deuteronomy 25:4 in his letters to the Corinthians and to Timothy (1 Corinthians 9:9 and 1 Timothy 5:18). He demonstrates how the injunction “Do not muzzle an ox while it is treading the grain” has a much deeper meaning at its heart. He does not deny that this practice is right for oxen but shows that it has parallels in the way ministers in the work of God should obtain material support from their ministry. Paul has seen these principles at the heart of the law and brings it out in this individual case. Surely, then, there are depths for us all to discover in our meditations on this and other aspects of the law. Those issues, which can seem vague and uninteresting, really have hidden depths that lead to our free spirit to respond in ways that bring life and truth into our communities. Oh, how I love your law!

When we begin to explore the law carefully and seek its deeper meanings we discover that we can grow into God’s holy ways far more effectively than through the application of a legalistic framework within the context of the flesh life. We see principles within the practical applications which are good at the simple level of obedience and profound in their deeper application. Surely, the Holy Spirit, who leads us into all truth desires that we explore God’s laws in this way. He will use our times of meditation on the Scriptures (Old Testament as well as New) to lead us into the deeper truths. Surely this was what was intended at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15), that a message should go to the churches to encourage Gentile believers to begin to meditate on God’s laws, by beginning on four important but not too heavy injunctions (relating to fornication, abstention from meat sacrificed to idols and from strangled animals, and from blood).

The need to not burden the Gentiles was born out of trust in the Holy Spirit’s teaching to those who would desire to go on to maturity. Hearing the good things of the law, possibly from the teaching in the synagogues, as well as clear teaching on faith in Jesus and the grace that brought us salvation, would lead to meditation on these things within the freedom to learn that is given by the Holy Spirit. Acts 16:4-5 describes how the teaching of the Council of Jerusalem was taken from town to town and how the churches grew daily, both spiritually and numerically.

We were meant, for example, to grow in understanding of why we should not eat meat unless drained of blood, and from eating blood itself, trusting God to show us deeper reasons for this, but not because it is imposed legally. Our meditations would take us deeper into holiness and spiritual maturity. This does not contradict the message of Paul to the Galatians concerning salvation through grace, but is a pointer to the depths of God’s ways which we are free to explore with Him, without condemnation. Ultimately our meditations lead us to a deeper knowledge of our Saviour.

The dryness of the law is replaced by a willingness to yield as we see what He has done for us, as we see Him fulfilling the law, showing us His ways for our health and well-being, seeing Him in every letter of the Torah, in types and provisions, even for the sins that we committed unintentionally (Leviticus 4:27). Oh, how I love your law, I meditate upon it day and night!

It leads me to you; it shows me your ways. I thank you that you have freed me to live a spiritual life in which I can rise to maturity, freed from the failure of the flesh and the harsh consequences of that failure, but yet to go on to perfection which is at the heart of your law and in all of its workings in my life!

The Relevance of the Law to the Gentile Nations

It is one thing to consider the role of the law in a Christian’s life but another issue in relation to a nation’s laws. “Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord” declares the Psalmist (Psalm 33:12). The Psalmist was considering Israel in particular when he said this, recognising the amazing situation which was offered, in which a nation could be kept by the Lord, secure in His ways. The Psalmist must have been conscious of the conditions for God’s co-
venant blessings to be bestowed, namely, obedience to all the commands of the law. In such a moment of revelation we, like him, might see with our spiritual eyes the great possibilities that were offered to this one nation, but which were never fully realised.

Herein too lies the agonising sadness of the exile of the Jews from the land of Israel, which is reflected graphically in the book of Lamentations, as well as a vision of a nation on which God’s Spirit can be poured out and in which His order and government are maintained. Here too is a beginning of meditation on the suffering of Jesus Christ on the cross where the penalty for sin and failure to obey all of these laws was paid, so that individuals might be gathered into communities, each person being born again by the Holy Spirit.

Clearly, though the principles for national blessings to Israel were laid out, it was never to be realised. The nation did not become a light to the world so that every other nation could learn from them the way to achieve national blessings, by organising society according to the ways God laid out for Israel. There is not, and will not be, a “born again nation” except that it be built of born again individuals. Though the Psalmist gives us a vision of a nation that could be blessed by the Lord, and the prophets give conditions for blessings from the Lord to any nation (for example, Jeremiah 18:7-10), we know that the Kingdom of God will be built, ultimately, through individuals who turn to the Lord for salvation.

These things should send a shudder through the government of any nation. It is not possible to see a specific promise for any nation other than Israel in Scripture (Psalm 147:19-20), but it is possible to know what God requires of a nation, through what was taught to Israel: simply, that God’s laws had to be obeyed. The context of their failure, and our understanding that the flesh would always fail in its striving against sin, is the context of the shudder that these things should bring down the spine of every Gentile nation. Salvation does not come by legalistic obedience to God’s laws, yet they are the means by which sin is controlled and revealed, and the schoolmaster to bring all who will come, to Christ.

Thus it is imperative that believing men institute and maintain laws in a nation which are as close to God’s declared ways for Israel as possible. It might be argued that this is limited to moral laws, but I would argue that one of God’s laws have been abrogated. Even the laws of sacrifice have not been taken away; rather, they have been fulfilled in Jesus. There is need for sacrifice and it is good for a nation to have leaders who declare with certainty that God’s righteous requirements have been and are fulfilled in Jesus.

We can easily give examples of nations of the world that are not putting God’s laws at the centre of its government.

**Examples of Fallen Nations**

Such a nation deliberately rebels against God and encourages its citizens to do this. It does not produce the framework in which sin is controlled and so departs to a place where God lets the nation discover the fruit of its open sin: “I am bringing disaster on this people, the fruit of their schemes, because they have not listened to my words and have rejected my law.” (Jeremiah 6:19). The world is full of such examples and it is horrific to see the consequences when men, particularly the leading men of a nation, choose darkness instead of light (John 3:19-21).

The result is spiritual wilderness, for centuries in some cases, in which every demon and false god can destroy the lives of even innocent people. The example that Jesus gave of the falling of the tower of Siloam on eighteen people illustrates clearly how the corporate sin of a nation can lead to harm coming to those who are not the chief sinners (Luke 13:4). It is an awesome responsibility to be the leader of a nation, particularly when God’s ways have been known and have been deliberately rejected by that nation.

It is particularly sad when a nation backslides when it once upheld Godly laws, and knew the guiding and protecting touch of God upon it. Britain is such a nation, and this nation has slipped more and more from the protecting hand of God as its national laws have turned more and more away from His ways. Consider some of the milestones of decay:

1951; Abolition of the law prohibiting witchcraft.
1967: The Obscene Publications Act Amendment.
1969: The Divorce Law.
1990: Amendment To the Abortion on Act.

...And Then Came The New Age -Wave

Along with these things go the rise of relativistic morality which parallels the relativistic theories of science, the lack of teaching of Biblical truths, particularly in schools, as ideas of evolution are taught as if true, creating a myth which purports to be truth and yet proclaiming that the truth of the universal flood, which was because of God’s judgement, is itself myth, the rise of compromise in the church regarding Biblical truth and the rise of multi-faith compromise. Alongside relativistic, evolutionary and quantum thinking comes the rise of prominence of Eastern mystical religions in the form of the major deception of the New Age Movement. As Godly parameters to life are not emphasised or enforced, so decay creeps in, not only morally, but also spiritually.

The removal of censorship controls has led to a growth in violence and pornography on films and television and in newspapers, magazines and books. Violence has also crept in through the back door of many homes and schools with the rise of computer games with this emphasis.

Another emphasis on fantasy through games, films and literature is resulting in many people, particularly the young not being able to tell the difference between fact and fantasy. The easing of divorce laws has led to countless divorces and split homes. Indeed, the easing of every restraining law has opened the door to lawlessness. In the background too is the broken covenant with the Nation of Israel.

At present, the British nation is among the many nations which are not being disciplined through its laws and leadership. The result is that, together with the lawlessness that abounds, the people of the nation are not being made conscious of God’s ways which might lead them towards a personal response to the salvation offered through Jesus Christ, spiritual rebirth and a right framework for freedom.

The church is also in danger of drifting away from its original mooring to the deep heritage of faith traced back through the House of Israel and Judah, to the extent that Paul’s warning might not be heeded by many in this generation, “Do not boast over those branches Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either.”

Surely all of our logic points to the great need for a nation to get as close to God’s laws as it can. Then we might be in a position to cry out for mercy and protection, perhaps revival, but only then. It is an awesome thing to see a nati-
on taking away its own protective laws and leaving itself vulnerable to decay, economically, socially and politically, and then perceiving that God allows decay in such circumstances. God’s laws have been made clear in the Old Testament, laws that would have brought blessings to Israel. The least we can do is our utmost to implement them on behalf of our nation and then, who knows, the Lord, rich in compassion and love, might strengthen our communities once more through the church.

Ultimately He is looking for clean hearts from individuals in communities, where the Sabbath is a delight and not a legal entity, where murder is replaced by love in the heart, where there is no desire to destroy human life in the womb or to expose our children to pornography, violence or harmful fantasy. The clean heart comes out of a transaction between God and individuals, but the laws of a nation, in a Godly framework, will bring about the safe framework in which God will act among individuals and maintain an overall sense of blessing among people with whom He sends His angels to work.

At a time of decay in a nation, the Gospel message must be backed by a proclamation of God’s laws. Indeed, these are the means by which sin is revealed, confessed and can then be forgiven. The laws do not save: but they lead, through the conviction of sin, to the one who does save.

Summary

From the elements of the discussion in this paper, it is clear that we face a complex issue when we try to understand law in relationship to the grace of God. This also reflects the intricate nature of Paul’s letters to the churches, which include many of the aspects of this discussion laid out in the Bible bit by bit. This shows us that we must meditate on Scripture, sometimes seeking maturity on one point, sometimes on another, and generally moving forward into all truth. There is much more to be said on the subject of our discussion. For example, the dating of the Epistles in relation to the Council of Jerusalem.

If Galatians is dated before Acts 15 then we can understand Paul’s teaching as coming before the injunctions that were sent out from Jerusalem, where there was a resolution on matters of the law as applied to Gentile converts. On the other hand, we have shown that Paul’s message to the Galatians does not conflict with the teaching of the Council of Jerusalem.

If the letter to the Galatians came after that Council then the teaching of the Council can be assumed anyway in the full light of the letter. With all of the New Testament set before us, of course, we are in a position to consider all that it teaches and relate it to the message of the Old Testament, historical considerations being in the background to our exploration of all truth.

The final conclusions are simply stated and can be tested against a broad ranging argument. The major emphasis on the Christian life is to grow in the life of the Spirit, wherein there is freedom to grow and be led into all truth, without condemnation. The external obedience to the law is (and always was) intended to be a result of internal reality; righteousness and holiness in deed being the result of a clean and regenerate heart. However, the flesh does war against the spirit and seeks to take over. This take over can be in diverse ways.

As Jeremiah wrote, in a context quite similar to our ideas in this paper, “This is what the Lord says: ‘Cursed is the one who trusts in man, who depends on flesh for his strength and whose heart turns away from the Lord. He will be like a bush in the wastelands; he will not see prosperity when it comes. He will dwell in the parched places of the desert, in a salt land where no-one lives. But blessed is the man who trusts in the Lord, whose confidence is in him. He will be like a tree planted by the water that sends out its roots by the stream. It does not fear when heat comes; its leaves are always green. It has no worries in a year of drought and never fails to bear fruit.’ The heart is deceitful above all things and beyond cure. Who can understand it?” (Jeremiah 17:5-9).

The Old Testament message is no different from that of the New. The difference is that the solution to the problem is seen finally to be fulfilled in Jesus.

In the New Testament, Paul teaches that the works of the flesh will not save us. The works of the flesh must, however, be subject to the law of God or they will lead our children and our nations into total lawlessness.

Hence, while emphasising the urgency to train our children about the way they should go, putting good things and corrective influences their way, the ultimate goal is to lead them to rebirth in Jesus and to both freedom and security in the spiritual life. However, the flesh life still wars with the regenerate heart. Indeed, the heart of every person needs regeneration and this comes out of a personal response to Jesus Christ. The Old Testament proverb, “Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.” (Proverbs 22:6) is as relevant today as it ever was.

Only one man lived on this earth with perfect submission of the flesh life to the life of the Holy Spirit and that was Jesus Christ, perfect man and God. The rest of us have a fallen nature which contests our spiritual life, even after we have made our commitment to the Lord and received the blessings of salvation.

The goal is maturity in the spiritual life, but it is a path of growth, wherein the flesh life is more and more submitted to the spiritual life. Everything of the flesh is open to deception and corruption and must come under the control of the law. The danger point for Christians is to assume too much and to fall into the flesh life as if it were the life of the spirit. In such a way counterfeit spirituality is manifested, and this accounts for many of the things that can seem to be right and are, nevertheless, wrong in the church, legalistic frameworks for ministry instead of servant-hearted uplifting and edifying ministries in which the love and life of the Spirit are obvious, philosophies of men which purport to be doctrines of God, idolatry of ministry and covetousness for position, even idolatry of the saints of preceding generations and counterfeit charisma.

The last of these is one of the more dangerous areas of the flesh life, when it brings counterfeit into the church, and echoes what Jesus said, “Many of you will say to me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord Then I will tell them plainly, ‘I never knew you . . .’”(Matthew 7:22-23).

Good Deeds Are to Bless Others

There is security in the life of the Spirit, but there is also the reality of the struggle. This is not a life of works, but it is an area of growth and discipline to the flesh: We are to be overcomers. If this is misunderstood, a life of false freedom will be lived, in which the flesh will take over and deception and lawlessness will abound. The grace of God has sent His Holy Spirit to give us true freedom.

The mature spiritual man will be truly free and, instead of exhibiting good deeds of the law in a moral framework (important and good though these are in every society) he will naturally overflow with spiritual blessings to others and these will come from a heart that God has placed in him, which is close to His own heart. This is the high goal to be discovered.

As Paul wrote, the acts of the sinful nature are obvious (Galatians 5:19) and what comes from the spirit are not acts but fruit (Galatians 5:22).

Paul, himself, encourages us to move forward to maturity by the
grace of God, but recognises that it is not brought about in a moment. Our conversion is the first step, so that we must be aware of the struggle between flesh and spirit as we grow in order not to fall into sin because we assume that we cannot.

In the book of Philippians he puts it this way, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing that I do: forgetting what is behind and straining towards what is ahead, I press on towards the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenwards in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained.” (Philippians 3:12-16).

Through grace, God has sent us the perfect teacher, the Holy Spirit, and has covered our sins in Jesus Christ. We are free to grow in grace and truth, towards the only true life of grace, when we are completely submitted to God and our walk in the Holy Spirit. Yet the law has a part to play alongside this as we mature in the life of grace, as a means of revealing sin and as a means of disciplining families and nations, so that many more might seek to grow in grace. Indeed, at the end we will say, by the grace of God, “Lord I love your Torah!”

The deep roots of the Christian faith will reach down and discover that the heart of the Torah of God.

Whatever the external manifestations of the law might be, of course, we will discover the heart of the Torah reflects the heart of God and should also reflect our own heart’s condition of loving our Lord with all of our heart, soul mind and strength and our neighbour as ourselves. We don’t do these things in order to go to Heaven, but because we are going to Heaven. This is the way the believer should look on the teaching of God.

In the context of our meditations and intercessions for the Gentile nations and for Israel, we can also dig deeply into an understanding of the sinfulness of mankind, the dealings of God with the nation of Israel through history, reflected in the blessings and curses in relationship to the law, and hence we can understand the plan of salvation more clearly, through the sacrifice of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ, Yeshua Hamashiach, as the final moments of history are coming together for the whole world.

Our final emphasis, of course, must be a reminder of the most important point. The goal of our discipleship programmes in the church should be for every believer to become mature in the life of the Holy Spirit. This is the true life of grace and, ultimately, the only way in which our righteousness can exceed that of the Pharisees and teachers of the law.

(Re-edited from Tishrei Vol 2, No 1, The Feasts Autumn 1993)
The Feasts of The Lord
Shadows of Things to Come

Written by:
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“Therefore, let no one judge you in matters of food and drink or with respect to a festival, a new moon, or a Sabbath day. These are a shadow of the things to come, but the reality belongs to Christ” (Colossians 2:16,17).

In his Letter to Colossians apostle Paul speaks of the feasts of the Lord that are shadows of things to come. God’s entire prophetic plan of salvation in Yeshua the Messiah is presented symbolically in the feasts of the Lord, from the Cross at Calvary to new heavens and a new earth. The spring feasts speak about the first coming of the Messiah which He implemented about 2000 years ago, and the autumn feasts speak about Yeshua’s second coming. In this article we will discuss shortly main features of the symbolic significance that the seven principal feasts of the times of Moses have in God’s plan of salvation in Yeshua the Messiah. There are feasts after the times of Moses in the Bible, such as the feast of Purim in the Book of Esther, and the feast of Hannukkah from the Maccabean times, but we won’t discuss them in this article (John 10:22,23).

The feasts are in honour of the Lord

“The Lord said to Moses, “Speak to the Israelites and say to them: ‘These are my appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the Lord, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies. There are six days when you may work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a day of sacred assembly. You are not to do any work; wherever you live, it is a Sabbath to the Lord.

These are the Lord’s appointed feasts, the sacred assemblies you are to proclaim at their appointed times” (Leviticus 23:1-4).

Biblical feasts, Shabbath included, are feasts to the Lord, to honor God the Father and Yeshua the Messiah. These feasts must be kept at their appointed times, times given by God. Here we are faced with a problem of calendar, because Passover must be celebrated the 14th day of the first month. Should we, then, celebrate Passover the 14th of January? Of course not! In the West, and actually in the whole world, we follow the Gregorian calendar instead of the calendar ordered by God. Times and laws (calendar included) have been changed by the horn of the fourth beast prophesied in Daniel 7, the imperial seat of Rome followed by the popal seat. In God’s calendar the first month (Nisan or Aviv) is in the spring (March-April; Exodus 12:1-11). The feasts of the Lord must be celebrated according to the calendar given by God. Only the people of Israel follow God’s calendar.

Foreshadowings of spring feasts in God’s plan of salvation

1. Passover (Pesach) – the atoning work of the Messiah

‘And the Lord spoke to Moses and Aaron in the land of Egypt, saying, This month shall be unto you the beginnig of months: it shall be the first month of the year to you. Speak unto all the assembly of Israel, saying, On the tenth of this month let them take them lambs, a lamb for a father’s house, a lamb for a house. And if the household be too small for a lamb, let him and his neighbour next unto his house take it according to the number of the souls; each according to the measure of his eating shall you count for the lamb. Your lamb shall be without blemish, a yearling male; you shall take it from the sheep, or from the goats. And you shall keep it until the fourteenth day of this month; and the whole congregation of the assembly of Israel shall kill it between the two evenings. And they shall take of the blood, and put it on the two door-posts and on the lintel of the houses in which they eat it. And thus shall you eat it, your loins shall be girded , your sandals on your feet, and your staff in you hand, and you shall eat it in haste; it is the Lord’s passover” (Exodus 12:11-7,11).

“The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him and said, “Look, the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world” (John 1:29).

“Your boasting is not good. You know that a little yeast leavens the whole batch of dough, don’t you? Get rid of the old yeast so that you may be a new batch of dough, since you are to be free from yeast. For Christ, our Passover lamb, has been sacrificed. So let us keep celebrating the festival, not with the old yeast or with the yeast of vice and wickedness, but with the bread of purity and truth that has no yeast” (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

Passover (Pesach = pass by, spare) is the first of spring feasts. It is celebrated after sunset on the fourteenth of Nisan, the first month of the biblical calendar. Jews have celebrated Passover already during about 3400 years, to commemorate the deliverance from the slavery of Egypt. Yeshua, too, had Passover meal with His disciples before He was crucified, which occurred on the fourteenth of Nisan (probably on a Wednesday, about 30 AD: Luke 22:1,7-20). That is when Yeshua, the Passover Lamb of God, redeemed the sin of mankind on the cross. The Apostolic early church celebrated Passover to commemorate Messiah’s redeeming sacrifice, also in Corinth, in the Greek region. Paul, apostle to the Gentiles, in fact admonishes/orders the church to keep Passover (Pesach) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread which follows, on the basis of grace and freedom of the New Covenant, without yeast in sincerity and truth of the Word of God. People from other nations can join the Israelites and keep these biblical feasts of the Lord on the basis of grace and freedom of the New Covenant. Keeping the Feasts is no foundation of salvation only through faith in Yeshua we are made righteous by grace, but it is a wonderful privilege to celebrate these feasts in honour of the Lord (Romans 3:23-25,31; Ephesians 2:8-10, Matthew 5:17-19).

2. The Feast of Unleavened Bread (Chag Ha’Matzot)

These are the feasts of the Lord, holy convocations, which you shall proclaim in their seasons: In the first month, on the fourteenth of the month, between the two evenings, is the passover to the Lord. And on the fifteenth day of this month is the feast of unleavened bread to the Lord; seven days shall you eat unleavened bread. On the first day you shall have a holy convocation: no manner of servile work shall you do. And you shall present to the Lord an offering by fire seven days; on the seventh day is a holy convocation; no manner of servile work shall you do” (Leviticus 23: 4-8).
“After the days of Unleavened Bread, we sailed from Philippi, and days later we joined them in Troas and stayed there for seven days” (Acts 20:6).

Chag Ha’Matzot, or the seven-day feast of Unleavened Bread, comes right after Passover, the fifteenth of Nisan. During that time you can only eat Matzah, bread baked without yeast. The first and the seventh day of this feast are so called High Sabbaths on which all daily routines cease (Leviticus 23 gives 7 high shabbats). It is a type and foreshadowing of believers’ unleavened, pure walk as described in 1 Corinthians 5:6-8. In the times of the early church this Feast of Unleavened Bread was kept also in Philippi, a Greek town.

3. Waving of the sheaf (omer) and the Messiah’s resurrection from the dead as the first-fruits

“And he shall wave the sheaf before Yahweh, to be accepted for you. On the next day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. On the day when you wave the sheaf, you shall offer a male lamb without blemish a year old for a burnt offering to Yahweh. The meal offering with it shall be two tenth parts of an ephah of fine flour mingled with oil, an offering made by fire to Yahweh for a sweet savor; and the drink offering with it shall be of wine, the fourth part of a hin. You shall eat neither bread, nor roasted grain, nor fresh grain, until this same day, until you have brought the offering of your God. This is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. You shall count from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, seven Sabbaths shall be completed: even to the next day after the seventh Sabbath you shall number fifty days, and you shall offer a new meal offering to Yahweh.” (Leviticus 23:15-16).

4. The Feast of Weeks (Shavuot) or Pentecost

“You shall count from the next day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering, seven Sabbaths shall be completed: even to the next day after the seventh Sabbath you shall number fifty days; and you shall offer a new meal offering to Yahweh. You shall make proclamation on the same day: there shall be a holy convocation to you, you shall do no regular work. This is a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations” (Leviticus 23:15,16,21).

“There was a great day of Yahweh, a day of vesture, a day of Convocation and freedom. (Leviticus 23:24).

When the counting of Omer has continued seven weeks (Hebrew Bible: seven Shabbats), Luke describes how the disciples, with Yeshua, were plucking the heads of grain in the field on the second Shabbat of the counting of Omer (according to Hebrew NT).

Yeshua the Messiah was resurrected on the day the sheaf of first fruits was waved, that is, on the first day of the week (according to the tradition of Sadducees), evidently on Saturday evening (in the Bible the first day of the week begins on Saturday evening), as Yeshua was raised from the dead as the first fruits of the dead after His body had been lying in the grave for three days and three nights (Matthew 12:40). After His resurrection Yeshua, the High Priest, also waved the sheaf of first fruits (omer), by raising from the dead a number of saints of the old covenant (Matthew 27:50-53, Hebrews 7:14-17). At the Messiah’s coming all those believing in Yeshua will be resurrected.

5. The feast of Trumpets (Yom Teruah) – The Day of the Lord

“Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying: ‘Speak to the children of Israel, saying, In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, shall be a solemn rest to you, a memorial of blowing of trumpets, a holy convocation. You shall do no regular work; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh” (Leviticus 23:23-25).

“In the seventh month, on the first day of the month, you shall have a holy convocation, you shall do no servile work: it is a day of blowing of trumpets (Hebrew Bible: Yom Teruah) to you” (Numbers 29:1).

“The great day of Yahweh is near.
It is near, and hurries greatly, the voice of the day of Yahweh. The mighty man cries there bitterly. That day is a day of wrath, a day of distress and anguish, a day of trouble and ruin, a day of darkness and gloom, a day of clouds and blackness, a day of the trumpet and alarm, against the fortified cities and against the high battlements. I will bring distress on men, that they will walk like blind men, because they have sinned against Yahweh, and their blood will be poured out like dust, and their flesh like dung. Neither their silver nor their gold will be able to deliver them in the day of Yahweh’s wrath, but the whole land will be devoured by the fire of his jealousy; for he will make an end, yes, a terrible end, of all those who dwell in the land” (Zephaniah 1:14-18).

Autumn feasts begin with the feast of Trumpets on the first day of the seventh month (normally late September). That’s when the shofars, made of ram’s horn, are blown. Prophet Zephaniah says that the day of Trumpets is a foreshadow of the time when the judgements of the Day of the Lord start to fall on the earth. Almost all Old Testament prophets speak about that time of God’s judgement when He judges godlessness and sin so that only very few people are left, as Isaiah prophesies (Isaiah 13:9-13; Isaiah 24). New Testament also speaks about the Day of the Lord which will take the world by surprise (1 Thessalonians 5:1-9; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3; 2 Peter 3:10-12). Most of Revelation is description of events of the Lord’s Day. It is comforting to know, though, that the Lord will take care of His own children even in difficult times.

From the day of Trumpets a ten-day period begins, which is called yamim noraim in Hebrew, days of Awe – horrifying days - in English. This period ends at Yom Kippur, the Day of Atonement. During those days the Israeli repent, and ask forgiveness for their sins and offences from God and their neighbours in order to have a good judgement and their name in the Book of Life before God at Yom Kippur. In the Book of Daniel, chapter 1, we read about a ten-day period of testing. Daniel and his three friends are told to eat non-kosher food at the court of Babylon, but they refuse to eat it, and eat faithfully only kosher food. In the Book of Revelation the saints of Smyrna are told about a coming ten-day period of great distress (Revelation 2:8-11). This is a foreshadowing of the great distress of the End Times which will be in all the earth, and the Church will also experience it (Daniel 11:40-12:3; Matthew 24:20-22, 29-31; do not count the length of distress based on the foreshadowing). It is a time when Babylon’s, the great whore’s, religious system, governed from Rome, tries to make believers “eat” Babylon’s non-biblical religious food (doctrines), but we have to remain faithful to the truth of God’s word, and eat only pure “Bread of the Word” in the midst of a difficult time (Hebrews 5:11-14).

6. The Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur) – the Messiah’s coming and the resurrection

“However on the tenth day of this seventh month is the day of atonement: it shall be a holy convocation to you, and you shall afflict yourselves; and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. You shall do no manner of work: it is a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings. It shall be a Sabbath of solemn rest for you, and you shall deny yourselves. In the ninth day of the month at evening, from evening to evening, you shall keep your Sabbath” (Leviticus 23:27-32). "When much time had passed and the voyage was now dangerous, because the Fast had now already gone by, Paul admonished them” (Acts 27:9).

"Blow your trumpet in Zion, and sound an alarm in my holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble, for the day of Yahweh comes, for it is close at hand: a day of darkness and gloominess, a day of clouds and thick darkness. As the dawn spreading on the mountains, a
His own blood. This atonement made eternal atonement through into the Most Holy of the heaven Priest, Yeshua the Messiah, went ning work on the cross, our High new covenant. Through His ato people (Leviticus 16, scapegoat, of atonement for the sins of the Holy and performed the ritual sacrifice and went to the Most the high priest took the blood of the Lord and went to the Most y the land the day of Awe end at weh, your God. Blow the trum pet in Zion! Sanctify a fast. Call weh, your God. Blow the trum pet and relents from sending cala mourning. Tear your hearts, and with weeping, and with mourning. Tear your hearts, and not your garments, and turn to Yahweh, your God. For he is gra cious and merciful, slow to anger, and abundant in loving kindness, and relents from sending calamity. Who knows? He may turn and relent, and leave a blessing behind him, even a meal offer ing and a drink offering to Yahweh, your God. Blow the trumpet in Zion! Sanctify a fast. Call a solemn assembly. Gather the people. Sanctify the assembly. Gather the elders. Gather the people, and those who suck the breasts. Let the bridegroom go forth from his room, and the bride go out from her chamber (Hebrew Bible: me Huppatah)” (Joel 2:1-3, 10-16).

The ten “days of Awe” end at Yom Kippur, the day of Atonement (usually in early October). At the time of Jerusalem Temple the high priest took the blood of sacrifice and went to the Most Holy and performed the ritual of atonement for the sins of the people (Leviticus 16, scapegoat, e.g.). Hebrews chapter 9 explains us Yom Kippur in the light of the new covenant. Through His aton ing work on the cross, our High Priest, Yeshua the Messiah, went into the Most Holy of the heavenly Temple, before the Father, and made eternal atonement through His own blood. This atonement and forgiveness of sins is available for everybody through faith in Yeshua the Messiah.

There is no temple in Israel today, but the Israelites celebrate Yom Kippur, that is Shabbat of Sabbats, and fast without eat ing or drinking for 25 hours (the sick excluded). People go then to the synagogues dressed in white (Revelation 7:9-17). In the story about Paul’s voyage we read about a Fast in autumn, which points to Yom Kippur Fast.

The Book of Joel speaks about the Lord’s Day’s difficult times. Trumpets will be blown in Zion (Jerusalem), and the terrifying events of the Day of the Lord will surge over the earth. Then will people fast, weep, wail, and repent. It is time for the great awakening and revival of the End time. It is not a revival of laughter, but a revival of repentance, weeping, and groaning (Joel 2:28-32). The people will be gathered to a holy assembly, a holy fast, a prophetic Yom Kippur, Day of Atonement. Then will the heavenly Bridegroom Yeshua the Messiah begin his chamber to fetch His bride, and the eagerly waiting bridal church will go from the briel canopy, Huppah, to meet the Bridegroom (John 3:29).

It is the prophetic Yom Kippur, the time of the Messiah’s coming and the church’s rapture (resurrection). At the same time, it is a time of distress and birth pains to Israel, as the tribes of Israel groan because Jerusalem and Israel is besieged by the enemy (Zachariah 12). And then, while the tribes of Israel weep their pierced Mes siah, believers are gathered at the Lord’s coming to meet Him (Matthew 24:20-22; 29-31; Luke 21:25-28,34-36).

7. The feast of Tabernacles - the Messiah’s Kingdom

“Yahweh spoke to Moses, saying, “Speak to the children of Israel, and say, On the fifteenth day of this seventh month is the feast of tents for seven days to Yahweh. On the first day shall be a holy convocation, you shall do no reg ular work. Seven days you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. On the eighth day shall be a holy convocation to you, and you shall offer an offering made by fire to Yahweh. It is a solemn assembly, you shall do no regular work... So on the fifteenth day of the seventh month, when you have gathered in the fruits of the land, you shall keep the feast of Yahweh seven days: on the first day shall be a solemn rest, and on the eighth day shall be a solemn rest. You shall take on the first day the fruit of goodly trees, branches of palm trees, and bunches of thick trees, and willows of the brook; and you shall rejoice before Yahweh seven days in the year: it is a statute forever throughout your generations; you shall keep it in the seventh month. You shall dwell in booths seven days. All who a native-born in Israel shall dwell in booths, that your gene rations may know that I made the children of Israel to dwell in booths, when I brought them out of the land of Egypt. I am Yahweh your God” (Leviticus 23:33-36, 39-43).

“ It will happen that everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tents. It will be, that whoever of all the families of the earth doesn’t go up to Jerusa lem to worship the King, Yahweh of Hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt doesn’t go up, and doesn’t come, neither will it rain on them. This will be the plague with which Yahweh will strike the nations that don’t go up to keep the feast of tents. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that don’t go up to keep the feast of tents” (Zachariah 14:16-19).

“ In that day, Yahweh’s branch will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the beauty and glory of the sur vivors of Israel. It will happen, that he who is left in Zion, and he who remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even everyone who is written among the living in Jerusalem; when the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from its midst, by the spirit of justice and by the spirit of burn ing. Yahweh will create over the whole habitation of Mount Zion, and over her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shine ning of a flaming fire by night, for over all the glory will be a canopy (Hebrew Huppah). There will be a pavilion for a shade ( Hebrew Sukkah=booth) in the daytime from the heat, and for a refuge and for a shelter from storm and from rain” (Isaiah4:2-6).

Israel people keep the feast of Tabernacles/Tents in memory of the 40-year wandering in the wilderness. People build booths where they pray, eat, and even sleep. Yeshua also went up to Jerusalem for the feast (John 7). This feast of Tabernacles is closely connected to the Land’s agriculture; it is a feast of harvest. In the spring the first fruits (omer) is cut from barley, the first spring crop. At Pentecost, Shavuot, begins the harvest of wheat. When the season is over, there is a harvest festival, feast of Tabernacles, in the autumn, on the 15th of the seventh month, and people bring samples of the growth of the earth for decoration.

One special item is ‘the bunch of Lulav’, the center piece of which is a palm branch. The feast of Tabernacles is, in all probability, the time of Yeshua’s real birthday. (Yeshua was not born at Christmas. You will find more information about that and other issues related to the feasts in my book “Apostolinen seurakunta”.)

The feast of Tabernacles is also a foreshadow of the Messianic Kingdom, the Millennium. Isaiah writes in chapter four about that time, when holy assemblies are gathered on Temple Mount in Jer usalem, in Zion. The third Temp le in Jerusalem will then be the religious and political center, the governing body for all the world,
where God’s glory will dwell (Isaiah 2). Nations will come up there to receive teaching of Torah, and from there the teaching of God’s word will spread over all the earth through believing Israeli people of priests (Isaiah 61:4-6; Micah 4). Representatives from all nations will come up to Jerusalem to bow before the Lord and to celebrate the feast of Tabernacles.

The original Hebrew text of Isaiah says that there is a Huppah, a bridal canopy, over all the glory. This means that the Millennium period of the Messiah’s Kingdom of peace is a period of a bridal canopy. Isaiah says further that the Sukkah, or booth, gives shade against the heat of the day and shelter from storm and rain. There are special instructions for how to build a Sukkah: branches of different trees are placed on the top so that they shade the interior but let the sun shine in between the branches. It is an appropriate picture of the veil of mist which envelops the earth at a time when the earth in its entirety is a garden of Eden.

Part of the waters of the planet will be lifted to envelop the earth and to shelter it as an ocean of mist, so that sunlight, instead of being burning, will be gentle. The earth and the creation will be restored as a paradise, the Eden it used to be in Adam and Eve’s days. The whole Millennium of the Messiah’s Kingdom of peace will be a time of bridal canopy and kingdom of Tabernacles, where the resurrected saints reign with the Messiah (Revelation 20; Isaiah 24:21-23; Isaiah 11; Isaiah 65).

8. Shmini Atseret – Eternal Kingdom of New Heavens and New Earth

“Say to the Israelites, ‘On the fifteenth day of the seventh month the Lord’s Feast of Tabernacles begins, and it lasts for seven days. The first day is a sacred assembly; do no regular work. For seven days present offerings made by fire to the Lord, and on the eighth day (Hebrew: be’yom ha’shmini) hold a sacred assembly and present an offering made to the Lord by fire. It is the closing assembly (Hebrew: atseret), do no regular work... So beginning with the fifteenth day of the seventh month, after you have gathered the crops of the land, celebrate the festival to the Lord for seven days: the first day shall be a day of rest, and the eighth day also is a day of rest” (Leviticus 23:34-36,39).

“looking for and earnestly desiring the coming of the day of God, by reason of which the heavens being on fire will be dissolved, and the elements will melt with fervent heat? But, according to his promise, we look for new heavens and a new earth, in which dwells righteousness. Therefore, beloved, seeing that you look for these things, be diligent to be found in peace, without blemish and blameless in his sight” (2 Peter 3:12-14).

“And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth have passed away, and the sea is no more. I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready like a bride adorned for her husband. I heard a loud voice out of heaven saying, ‘Behold, God’s dwelling is with people, and he will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away from them every tear from their eyes. Death will be no more, neither will there be mourning, nor crying, nor pain, any more. The first things have passed away” (Revelation 21:1-4).

We have already learned about the feast of Sukkot/Tabernacles, which starts on the fifteenth day of the seventh month. The festival lasts for seven plus one days. The feast of Sukkot itself is a feast of seven days, but it has one additional day, the eighth day, ‘Shmini Atseret’ in Hebrew, the closing assembly/feast. It is also called ‘Simhat Torah’, that is, feast of the joy of the law, when Torah scrolls are carried around in the synagogues and all the people are rejoicing. The last Torah portion is read, and the reading of Torah is restarted from the beginning. It is like a new beginning in the Torah. The feast of Tabernacles foreshadows the Messianic Kingdom, Kingdom of bridal canopy and Tabernacles, as we have seen above, based on Isaiah 4:2-6. The additional eighth day of the feast, Shmini Atseret, or Simhat Torah, is like a foreshadowing serial of the feast of Tabernacles, which describes the time after the Messianic Kingdom of peace, the time of future new heavens and new earth, the eternal Kingdom of God.

When we consider this High Shabbat, the eight day, in the light of numerology, or gematria, of the Hebrew Bible, it speaks about a new beginning. The seven feasts of Israel and the seven days of the feast of Tabernacles bring the old world to its end, for number 7 is the number of God’s perfection in the Bible. The Book of Revelation abounds in number sevens; there are seven churches, seven archangels, seven seals, seven trumpets, seven thunders etc. All the sevens in Revelation speak about how God’s judgements and God’s plans will come true in this age.

Number eight is a number of new beginnings. Shmini Atseret, the closing assembly of the eighth day which comes after the feast of Tabernacles, is thus, in the light of biblical gematria, a new beginning, the eternal kingdom of new heavens and new earth, which will come after the Messiah’s Millennium Kingdom of peace. Shmini Atseret, the final feast, is the beginning of a new world, which is the ultimate goal of God’s whole plan of redemption, from Calvary up to the eternal age of new heavens and new earth.

Why does Christianity not observe the original feasts of the Lord?

We have discussed the prophetic and symbolic significance of the feasts of the Lord in God’s redemptive plan, as revealed in the Bible. Why, then, does the majority of global Christianity not observe these original feasts of the Lord, which the early church observed according to the New Testament? The greatest culprit is the horn of the fourth beast that Daniel prophesied, the beast of Rome: the throne of the Roman Emperor, and after him the throne of the Pope.

Rome has changed the calendar system, it has changed the day of rest from Shabbath to the day of the sun, Sunday (Constantine in 321 AD), and it has given the feasts of the Lord, for the most part, a heathen foundation based on Babylonian mystery beliefs, coating them with a Christian exterior. Rome has succeeded in making the majority of Christianity swallow up these changes, the roots of which are largely in paganism. A good example is the history of Christmas, of which Otaba’s Great Encyclopedia writes as follows:

Pagan background of Christmas and heritage of the Middle Age: Christian Christmas was moved to the 25th of December in the 350’s. The former feast was in January, at Epiphany. There have been several different interpretations and calculations of the time of Christ’s birth. It has been placed in the spring and in the autumn. But no tradition binds it to December. The reasons lie elsewhere. In Rome, by order of Emperor Aurelianus, the 25th of December was celebrated as the birthday of the sun god. “Dies natalis solis in victi”. This was linked to oriental religions, e.g. Mithra cult. The date was chosen, because at the time Julian calendar was introduced, winter solstice fell on December 25th.

Christian church acted in regard to the feast the same way it so often used to do. It didn’t rise to fight against the success of the manoeuvre, but embraced it and transferred a Christian content to it. Two other feasts of the Roman Empire added to the making up of Christmas; one was Saturnalia,
Prophetic Perspectives
Observations on Zechariah, chapters 12-14

Written by:
Keijo Lindeman

The world we live in now is a chaotic world. As Daniel has prophesied, the great sea of nations, and the Mediterranean area in particular, is in turmoil. It is obvious that the process of events heralded by the sixth trumpet of Revelation has began, and the area of River Euphrates is the stage for fighting and war. Four evil angels have been released from River Euphrates, and four states are prime targets of terrorism, fighting, and turmoil: Iraq, Syria, Iran, and Turkey. We have addressed this issue already in our previous magazine, Yovel of May. This turmoil will sooner or later, according to God’s timing, result in a global war, where 200 million soldiers will be fighting, culminating in an atom war which will destroy the human race.

In the midst of this storm Israel has had reasonable peace, away from the worst fighting. Still, Israel lives all the time threatened by war and terrorism. Iran keeps threatening to wipe off Israel from the earth, and its underlings, terrorist organizations Hizbollah in southern Lebanon, Hamas and Jihad in Gaza, as well as an extreme Muslim terrorist organization on Sinai, allied with ISIS, cry out hate and destruction to Israel. Egypt has been forced to fight continually against terrorists active in Sinai. There is hostility toward Israel also in many of Israel’s other Muslim neighbours. Part of the Muslim population of Egypt and Jordan desire the dissolving of the peace treaty with Israel.

Inside Israel many Palestinians riot and some extreme Islamists make terrorist attacks against Jews. Many other countries, e.g. in Europe, have had the share of extreme Islamic terrorism. Especially Jerusalem is in the center of controversy, as Palestinians claim its eastern part as the capital of their future state of Palestine, while Israel wants to keep Jerusalem undivided as Israel’s eternal capital. The actual bone of contention is the Temple Mount area where the so called holy buildings of Islam are: the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa. Elsewhere in the world there is strict surveillance with cameras and metal detectors in all public buildings and so called holy places, Mecca e.g., but they are not allowed on Temple Mount in Jerusalem where the so called temples of Muslims are situated. Israel had to take away all surveillance equipment because of riots run by Palestinians and oppression used by Islamic nations. The word of God has foreseen all this, as we will see as we move on to study briefly the prophecies in Zechariah’s chapters 12-14.

Zechariah’s message to surrounding nations and to all nations

“An oracle. The word of Yahweh concerning Israel. Yahweh, who stretches out the heavens, and lays the foundation of the earth, and forms the spirit of man within him says: ‘Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of reeling (Hebrew Bible: cup of poison) to all the surrounding peoples and on Judah also will it be in the siege against Jerusalem. It will happen in that day, that I will make Jerusalem a burdensome stone for all the peoples. All who burden themselves with it will be severely wounded, and all the nations of the earth will be gathered together against it” (Zechariah 12:1-3).

Message to nations that surround Israel

Original Hebrew text goes as follows: “Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of poison for all the surrounding peoples.” This part of the prophecy concerns nations surrounding Israel, and Jerusalem will become a cup of poison to them. Jerusalem will be a bone of contention and a cup of poison to surrounding Islamic nations, and to many other nations, when people try to divide by force the land God has promised to Israel, and establish a Palestinian state with East Jerusalem as its capital. Israel won’t accept this kind of solution, because, according to the Bible, Jerusalem is Israel’s eternal and undivided capital, although nations won’t accept it. According to prophet Joel the Lord will judge every nation that
stretches its hand in order to divide the land of Israel, or touches Jerusalem with evil intentions (Joel 2:1-4). The controversy focuses on Temple Mount where Muslims’ so-called sacred mosques are. (In the light of biblical prophecy these are Islamic “abominations in the sanctuary” on Temple Mount; Daniel 11:31; 12:11; Matthew 24:3,15.)

Palestinians, and the entire Islamic world, are afraid that Jews are going to build there the third Temple of Jerusalem and replace or even destroy the existing mosques which are the third holiest places of the Muslim world. Temple Institute has for years been making preparations for the building of the third Temple. Islamist world succeeded in its efforts to oppress UNESCO to make a decision, which is contrary to historical facts, claiming that Temple Mount (Western Wall included) has no connections with Jewish history, but that it is a part of Palestinian and Islamic history.

The majority of the representatives of the Christian world in UNESCO kept cowardly their mouths shut, and abstained from voting, which made it easy for the Islamic minority to bring about the decision which distorts history. Some Palestinians have gone so far in their pursuit to distort history that they claim that Abraham, Jesus and other biblical characters are Palestinians, and that the history of Israel, which started from Abraham according to the Bible, is in fact the history of Palestinians.

Nations surrounding Israel attack Israel and Jerusalem

Zechariah prophesied how the nations around Israel would attack Jerusalem and Israel. At this moment there is war going on in the Middle East, in Iraq and Syria mostly, where Muslims, Shiias and Sunnis are fighting for power, and the terrorist organization ISIS is using terrible violence. Super powers have also got involved in the fight, and it seems, rather, that every one is against every one. Ultimately the situation will end up with surrounding Arab nations attacking Israel and Jerusalem. Egypt and Jordan will join them inspite of their peace treaty with Israel. Psalm 83 speaks about this war, and it gives the names of the attacking nations: Edom, Moab and Ammon, i.e. Jordan; Hagrites, i.e. Egypt (Hagar the Egyptian was Abraham’s concubine); Gebal and Tyre, i.e. Lebanon; Assur, i.e. Syria and Iraq; and Philistia, i.e. the Palestinians. They want to wipe off the name of Israel from the earth. They try to capture Jerusalem, the dwelling place of God. The Psalm tells us the shameful end of Israel’s enemies. Fire will burn the attackers, and the destruction and shame of these attacking nations will be great, and the Lord will get the glory.

Israeli generals and the atom war

“In that day, says Yahweh, I will strike every horse with terror, and his rider with madness; and I will open ye eyes on the house of Judah, and will strike every horse of the peoples with blindness. The chieftains of Judah (Hebrew: Alufei Yehudah) will say in their heart, ‘The inhabitants of Jerusalem are my strength in Yahweh of Hosts their God’. In that day I will make the chieftains of Judah (Alufei Yehudah) like a pan of fire among wood, and like a flaming torch among sheaves; and they will devour the surrounding peoples, on the right hand and on the left, and Jerusalem will yet again dwell in their own place, even in Jerusalem. Yahweh also will save the tents of Judah first, that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem not be magnified above Judah. In that day Yahweh will defend the inhabitants of Jerusalem. He who is feeble among them at that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like God, like the angel of Yahweh before them. It will happen in that day, that I will seek to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem” (Zechariah 12:4-9).

The text speaks about chieftains, leaders of tribes. The original Hebrew text uses the word Alufei Yehudah, which in modern Hebrew means generals of Judah, who have a decisive role in this war.

The horses of the nations are struck with terror, and their riders with madness. The Book of Revelation speaks about flying war horses, (i.e. fighter planes (Revelation 9:7-9). It will be a war where the technology of enemy’s planes collapse, blindness and terror hits the planes, and they become uncontrollable. Pilots turn mad.

We may ask, if Israel has such advanced military technology which enables them to disturb the information technology of the enemy’s fighter planes in such a degree that the planes go mad, or if it is God’s miracle or both.

Everything will culminate in atom war. Atom fire sent by the generals of Judah consumes the attacking nations around Israel and the destruction will be great. Zechariah mentions the use of atomic weapons, when he says that the attackers’ flesh rots while they are standing (14:12-15). This description refers to the use of neutron bomb. With its explosive power it does not cause so much damage to infrastructure or buildings, but its neutron radiations destroys all the animate. By the way, the man who developed neutron bomb was a Jewish scientist called Samuel Cohen. Troops that attack Jerusalem will be overcome with confusion, and they will start fighting against each other, and the fire of the atomic weapons of generals of Judah will destroy them.

The area of the Land of Israel enlarges as consequence of war

The Palestinian territory is called West Bank, but in the Bible that area belongs to Judea and Samaria. According to the Book of Zechariah the territory of Judah will be delivered from the hands of the enemy to Israel, and likewise the territories of Samaria and Esau in southern Jordan will return to Israel (Obadiah 19-21). Sephardic Jews, i.e. the so called Anusim Jews from Spain, Portugal, Brazil, South America, and other countries, who were converted to Christianity by force, will settle in the South land, the Negev, as told by Obadiah. The territory of Edom and Moab in southern and central Jordan will come into Israel’s possession (Isaiah 11:12-16). According to Zechariah the territory of Gilead from Golan towards Syria and northern Jordan, as well as Lebanon, will come to Israel’s possession to receive Exodus Jews (10:8-10-12).

Why does the devil want to occupy Jerusalem and destroy Israel?

The devil knows that when Yeshua the Messiah returns to Jerusalem, on the Mount of Olives, his judgement time is at hand. The devil knows that he and his troops will be thrown into the abyss for a thousand years, after which time he will be released for a moment. He will then stir up a last revolt against Jerusalem, but is defeated and thrown into the lake of fire for forever, as told in Revelation chapter 20 (Matthew 25:41).

Satan can’t compete with Almighty God, but he makes every possible effort to prevent judgement from falling on him by taking control over Jerusalem, and by inciting the enemies of the God of Israel and the people of Israel to attack Jerusalem and Israel. The devil tries to make happen that there would be no people of Israel in Jerusalem to shout: “Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord”, in which case the Messiah couldn’t return on the Mount of Olives.

Isaiah has prophesied over these things in an interesting way (Isaiah 14:12-15). He talks about the morning star alias Lucifer or Satan, the anointed cherub, who was so blinded by his wisdom and beauty that he, in his pride, rose in rebellion against God, wanting
Israel will be purified through fire to be a nation of priests

“It shall happen that in all the land, says Yahweh, two parts in it will be cut off and die, but the third will be left in it. I will bring the third part into the fire, and will refine them as silver is refined, and will test them like gold is tested. They will call on my name, and I will hear them. I will say, It is my people. And they will say, Yahweh is my God” (Zechariah 13:8-9).

“Behold, I send my messenger, and he will prepare the way before me; and the Lord, whom you seek, will suddenly come to his temple; and the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, behold, he comes! Says Yahweh of Hosts. But who can endure the day of his coming? And who will stand when he appears? For he is like a refiner’s fire, and like launderer’s soap; and he will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver, and he will purify the sons of Levi, and refine them as gold and silver; and they shall offer to Yahweh offerings in righteousness” (Malachi 3:1-3).

This text of Zechariah has been interpreted in various ways.

* One explanation is that two thirds of mankind will perish in the judgement of the Last days, and one third will remain. This explanation cannot hold, because the context shows clearly that these words are spoken to the Jewish people and Israel.

* According to the second explanation the prophecy was fulfilled in 70 AD, when Roman troops occupied Jerusalem and destroyed the Temple. Two thirds of Jews were killed in those battles, and the remaining third was taken as prisoners to Rome to be sold at slave market. Zechariah’s prophecy, however, relates to the events of the End time. To my understanding, this prophecy was but partly fulfilled in the year 70.

* The third interpretation is that in Pogroms, persecutions, and the Nazi Holocaust in Europe and elsewhere in the world, two thirds of Jews have already been destroyed.

* According to the forth interpretation two thirds of the world’s or Israel’s Jews will be destroyed in the End time, and only one third will survive and receive Jeshua as their Messiah.

What, then, is the right interpretation of the prophecy? The original Hebrew text sheds us some light in verse 8: “...pi shnaim ba Yikartuh Yigvauh vehashlishit yi-vater ba ya vehevith et hashlishit baesh utstraphtim...” “Pi shnaim” is a mathematical term which means two times. This somewhat difficult text to translate could run as follows: ... two times will there be devastation/destruction and starving/death, and the third time I reject/renounce/back out/agree/forgive there, and bring the third/the third time into fire and refine...” Jeremiah’s prophecy gives us even more light.

“Therefore, behold, the days come, says Yahweh, that it shall no more be said, as Yahweh lives, who brought up the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt, but, as Yahweh lives, who brought up the children of Israel from the land of the north, and from all the countries where he had driven them. I will bring them again into their land that I gave to their fathers. Behold, I will send for many fishermen, says Yahweh, and they shall fish them up; and afterward I will send for many hunters, and they shall hunt them from every mountain, and from every hill, and out of the clefts of the rocks. For my eyes are on all their ways; they are not hidden from my face neither is their iniquity concealed from my eyes. First I will reimburse their iniquity and their sin double, because they have polluted my land with the carcasses of their detestable things, and have filled my inheritance with their abominations” (Jeremiah 16:14-18).

According to this prophecy, before the End time’s great Exodus from the northern country and from other countries, when fishermen try to persuade and hunters, i.e. persecutors, chase the Jews and drive them back to Israel, God will recompense doubly their iniquity and sins. We find a similar expression in Isaiah:

“Comfort you, comfort you my people, says your God. Speak comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry to her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned, that she has received of Yahweh’s hand doubly for all her sins” (Isaiah 40:1-2).

Before the time of comfort comes to Israel and Jerusalem in the Last Days, the Jewish people and Jerusalem have received doubly (kiflaim in Hebrew) for their sins from God’s hand. This has happened twice: in the devastations of the land of Israel, and in the destructions of the Temple, and in the exiles thereafter.

The first time it happened in two parts:

* First the Northern Kingdom of the divided Israel, the ten tribes, i.e. Ephraim or Joseph, was taken into exile in Assur in 722 BC.

* The second part, southern Judah, was taken into exile during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar, in 586 BC, when also Solomon’s Temple was destroyed.

The second time it happened through Romans in 70 AD, when the Second Temple was destroyed and the surviving Jews were taken into exile in Rome and sold as slaves, and the land was deserted for almost two thousand years.

Now the third time, in the Last days, in the eve of Messiah’s coming, the people of Israel will go through God’s refining fire in order to be cleansed of their sins, and in order to submit to receive Yeshua the Messiah, as also prophet Malachi prophesies. In the final hours before the Messiah’s coming, the people of Israel will be cleansed in fire, so that they would be the holy peop-
le of priests for the Messiah's Millennial Kingdom of Peace (Isaiah 61:4-6, Isaiah 2; Revelation 20). Not only Israel will be purified, but also the church of the Lord will be refined in fire, so that it would be holy and blameless for the Messiah's coming, and for the taking up of the church.

Israel will repent in synagogues

"I will pour on the house of David, and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the spirit of grace and supplications; and they will look to me [After 'me', the Hebrew has the two letters 'Aleph Tau', the first and the last letters of the Hebrew alphabet, not as a word, but as a grammatical marker] whom they have pierced; and they shall mourn for him, as one mourns for his only son, and will grieve bitterly for him, as one grieves for his firstborn. In that day there will be a great mourning in Jerusalem, like the mourning of Hadadrimmon in the valley of Megiddon. The land will 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; the family of the house of Levi apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of Shimei apart, and their wives apart; the family of the house of David apart, and their wives apart, the family of the house of Nathan, i.e. the prophets; from the house of Shimee, i.e. the government employees. With their secular and spiritual leadership the entire people will repent. Why are the wives mentioned separately, apart? This refers to the practice of traditional orthodox synagogues, where men and women sit apart; thus, in Israel's time of repentence, synagogues with their worship play a crucial part in Israel's receiving Jeshua as their Messiah. Why synagogues? God won't allow unbiblical Christian doctrines and partly pagan Babylonian beliefs that have come through the church of Rome to confuse the people of Israel any more. The priestly people of Israel shall be a pure priestly nation in the Messiah's Kingdom according to the Bible's teaching and the model of the early church.

Messianic synagogues were the meeting places of believing Jews in times of the early church, as James (Ya'akov) writes (James 1:1; 2:1-2). In the original Greek text, and also in Hebrew New Testament, it reads synagogen, i.e. Messianic believers gathered in Messianic synagogues. We have the same in the Book of Hebrews (Hebrews 10:25). The Greek original gives episyngagon, i.e. we must not give up meeting in a Messianic synagogue. It is quite natural that the people of Israel will repent in synagogues in the time of great tribulation, and, in the future Kingdom of Peace of the Messiah, there will obviously be Messianic synagogues in the land of Israel.

The text also mentions that all names of idols and the spirit of unpurity will be driven out of the land. Spirit of Islam, worship of saints, and other unbiblical and heathen religious practices will come to an end in Israel. In the model of the early church homes were also believers' meeting places, and it is good to take to the habit of gathering together in homes thus preparing for times when it won't be possible to meet in public places of worship during the great tribulation and persecutions.)

All nations will come against Israel and Jerusalem

"Behold, a day of Yahweh comes, when your spoil will be devired in your midst. For I will gather all nations against Jerusalem to battle; and the city will be taken, the houses rifled, and the women ravished. Half of the city will go out into captivity, and the rest of the people will not be cut off from the city. Then Yahweh will go out and fight against those nations, as when he fought in the day of battle. His feet will stand in that day on the Mount of Olives, which is before Jerusalem on the east, and the Mount of Olives will be split in two, from east to west, making a very great valley.

Half of the mountain will move toward the north, and half of it toward the south. You shall flee (Hebrew nastem = flee, or nistam = closes) by the valley of my mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach to Azel, yes, you shall flee, just like you fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Yahweh my God will come, and all the holy ones with you" (Zechariah 14:1-5).

Finally all nations gather together to attack Israel and Jerusalem, as Zechariah prophesies. This is what we have been seeing lately; not only individual countries, but even the UN keeps drawing resolutions against Israel, and wants to devide Jerusalem.

There are about 30 million Kurds, but no one wants to provide them a state of their own, while for the cause of Palestine resolutions after resolutions are drawn up. All this is a proof of antisemitic nations' double standard and the latent hate nations harbour against Israel, and the God of Israel. In the end nations will attack Israel.

That's when the Messiah will start war against the Gentiles. He went up to heavens from the Mount of Olives, and that is where He returns (Acts 1). The Mount of Olives will be split in two, from east to west, creating thus a large valley; and then all Islamic abominations, the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa, and probably also Catholic abominations, will fall in the clefts. Some people think that a temple of anti-Christian age of wrath were to be built in Jerusalem, and Anti-Christ would proclaim himself god there. However, it is more obvious that the Dome of the Rock and Al Aqsa will be destroyed at the coming of the Messiah, and the third Temple of Jerusalem won't be built until in the Messiah's Millennial Kingdom.

The people of Jerusalem will flee and seek shelter in the valley of the Mount of Olives, split in two. Moshe Ben Meir, a late Messianic pioneer from Jerusalem, had an interesting interpretation of this. The verb to flee is nastem in Hebrew, but as the vowels were not marked, the word could also be read as nistam, that is, 'closes'. Thus, the Jews will flee -nastem - to the valley in the crevice of the Mount of Olives, and the enemy will pursue them. Then the Mount of Olives will close -nastam -, and the enemy will perish just like Egyptians perished in the Red Sea when they were pursuing Israelites (Exodus 14:26-31). We have another relating example in the case of Korah and his allies, who rose up against Moses, and fell into the crevice opened in the earth, and went down alive into the grave (Numbers 16). Revelation also points to that possibility.

"Then from his mouth the serpent spewed water like a river, to overtake the woman and sweep her away with the torrent. But the earth helped the woman opening its mouth and swallowing the river that the dragon had spewed out of his mouth" (Revelation 12:15-16).

The river the dragon alias Satan sends to sweep away the woman, Israel, are the troops of the enemy that will perish, when the earth opens to swallow them up,
as happened to Korah and his allies. The Mount of Olives will close and swallow the enemy. At the Messiah’s coming, resurrected holy ones will come with the Messiah (Jude 14,15). The holy ones in their resurrection bodies will fight with the Messiah against the enemies of Israel, save Israel from destruction, judge Israel’s enemies and the ungodly world, and establish the Messiah’s Millennial Kingdom of Peace on earth.

The Millennial Kingdom of the Messiah and the Temple of Jerusalem

“It will happen in that day, that living waters will go out from Jerusalem; half of them toward the eastern sea, and half of them toward the western sea, in summer and in winter will it be. Yahweh will be King over all the earth. In that day Yahweh will be one, and his name one. All the land will be made like the Arabah, from Geba to Rimmon south of Jerusalem; and she will be lifted up, and will dwell in her palce, from Benjamin’s gate to the place of the first gate, to the corner gate, and from the tower of Hananel to the king’s wine-presses. Men will dwell therein, and there will be no more curse; but Jerusalem will dwell safely...It will happen that everyone who is left of all the nations that came against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, Yahweh of Hosts, and to keep the feast of tents. It will be, that whoever of all the families of the earth doesn’t go up to Jerusalem to worship the King, Yahweh of Hosts, on them there will be no rain. If the family of Egypt doesn’t go up, and doesn’t come, neither will it rain on them. This will be the plague with which Yahweh will strike the nations that don’t go up to keep the feast of tents. This will be the punishment of Egypt, and the punishment of all the nations that don’t go up to keep the feast of tents.

In that day there will be on the bells of the horses, “HOLY TO YAHWEH”, and the pots in Yahweh’s house will be like bowls before the altar. Yes, every pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to Yahweh of Hosts; and all those who sacrifice will come and take of them, and cook in them. In that day there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of Yahweh of Hosts” (Zechariah 14:8-11. 16-21).

All ends with the Messiah establishing His Millenial Kingdom, where the resurrected holy ones reign with the Messiah, as written in Revelation chapter 20 (Isaiah 24:21-23).

The third Temple will be built in Jerusalem, and the glory of the Messiah will dwell there (Isaiah 2:1-4). Nations will come up to Jerusalem to worship the Lord, to keep the feast of Tabernacles, and to receive teaching of the word of God from the mouth of the believing Israeli nation of priests.

The Mount of Zion will be the highest mountain on earth; other mountains will fall down and topographically the earth will be like one flat garden of Eden, just as Revelation 6 and 16, and other biblical texts say. We are all invited to that wonderful Kingdom of the Messiah, and after that to the eternal Kingdom of God in new heavens and new earth, which is the ultimate dwelling place of those who are Messiah’s own. It would be wise to receive in faith Jeshua the Messiah as one’s Saviour and King, and thus have the privilege to be partaker in that final, wonderful future that awaits all those in the Messiah.

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New edition published in every three months.
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