



More Nazarene fundamentals

Jim Coetzee

Nazarene Israelite Two House Congregation of Port Elizabeth.



More Nazarene fundamentals

This book is not to be sold. We are told in the second part of Matthew 10: 8 “*freely you received, freely give.*” The book contains sermons that I gave over the past few weeks and is intended as a reference manual for like-minded Nazarene Jewish/Israelite believers.

Note: All Scriptures used are from the ‘NEW AMERICAN STANDARD BIBLE’, unless otherwise indicated. Set-apart Names corrected in quotes used, in accord with this Bible’s ‘Principles of Translation’.

Published by the Nazarene Israelite Two House Congregation of Port Elizabeth. Published November 2012.

Index

Chapter		Page
1	Are you a true disciple of Messiah?	4
2	What is required for Eternal life?	9
3	Shadows of what is to come.	13
4	The Fear of Elohim.	21
5	Why can we expect Messiah's return?	27
6	Forgive us our Debt.	33
7	Why do believers sin?	37
8	What's next?	42
9	Where are we heading?	47
10	Does it make a difference to Elohim?	51
11	What is the reason for our creation?	57
12	Why do we need Yahshua?	61
13	YHVH – The Eternal?	66
14	Thou shalt not covet!	70
15	Find the way to peace.	73
16	The handwriting on the wall.	78
17	The importance of Messiah's resurrection.	83
18	Sabbath rest.	89
19	The Master Potter's work.	93
20	Our hope of Glory.	97
21	How to overcome Depression?	101
22	Our perfect example, Messiah.	106
23	The seven ecclesia of Revelation.	116
24	Mysticism.	122
25	Lessons from the life of Sarah.	129
26	Yahshua speaks about the two house restoration .	135
	Contact details of publisher	139

Chapter 1: Are you a true disciple of Messiah?

There are literally hundreds of different Christian denominations all confessing faith in our Jewish Messiah Yahshua, nevertheless they prefer to call Him J*e*s*u*s* the C*h*r*i*s*t*. Most professing Christian groups also maintain that they have a calling from YHVH, the one they refer to as the LORD. In addition, many non-Christian religious groups regard themselves as being chosen of (their) G-d. In fact most religious groups, whether they are Christian, or not, believes that they have a personal calling from (their) G-d; it is no wonder that there are millions of intelligent people throughout the world, who are very suspicious of any religion.

The question is: Is it possible to find the truth amongst all the different religious groups in the world today? One thing is as certain as the nose on your face; Yahshua the Messiah is real! Even though His name was changed by Christianity; and most have been deceived to believe the true gospel to be about the birth, life, death and resurrection of Messiah and that He came to fulfill Elohim's commandments for them – so that they need not obey Torah any longer, He fulfilled all the prophecies in the Tanach about his first advent and most of His chosen disciples testified about Him in their writings, which eventually became canonized as the New (Renewed) Covenant. Most people in the western world is familiar with Yahshua's Latinized Greek name namely J*e*s*u*s* C*h*r*i*s*t, but very few truly knows and believe what He taught and why He came to earth. The question at this time is: who are Yahshua's true disciples today, and what make them different from all the millions who say they believe in Him?

Do you realize that most people simply ignore what Yahshua taught, especially if they disagree with it. Even so, Yahshua our Messiah warned those who wish to be His true disciples that His way is a narrow lonely road, as we read from Matthew 7: 13 & 14, in this way: ***'Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. (14) For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.'*** Even if one becomes a true disciple of Messiah, a real danger is that he/she can be deceived by Satan and his many agents to go right back to where he/she comes from, or follow another counterfeit religion, slightly closer than Christianity to the one true faith once delivered to the saints or true believers, as Rav Shaul warned about in 2 Corinthians 11: 3 & 4, saying: ***'But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be lead astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Messiah. (4) For if one comes and preaches another Yahshua whom we have not preached, or you received a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear it beautifully.'***

Rav Shaul was astonished how easily believers flung aside his teachings, instead of imitating him as he imitated Messiah; to embrace a counterfeit gospel together with a counterfeit Messiah. Satan as the master counterfeiter has managed to deceive the majority of believers to accept falsehood, even if some once embraced the truth. This happens time and time again; as people are called out of the counterfeit of the original Nazarene Jewish faith, namely Christianity, they are deceived to follow just another counterfeit faith, where people decide for themselves how and when to worship YHVH our Elohim. Even though it is very difficult to deceive those called out of the world, Satan and his agents are persuasive teachers peddling a counterfeit of righteousness, which is much closer to the true faith, once delivered to the saints or true followers of Messiah. Rav Shaul writes about such teachers in 2 Corinthians 11: 13 – 15, in this way: ***'For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Messiah. (14) And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (15) Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.'*** No wonder so many varieties of what some call the truth and righteousness is taught under the name of Yahshua Messiah. Yes, there is also a great deal of falsehood taught under the name of J*e*s*u*s* C*h*r*i*s*t, but it is not so easy to deceive those of us who have learnt the true name of our

Messiah. We have over a period of time discovered that most of what Christianity teaches in the name of Messiah is based on lies and paganism.

However, we need to be very careful of those who come to us in the true name of our Messiah and Savior. When Yahshua addressed His disciples privately in Matthew 24 and said in verses 4 & 5, ***“See to it that no one misleads you. (5) For many will come in My name*** (we need to realize that Yahshua knew His true name and did not ever refer to Himself as the ‘Christ’), ***saying, ‘I am the Messiah,’ and will mislead many.”*** Like His false name, Yahshua’s true name serves as a façade or disguise for religious viewpoints that did not originate with Messiah. Yahshua said in Matthew 7: 22 & 23, ***“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Master, Master, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ (23) And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.”*** If we practice lawlessness, which is the opposite of truth or Torah, we negate all other good deeds. As soon as we follow the teachings of teachers who contradict the words of Messiah and YHVH, we are not following truth any longer.

Lawlessness is the main component in the counterfeit righteousness taught by these false teachers. Under Satan’s influence mankind has been blinded to the true gospel of Messiah, who is the image of Elohim. The problem is as identified by the prophet Jeremiah as human nature in chapter 17: 9, as follows: ***“The heart is more deceitful than all else and desperately sick (the KJV reads wicked); who can understand it?”*** Rav Shaul agreed with the prophet Jeremiah in Romans 8: 7 - 9, in this way: ***‘Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward Elohim; for it does not subject itself to the law of Elohim, for it is not even able to do so; (8) and those who are in the flesh cannot please Elohim. (9) However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of Elohim dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Messiah, he does not belong to Him.’*** It is plain to see that, alternatives to the true message of Yahshua our Messiah have been contrived to accommodate mankind’s natural unwillingness to obey Elohim. The sad thing about this is that most people who accept these false lawless ideas are totally sincere. It is as Rav Shaul has written in 2 Thessalonians 2: 7 - 12, in this way: ***‘For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. (8) And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Master will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; (9) that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, (10) and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. (11) And for this reason Elohim will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, (12) in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.’***

The question at this point is: What is the difference between a true and a false disciple of Messiah? Yahshua our Messiah gave us a hint in the parable in Matthew 22: 14, when He said in conclusion of His Message, ***“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*** Both the ideas of being called and chosen are Scriptural, however, they are seldom understood and are as a result often misapplied. But what did Yahshua mean, when He used these two words in the quoted section? We need to understand that Elohim’s purpose is to eventually give eternal life to all of mankind, as witnessed in John 3: 17, as follows: ***“For Elohim did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.”*** Even so, all of mankind are not being saved during this age, as may be understood from Ephesians 1: 7 - 12, in this way: ***‘In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, (8) which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight (9) He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (10) with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Messiah, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him (11) also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, (12) to the end that we***

who were the first to hope in Messiah should be to the praise of His glory.' It is only once we both learn and obey the truth, that Elohim chooses a person to receive eternal life.

Righteousness goes together with truth and is revealed in the Tanach to be Torah, as we read from Psalms 119: 142, as follows: ***'Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and Thy law (Torah) is truth.'*** When Yahshua was on the earth as a 'man', the only Scriptures (or word of Elohim) available at that time was the Tanach and in His prayer immediately prior to His betrayal by Judas, He also identified it as truth, as recorded in John 17: 17, in this way: ***"Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth."*** So it is clear that truth is what YHVH revealed to us in His word, the Scriptures. Those who want to be saved from the second death must both learn and accept the Scriptures (truth); and apply it in their lives: this is known as putting their faith into action. We read Rav Shaul's exhortation in this regard, from first Timothy 2: 1 – 4, as follows: ***"First of all, then, I urge that entreaties and prayers, petitions and thanksgivings, be made on behalf of all men, (2) for kings and all who are in authority, in order that we may lead a tranquil and quiet life in all godliness and dignity. (3) This is good and acceptable in the sight of Elohim our Savior, (4) who desires all men to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth."***

After we have come to the knowledge of truth, by guidance of a teacher and intensive self-study, we need to repent and clean our lives up in accordance to what we have learnt from the Scriptures. As I said many times before, repentance is a process which takes many years of studying and learning; and YHVH allows us a period of time to get our lives in order, as witnessed in second Peter 3: 9, in this way: ***'The Master is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish (in the second death) but for all to come to repentance.'*** True repentance (or Teshuvah the transliterated Hebrew word for it) means that we stop sinning (breaking the Torah teachings of Elohim) and return to obeying the commandments that we broke or neglected in the past. True repentance also involves believing in the one and only true Elohim, calling on His name. However, once called out of the religions of this world, we need someone who has completed Messiah's discipleship program to guide and teach us in the way of Elohim, before we are able to follow the lonely narrow road that our Messiah walked whilst He was on earth. Rav Shaul puts it like this in Romans 10: 13 & 14, saying: ***'For "WHOEVER WILL CALL UPON THE NAME OF YHVH WILL BE SAVED." (14) How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?'*** We need to be taught by teachers who teach Torah righteousness in the name of Elohim and who are themselves faithful to His word; who teach that true repentance involves turning from sin to full Torah obedience, as we read from 1 John 3: 4, in this way: ***'Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.'***

To fully understand the difference between the phrases 'called' and 'chosen', we need to see what the Scriptures have to say about it. We read therefore from second Thessalonians 2: 13 & 14, where Rav Shaul explains: ***'But we should always give thanks to Elohim for you, brethren beloved by the Master, because Elohim has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (14) And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Master Yahshua Messiah.'*** So we see that, YHVH called believers by the preaching of the gospel (the good news about the coming Kingdom of Elohim); they are given knowledge of the truth (the Scriptures) and as a result need to repent of their lawlessness (or sin). Those believers, who respond by believing the word of truth, are then chosen for salvation. But how do they respond? They respond by accepting Yahshua as their Passover Lamb and are immersed in His saving name; after which they are given a portion of the Set-apart Spirit as a pledge of their salvation, as confirmed in Ephesians 1: 13 & 14, as follows: ***'In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Set-apart Spirit of promise, (14) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of Elohim's own possession, to the praise of His glory.'***

It all begins when Elohim calls us to come out of darkness into His marvelous light, as Yahshua explained in John 6: 44, saying: ***‘No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.’*** In fact Yahshua repeated this after explaining the need to partake of the annual Passover to His disciples, saying in verse 65 of John 6, ***“For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father.”*** Elohim grants us an earnest desire to learn more about Him and His ways, after which He wants us to submit to His Torah way of life, as Rav Shaul explained in Philippians 2: 12 - 15, saying: ***‘So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; (13) for it is Elohim who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (14) Do all things without grumbling or disputing; (15) that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of Elohim above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.’*** Yahshua used the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 to indicate people’s different approaches to hearing the true gospel; in the parable, all who hear the gospel of the Kingdom of Elohim preached, respond differently. Only those who are called by Elohim understand the truth. Yahshua starts explaining that those not called will not understand what they hear (in verse 19), saying: ***“When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.”***

Then Yahshua explains the three different responses from the people who understand. Even though Elohim has opened their minds to understanding, each one responds differently. We read accordingly from Matthew 13: 20 & 21: ***“And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; (21) yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction and persecution arises (from family, friends and foes) because of the word, immediately he falls away.”*** Such a person is usually more concerned about what his/her family and friends think of him/her and cannot take their rejection. Such people are afraid to make waves and rock the boat (the proverbial comfort zones of his fellow man), and rejects the words of Elohim soon after hearing it. We continue reading from verse 22, ***“And the one on whom the seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful.”*** This person is not only concerned about the opinions of his peers, but is very busy with all sorts of pursuits in life, and as a result has little time to spend praying and studying the Scriptures. Material things finally get the better of him and he also ultimately rejects the word of Elohim.

Finally we read from verse 23, ***“And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”*** This person immediately understand Elohim’s word and takes it to heart, and as a result changes his way of life to conform to the way of Elohim, as he learns more about Him. This person was chosen for salvation, as he put Elohim first in his life. So we see, that even though many are called to follow Elohim’s will and way, only a few are chosen by Elohim, because they choose to serve Elohim, above all else. We need to understand that the choice to serve Elohim whole heartedly or not remains ours. But like repentance the choice is an ongoing decision, and we need to commit to that choice and persevere until our dying day, or when Yahshua returns one day. We live at a time very close to the end of this age, as is also described in the book of Revelation. This is the time during which a great beast will arise, resulting from an economic and political union of 10 kings, who will resist Yahshua our Messiah at His return. These kings will be very powerful and will believe their union to be powerful enough to engage into battle with Messiah at His return, as witnessed in Revelation 17: 12 – 14, as follows: ***“And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. (13) These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast. (14) These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is***

Master of masters and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful. That is correct; we see that those who are with Messiah at His return, will not only be called and chosen, but they also remained faithful to the end.

How will these chosen, called and faithful get to be with Yahshua at His return. We read the answer in Matthew 24: 29 – 31, in this way: ***“But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, (30) and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. (31) And He will send forth his angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER HIS elect from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other.”*** Those who remain faithful will eventually grow to become like our Master Yahshua the Messiah. Those of us called and chosen have been called because Elohim knows that we have the ability to make it into His everlasting Kingdom. However, once He has called us, He expects each one of us to conform to the image and stature of our Master and Savior Yahshua Messiah. YHVH accordingly allows us to develop through trials and tests that will expose our weaknesses forcing us to continue to make choices to obey Him under very difficult circumstances. If we learn to develop the fruits of the Spirit, of love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control and the like, we will slowly but surely develop Yahshua’s character in us.

To conclude we read how Rav Kepha sums this up in second Peter 1: 2 – 11, as follows: ***“Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of Elohim and of Yahshua our Messiah; (3) seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (4) For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. (5) Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence, knowledge; (6) and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; (7) and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. (8) For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Master Yahshua Messiah. (9) For he who lacks these qualities is blind or short-sighted, having forgotten his purification from his former sins. (10) Therefore, brethren, be all the more diligent to make certain about His calling and choosing you; for as long as you practice these things, you will never stumble; (11) for in this way the entrance into the eternal kingdom of our Master and Savior Yahshua Messiah will be abundantly supplied to you.”*** I pray that this will serve to encourage us to remain faithful to our calling, until our Master and Savior returns. Amein!

Chapter 2: What is required for Eternal Life?

What does our heavenly Father require of us to receive eternal life? The answer to this important question is contained in the Scriptures, as may be read from John 3: 16 – 18, as follows: ***“For Elohim so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (17) For Elohim did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. (18) He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of Elohim.”*** That is all that YHVH requires of us; that we believe in the one whom He has sent.

However, there are more to this. But based on this Scripture, some believe that all they need to do for salvation, is to ‘*accept J*e*s*u*s* in their hearts*’ and then their eternal life is assured. But is that truly what the Scriptures say? It is certain Elohim gives us eternal life out of His deep love for us, His creation. Rav Shaul explains this in Ephesians 2: 1 - 5, in this way: ***‘And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, (2) in which you formerly walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. (3) Among them we too all formerly, lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (4) But Elohim, being rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, (5) even when we were dead in our transgressions, made us alive together with Messiah (by grace you have been saved).’*** Continuing in verses 8 & 9, we read further, ***‘For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of Elohim; (9) not as a result of works, that no one should boast.’*** Yes, we receive eternal life as a result of Elohim’s grace, through faith in Messiah Yahshua and not because of our works of obedience.

However, what did Yahshua our Messiah have to say about the subject of eternal life; after all He is the authority on the subject, since He is known as the author of our salvation. We read accordingly from Hebrews 5: 8 & 9, ***‘Although He was a Son, He learned obedience from the things which He suffered. (9) And having been made perfect, He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation.’*** If we are saved by faith, why does this Scripture read, that Messiah became the source of eternal salvation to all who obey Him? How is it a gift, if we need to do something to receive Elohim’s promise? Let’s turn to the Scriptures to find the answer to these questions and since Messiah is described as the author of salvation, let’s read a few of His teachings in this regard. Whilst Yahshua our Messiah was on earth, He had many disagreements with the religious leaders of His time. Even though He also disagreed with the Pharisees, the group who demanded strict obedience to their interpretations of Elohim’s Torah, He never said that obedience to Elohim’s Torah was wrong or unnecessary. In fact Yahshua said the exact opposite of what most so-called believers in Him believe today, as we read from Matthew 5: 20, as follows: ***“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”***

So we see here, that contrary to what Christianity teach, Yahshua’s interpretation of Torah was stricter than that of the scribes and the Pharisees, as He goes on to explain in the rest of Matthew 5. It is clear that the way the scribes and the Pharisees interpreted Torah in Messiah’s day was not narrow enough, as evidenced by the many spiritual problems experienced by people at that time. Why was it necessary for Messiah on numerous occasions to release people in the community from demonic depression? Similar to today, feelings of guilt and depression originated because of sins – be it personal sins, sins of parents or the community. It is for this reason that as with all Jews, Yahshua set boundaries to safeguard His followers from breaking the commandments. One such a boundary is also used by us the Nazarene followers of Messiah, in that we teach that men or woman should never visit people of the opposite gender (other than their wives/husbands or own children)

without another adult accompanying them. Another example may be seen in Jerusalem to this day, where every Friday afternoon, well before the Sabbath begins, boundaries (or gates) are set up in the streets of the Orthodox areas so that traffic are not allowed to go through the area. This is when the public domain becomes private domain. There is actually a reference in the Talmud in this regard, as follows: Talmud – Mas. Eiruv 6a. 29 – 31: *‘Our Rabbis taught: How is a road through a public domain to be provided with an ‘eruv’ (boundary)? The shape of a doorway is made at one end, and a side-post and cross-beam are fixed at the other.’* In fact Yahshua made a specific reference to the cross-beam in Luke 9: 23, saying: ***“If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me.”*** Here Yahshua was saying that our cross-beams (boundaries) are to be picked up daily, to safeguard our Torah obedience, by the boundaries or gates that He set for His ecclesia or followers, as it will help us to remain within the private domain of Elohim’s household.

Even so, the problem with the scribes and the Pharisees was simply, that they did not fully understand the reason for obeying Torah, as Yahshua said in Matthew 23: 23, ***“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you tithe mint and dill and cumin and have neglected the weightier provisions of the law: justice and mercy and faithfulness; but these are the things you should have done without neglecting the others.”*** Notice that Yahshua commended these religious leaders for their obedience, but added that they did not understand the far more important lessons that should have resulted from obedience to Elohim’s Law. Messiah said that obedience is important, not only as an exercise of doing what is required of us, but because obedience can also teach us Elohim’s character traits of mercy, good judgment and faith. Yahshua made it abundantly clear that merely acknowledging Him as Master and Savior is not enough, when He said in Matthew 7: 21, ***“Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Master, Master,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven.”*** This brings us back to the original question? If we have to do something to inherit eternal life, how can it be a free gift from YHVH? Are we not saved by simply believing in Yahshua Messiah?

What is meant by the word *‘belief’*? The Webster’s Dictionary defines it as follows: *‘An assent (agreement) of the mind to the truth of a declaration, proposition, or alleged fact, on the ground of evidence distinct from personal knowledge; theol. Faith or firm persuasion of the body of tenets held by the professors of any faith.’* Yahshua our Messiah wanted us to understand that there is much more to receiving eternal life than simply a mental act or acceptance. Our belief that He is our Savior is more than a warm thought or intellectual idea. Yahshua explained that simply calling on His saving name, or even recognizing Him as our Master, is not enough to enter the kingdom of Elohim. Yahshua wants us to realize that Elohim requires us to show our faith in Him by obediently doing His will; He emphasized in Matthew 16: 24 & 25 that following Him requires a lot of effort and sacrifices, as follows: ***“Then Yahshua said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. (25) For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it.”*** It is clear; to follow Yahshua takes much more than a mere intellectual conviction. Once we accept Yahshua’s way of life, we will of necessity change our priorities and outlook on life. Instead of spending Saturdays shopping, visiting friends and relatives, or playing on the beach, we will spend time worshipping YHVH our Elohim and rest from all our work. Yes, our lives will no longer be our own, as we need to dedicate it to the way of Elohim and do what He requires of us.

This demands that we lose our lives; and live a deeply committed life of obedience to Elohim, which demonstrates our faith in His salvation by our works. It is as Yahshua explained in the parable of the nobleman in Luke 19: 12 – 27. Yahshua likens His ascension to heaven by the parable of the nobleman who went to a distant country, to receive a kingdom for himself and then return. Upon his departure the nobleman gives his servants some money and instructs them to trade/invest it whilst he is away. When he returned, the nobleman called his servants together and asked them to tell

him, how his investment increased in his absence. We see that he rewards two of his servants for increasing what he had given them. However, when the third servant stated that he was afraid of losing the nobleman's money and hid it away instead of investing it, he said to him, as we read from verses 23 & 24, of Luke 19, ***'Then why did you not put the money in the bank, and having come, I would have collected it with interest?'*** (24) ***'And he said to the bystanders, 'Take the mina away from him, and give it to the one who has ten minas.'"*** The servants fear and lack of obedience proved his unfaithfulness to his master. The two closing verses of the parable shows that Yahshua Himself is represented by the nobleman, when He said in verses 26 & 27, ***"I tell you, that everyone who has shall more be given, but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. (27) But these enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, bring them here and slay them in my presence."*** This parable is clear; whereas obedience and spiritual growth prove our faith or more specifically faithfulness to YHVH, but refusal to obey and lack of faith will result in condemnation. The point is: Do not say or believe in your heart, *'that nobody is able to keep Torah'*, without even trying.

This parable further teaches that eternal life is not the end; it is only the beginning. This is also what Rav Shaul was insinuated in Colossians 1: 21 – 23, as follows: ***'And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds, (22) yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach—(23) if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Shaul, was made a minister.'*** It is important to note that the chance to receive eternal life is conditional – we need to remain holy (set-apart) and blameless before YHVH, and continue in the faith. We need to realize that when we are called and are immersed into Yahshua's saving name, that it is only the beginning of Elohim's work in our lives. More is required to receive eternal life; we cannot expect Elohim to hand it over to us, whilst we sit passively doing nothing. Yes, it is a gift and we cannot earn it, but we are also required to put the gift to work! After all it is as Rav Yaa'cov wrote in James 2: 17, ***'Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead, being by itself.'*** Even though we read from Ephesians 2 earlier, Rav Shaul stating that we are saved by Elohim's grace and not works, he concluded his comments, by saying in verse 10, ***'For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yahshua for good works, which Elohim prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.'*** So we see that the purpose of receiving eternal life is that we may begin a life of good works.

In Matthew 19, we read about a young man who came to Yahshua in verse 16, asking: ***"Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?"*** Yahshua answered the young man in verse 17, saying: ***"Why are you asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments."*** It is important to note that Yahshua did not say to the young man at this point, that he need not do anything, since eternal life is a free gift. No, He told him that he must obey the commandments of Elohim to receive the gift of eternal life. Also notice that Yahshua did not say obedience will earn the young man eternal life (as nothing can in fact earn it), but He made it plain that obedience is nevertheless required. Later when the young man was unwilling to sell his personal belongings and give it to the poor, and went away grieved because he was a rich young man, Yahshua said to His disciples in verses 23 & 24 of Matthew 19, ***'Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. (24) And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of Elohim.'*** Yahshua's disciples was astonished, when asking Him in verse 25, ***"Then who can be saved?"*** Yahshua answered in verse 26, saying: ***"With men this is impossible, but with Elohim all things are possible."*** One thing is certain our best efforts will always come short, as shown by the rich young man's lack of commitment. No matter what we are willing to give up or do, we cannot earn Elohim's gift to us; eternal life is impossible, other than by the grace and favor of Elohim. Even so, it does not relieve us from the requirement to obey.

We read from the first book of Peter 1: 17 – 21, ***‘And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves in fear during the time of your stay upon earth; (18) knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, (19) but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Messiah. (20) For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you (21) who through Him are believers in Elohim, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in Elohim.’*** So we see that even though salvation is free, it is by no means cheap! Our gift of life cost Messiah His life. He willingly surrendered His life so that we might enjoy the free gift of eternal life. However, Yahshua expects us to surrender our lives for salvation as well, as we read from Luke 14: 26 & 27, as follows: ***“If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes even his own life (in comparison of his love for Me), he cannot be My disciple. (27) Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple.”***

Our love for Yahshua Messiah and the Father must exceed that of any other relationship in our lives. We read further from verses 28 – 33 of Luke 14 how Yahshua warns us to consider the cost of following Him very carefully before finally committing our lives to Him, in this way: ***“For which one of you, when he wants to build a tower, does not first sit down and calculate the cost, to see if he has enough to complete it? (29) Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation, and is not able to finish, all who observe it begin to ridicule him, (30) saying, ‘This man began to build and was not able to finish.’ (31) Or what king, when he sets out to meet another king in battle, will not first sit down and take counsel whether he is strong enough with ten thousand men to encounter the one coming against him with twenty thousand? (32) Or else, while the other is still far away, he sends a delegation and asks terms of peace. (33) So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.”*** Yahshua explained through a story in Luke 17: 7 – 10 that we earn nothing through obedience, as follows: ***“But which of you, having a slave plowing or tending sheep will say to him when he has come in from the field, ‘Come immediately and sit down to eat?’ (8) But will he not say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat and properly clothe yourself and serve me until I have eaten and drunk; and afterward you will eat and drink?’ (9) He does not thank the slave because he did the things which were commanded, does he? (10) So you too, when you do all the things which are commanded you, say, ‘We are unworthy slaves; we have done only that which we ought to have done.’”*** When a servant does what is required by his master, he has simply done his duty. Similarly, we need to understand that obedience earns us nothing; as it is our duty and is required if we want to receive eternal life. When Messiah returns one day, He will reward each one of us according to our works. Only those who have kept His commandments may claim the right to eternal life.

Obedience is an expression of our faith in Elohim’s promises and is not an attempt to prove ourselves righteous or to earn Elohim’s favor. Rav Yochanan confirms in first John 5: 3 that faith does not contradict obedience, but that there is a clear connection between the two, in this way: ***“For this is the love of Elohim, that we keep His commandments; and His commandments are not burdensome.”*** By obedience to Elohim, we show our faith in Yahshua, overcome the world and reach Elohim’s purpose for us. Rav Yaa’cov agrees that faith and obedience goes hand in hand in James 2: 23 & 24, as follows: ***‘And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “AND ABRAHAM BELIEVED ELOHIM, AND IT WAS RECKONED TO HIM AS RIGHTEOUSNESS,” and he was called the friend of Elohim. (24) You see that a man is justified by works, and not by faith alone.’*** Eternal life is free and obedience is required. Yahshua specifically mentioned that we should keep Elohim’s commandments if we want to inherit eternal life. He also added in verse 22 & 23 of Matthew 7, saying: ***“Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Master, Master, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ (23) And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”***

Chapter 3: Shadows of what is to come.

We have all seen shadows of ourselves when we stand outside on a sunny day. Our shadows are perfect representations of our profiles outlined on the ground; it is a reflection of our features etched onto whatever is behind us. By looking at your shadow someone can tell that you are lean or fat, with long or short hair and whether you have a big nose and ears or not. However, even though those who look at your shadow can see your physical features and mannerisms, they cannot see what your character traits are like – as your shadow isn't you.

I am discussing us and our shadows here, simply to demonstrate that where Rav Shaul wrote in Colossians 2: 16 & 17 regarding the Scriptural Festivals or new moons or the Sabbath day as ***'a mere shadow of what is to come'***, he did not inform us that these observances are now outdated and not required any longer, but that from a Hebrew perspective, they are rehearsals of things to come in the future. A case in point being where we read from Exodus 31: 13, ***"But as for you, speak to the sons of Israel (meaning both houses in this case), saying, 'You shall surely observe My Sabbaths: for this is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations (meaning forever), that you may know that I am YHVH who sanctifies (set-apart) you.'"*** Note that YHVH spoke about His Sabbaths not only His Sabbath, meaning that not only is the weekly Sabbath a sign between YHVH and His people, but also His annual Sabbaths or Feast Days. We the remnant of the lost ten tribes of Israel together with the house of Judah are therefore obliged to keep the weekly and annual Sabbaths commanded in Leviticus 23: 1 – 4, as follows: ***'YHVH spoke again to Moses, saying, (2) "Speak to the sons of Israel, and say to them, '(YHVH)'s appointed times (feasts) which you shall proclaim as holy (set-apart) convocations-- My appointed times (feasts) are these: (3) 'For six days work may be done; but on the seventh day there is a Sabbath of complete rest, a holy (set-apart) convocation. You shall not do any work; it is a Sabbath to YHVH in all your dwellings. (4) These are the appointed times of YHVH, holy (set-apart) convocations which you shall proclaim at the times appointed for them.'"*** There are two important Hebrew words in this section of Scriptures, which are translated as appointed times (or feasts) and convocations. The word feast comes from the Hebrew word transliterated as *'mo'ed'* meaning an appointment, which involves a fixed or set time. We see from verse 2 of Leviticus 23 that the Sabbath is also a Set-apart (holy) convocation, which is the Hebrew word transliterated as *'miqra'* meaning an assembly or rehearsal. YHVH is therefore telling His people that the Sabbath is an appointed time during which He wants us to rehearse the Torah, teaching us about His kingdom and our redemption through the Messiah and the Messianic age (known as the Atid Lavoh).

However, when we tell our Christian relatives and friends that we keep Elohim's scripturally ordained Set-apart Days and the Sabbath, they usually argue that these *'Old Testament'* laws need not be kept any longer, as they are only shadows of things Messiah fulfilled for us and are no longer required for spiritually minded believers. They insist that as believers in Messiah, we should lift ourselves above the earthly representations of Elohim's spiritual truths. Such believers insist that physical representations are made void by the greater spiritual truths which they represent. Ever since the canonization of the Renewed Covenant, referred to by Christianity as the *'New Testament'*, have students of the Scriptures discussed the validity of the so-called *'Old Testament'* in the lives of Christian believers. Most hold that Christians have moved from the *'Old Testament'* age of law to the age of grace. However, there are some who believe that the *'Old Testament'* moral laws are still applicable to Christians as a guide to life. The first group believes that unless the *'New Testament'* restates an *'Old Testament'* law, it has become obsolete and disappeared with the so-called old covenant. The second group believes that unless the *'New Testament'* annuls an *'Old Testament'* principle, it should be considered as still binding. Even so, both these groups are of the opinion that a section of the law was purely ceremonial or ritual in nature and therefore merely a shadow of a greater reality. In addition, most such believers assume that all that may be called a *'shadow'* are ceremonial and is of no importance to believers in Messiah any longer. Besides quoting Colossians 2:

16 & 17, Christians often quote Hebrews 10: 1 as a second Scriptural 'witness' to their claim, as follows: ***'For the Law, since it has only a shadow of the good things to come and not the very form of things, can never by the same sacrifices year by year, which they offer continually, make perfect those who draw near.'***

Considering the two Scriptures quoted by Christians to show that 'Old Testament' legislation is positively not applicable for modern believers in Messiah, or Christians as they refer to themselves, their claims appear valid at first. If we need not sacrifice for sin any longer because such sacrifices were merely a shadow of Messiah's sacrifice for the sins of the world, then shouldn't we be consistent and do away with all the so-called ceremonial aspects of the Law? This last name view of sacrifices may be found in a number of Christian books regarding the subject, one of which being statements in The MacArthur Study Bible's (based on the New American Standard Bible) footnote on Colossians 2: 16 & 17, as follows: '2: 16 **food or drink.** The false teachers sought to impose some sort of dietary regulations, probably based on those of the Mosaic law (cf. Lv 11). Since they were under the New Covenant, the Colossians (like all Christians) were not obliged to observe the OT dietary restrictions (cf. Mk: 7: 14 – 19; Ac 10: 9 – 15; Ro 14: 17; 1 Co 8: 8; 1Ti 4: 1 – 5; Heb 9: 9, 10¹). **festival.**

¹ Renewed Covenant Scriptures often quoted in an attempt to challenge the clean food laws discussed in the Torah teachings of Elohim, as well as suitable answers to these erroneous beliefs are given below:

1. The first Scripture usually mentioned by Christians to refute the kosher food laws comes from Acts 10: 15, in this way: ***'And again a voice came to him a second time, "What Elohim has cleansed, no longer consider unholy."*** This verse is erroneously interpreted as if YHVH has cleansed all meats in the Renewed Covenant Era. To understand this verse and Rav Kepha's vision surrounding it is to understand the context of the entire chapter. At the beginning of this passage we read about a Gentile named Cornelius. He is an army captain who is righteous and well respected by all those around him, including the Jews. YHVH sends an angel to deliver a message to Cornelius, saying in verse 5 of Acts 10: ***"And now dispatch some men to Joppa, and send for a man named Simon, who is called Peter (Kepha)."*** Cornelius a man, who fears Elohim, did as instructed by the angel. Before Cornelius' men arrive, Kepha goes onto the housetop to pray and whilst there he becomes hungry. As he prays he falls into a spiritual trance through which YHVH reveals a message that will change true worship forever. In his vision Kepha sees a great sheet coming down from the sky and on the sheet he saw the four-footed animals of the earth and the wild beasts and the crawling creatures and the birds of the air. Next, Kepha hears a shocking statement; a voice saying: ***"Rise, Peter; kill and eat."***

Rav Kepha could not believe what he heard. He was confused and mystified by this instruction. It is repeated three times by the angel before the sheet and its contents are taken away. Kepha argues that he has never eaten anything unclean (verse 14), not even 10 years after the death of Yahshua. Surely if the laws of clean and unclean foods had been done away with since the Savior's death, Rav Kepha, one of the greatest apostles of the Renewed Covenant would have known about it soon after Yahshua's death? In addition Rav Kepha was filled with the Set-apart Spirit, which was supposed to lead the apostles into all truth (John 14:26). After the vision the men sent by Cornelius find Kepha and he returns with them to meet Cornelius. Once there, Kepha explains the meaning of his vision of the sheet, in Acts 10: 28, as follows: ***"You yourselves know how unlawful it is for a man who is a Jew to associate with a foreigner or to visit him; and yet Elohim has shown me that I should not call any man unholy or unclean."*** Thereafter Cornelius became the first Gentile convert to the Nazarene Jewish faith. In Acts 10: 28 we have the simple explanation of this vision from the mouth of Rav Kepha himself: Gentiles, once considered unclean, may now enter the Covenant of promise. YHVH simply used unclean food to symbolize "unclean" Gentiles, who are now allowed to follow the Master Yahshua and enter the Promises. In Acts 10: 35, Kepha summarizes the lesson of his vision that he received in Joppa on the rooftop of the house of Simon the Tanner, as follows: ***'but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right, is welcome to Him.'*** Clearly the vision seen by Kepha was to show him in a very profound way that Gentiles, who were once considered unclean, were now permitted into Elohim's covenant. Nowhere in this passage are Elohim's clean food Laws discussed or

repealed. Kepha himself rejects the idea of ever eating anything that conflicts with the clean food Laws given by YHVH in His Torah.

2. A second Scripture that Christians usually site to 'refute' the kosher food laws, comes from Mark 7: 18, as follows: **'And He (Yahshua) said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him?"** This verse is erroneously interpreted as if Yahshua was condemning the Scribes and Pharisees for their strict laws, decreeing many foods to be unfit for human consumption. However, we find by reading the entire passage, that this was not the issue under discussion. At the beginning of the passage, we find Yahshua's disciples eating with unwashed hands in plain sight of the Scribes and Pharisees. The Scribes and Pharisees had many rabbinical traditions that had been handed down through the ages, and one of those were ceremonial washing of hands before eating. We read accordingly in verses 3 & 4 of Mark 7, **"For the Pharisees, and all the Jews do not eat unless they carefully wash their hands, thus observing the traditions of the elders; (4) and when they come from the market place, they do not eat unless they cleanse themselves; and there are many other things which they have received in order to observe, such as the washing of cups and pitchers and copper pots."** When the Scribes and Pharisees saw Yahshua's disciples eating before washing their hands, they accused Yahshua and His disciples of breaking their traditions. Yahshua was not pleased with their condemnation, but in turn accused them of placing their own man-made traditions above the commandments given by Elohim (see Mark 7: 6 – 9). Yahshua did not condemn them for compliance with the kosher food Laws found in the Scriptures, but condemns them for their doctrines of men.

These doctrines were not part of the Torah teachings of YHVH, but were laws established by Jewish leaders through many generations. This section has nothing to do with the kosher food laws to be found in the Scriptures. In fact we read according to verses 18 & 19 of Mark 7, **'And He said to them, "Are you so lacking in understanding also? Do you not understand that whatever goes into the man from outside cannot defile him; (19) because it does not go into his heart, but into his stomach, and is eliminated?" (Thus He declared all foods clean).'** The bracketed section was added by the Authors of the NASB to show that it is their personal interpretation. A similar sentence is added in most Christian Bibles. We read about the misinterpretations and additions to the word of Elohim, in Jeremiah 8: 8 – 9, as follows: **"How can you say, 'We are wise, and the law of YHVH is with us?' But behold, the lying pen of the scribes has made it into a lie. (9) The wise men are put to shame, they are dismayed and caught; behold they have rejected the word of YHVH, and what kind of wisdom do they have?"** Yahshua taught in verse 18 of Mark 7 that ingesting some dirt from unwashed hands will not defile them, but evil thoughts will defile because they come from the heart, as we read from verses 21 – 23, **"For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed the evil thoughts, fornications, thefts, murders, adulteries, (22) deeds of coveting and wickedness, as well as deceit, sensuality, envy, slander, pride and foolishness. (23) All these evil things proceed from within and defile the man."** Yahshua did not even make mention of the kosher food laws in Mark 7; He simply taught that we are to observe Elohim's physical Laws without neglecting His weightier (Spiritual) Laws. Ceremonial washing, as distinct from washing for cleanliness was one of the traditions of the Jews. However, as believers we should always wash our hands after working outside or after going to the toilet, as Rav Yaa'cov wrote in James 4: 8, saying, **'Draw near to Elohim and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.'** Yes, Rav Yaa'cov meant that we should clean ourselves up spiritually, but because of the duality principle that runs throughout the Scriptures; he also implied that we should clean ourselves up physically.

3. A third verse used to discredit the Scriptural kosher laws, is in Colossians 2: 16, as follows: **"Therefore let no one act as your judge in regards to food or drink or in respect to a festival or a new moon or s Sabbath day."** This is erroneously interpreted to say that we should not judge people in regard to the freedom that we now have in Messiah. However, Rav Shaul is speaking to the ecclesia (or Body of Messiah) and not to the world in general. If he was speaking to a pagan world that has neglected Elohim's Word, then it would only make sense to conclude that Rav Shaul is saying that we are no longer under 'Old Testament' regulations and must not be judged by such matters. However, Rav Shaul is speaking to an obedient ecclesia of called out believers. Verse (17) is the key to understanding this, stating: **"things which are a mere shadow of what is to come; but the substance belongs to Messiah."** This is essentially saying that those of us following Messiah should be judged by Him, or by His ecclesia and not by outsiders. It has nothing to do with the kosher food laws found in the

Scriptures. However to understand this misconception better, we need to be familiar with the following two scriptural concepts, namely (a) a shadow and (b) a type:

- (a) **A shadow:** A shadow points to the reality, but does not do away with it. Elohim's Feast Days are shadows of things to come according to Colossians 2: 17. These Feasts Days were introduced by YHVH in Leviticus 23 and relates His plan of salvation for all humankind, to us. We keep these Feast Days yearly to rehearse Elohim's plan of Salvation, so that we as first fruits will be able to teach the same as well as the rest of Torah to our siblings during Yahshua's millennium rule. Even though Passover, including the Feast of Unleavened Bread and Pentecost has already been fulfilled, the last four Feast Days namely Trumpets, Atonement, Tabernacles and the Last Great Day will only be fulfilled at, and after Yahshua's return one day.
- (b) **A type:** The sacrificial laws were types and after Yahshua became the sacrifice for our sins, He introduced the new Priesthood, effectively doing away with the sacrificial requirements of the Law in respect of sin. Since Yahshua fulfilled the Sacrificial Law, by becoming the sacrifice, there is no longer a need to sacrifice animals, each time we sin (transgress the Torah).
4. A fourth verse used by Christianity to refute the Scriptural kosher laws is in 1 Timothy 4: 4, in this way: **'For everything created by Elohim is good, and nothing is to be rejected, if it is received with gratitude;'** This is erroneously interpreted that it is acceptable to eat anything, as long as you are thankful for it. However, to fully understand what this portion of the Scriptures is saying, we have to read the very next verse (5), which reads like this: **"for it is sanctified by means of the word of Elohim and prayer."** The question to answer here is: What is sanctified by means of the word of Elohim? The word sanctified simply means to set-apart or made 'holy'. So the question is what foods are set-apart by the word of Elohim for use as food by mankind. The answer is obviously to be found in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. Rav Shaul was definitely not promoting the eating of ceremonially unclean animals. The point is that most people will agree that rats, bats, lizards, scorpions and skunks are definitely not good for food? The food that YHVH has set-apart in the Torah remains so, for all of those called out to follow His way.
5. Finally Christianity uses Romans 14: 14, to refute the Scriptural kosher laws, as follows: **'I know and am convinced in the Master Yahshua that nothing is unclean in itself; but to him who thinks anything to be unclean, to him it is unclean.'** Does this mean that he abandoned the laws of clean and unclean foods discussed in Torah? We know that Rav Shaul did not change or abandoned any command given by YHVH in the Torah, and to explain this particular verse from the Scriptures, we need to familiarize ourselves with the different Greek words used in the Renewed Covenant, to fully understand what Rav Shaul was actually saying regarding food in Romans 14. The Greek word used by Rav Shaul in Romans 14, was 'koinos' meaning common or ordinary. The word 'koinos' is also used in Acts 2: 44 (**'And all those who had believed were together, and had all things in common.'**), Acts 4: 32, Titus 1: 4; and Jude 3 (**'Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation...'**). The same word was also used for things considered polluted or defiled. This word is also used in its form as a verb, namely 'koinoo' in Mark 7: 2, as follows: **'and had seen some of His disciples were eating their bread with impure hands, that is, unwashed.'** These two words ('koinos' and 'koinoo') are in fact used throughout the Renewed Covenant to refer to ceremonially uncleanness, and not to unclean meats or animals. Therefore something could be common or ceremonial unclean, yet be in the prescribed list of 'Kosher' foods given in Leviticus 11 and Deuteronomy 14. The very same word used in the Septuagint version of the Torah, namely 'akatharos' is also used in the Greek translation of the Renewed Covenant for unclean meats. In Acts 10 both the words 'koinos' and 'akatharos' describe Rav Kepha's vision of the sheet filled with all kinds of animals of the earth. Rav Kepha distinguished between the two concepts of unclean by using both words in verse 14 of Acts 10. Most translations of the Scriptures distinguish between the meanings of the two words used here. Rav Kepha used the same terminology in verse 28 and Acts 11: 8 in discussion of his vision.

Where Rav Shaul said in Roman 14: 14, **'I Know and am convinced by the Master Yahshua that nothing is unclean in itself'**, he was in fact making the same point as he did in 1 Corinthians 8. Here in Corinthians Rav Shaul explained that even if clean meat was offered to idols, the so-called pagan god had no bearing on whether the meat was suitable to be eaten or not. But what was Rav Shaul's

*The annual religious celebrations of the Jewish calendar (e.g., Passover, Pentecost, or Tabernacles (Booths); cf. Lv 23). **new moon.** The monthly sacrifice offered on the first day of each month (Nu 10: 10; 28: 11 – 14; Ps 81: 3). **Sabbath Day.** The weekly celebration of the seventh day, which pictured God's rest from creation. The NT clearly teaches that Christians are not required to keep it (See notes on Ac 20: 7; Ro 14: 5, 6). 2.17 **shadow....substance.** The ceremonial aspects of the OT law (dietary regulations, festivals, sacrifices) were mere shadows pointing to Christ. Since Christ, the reality has come, the shadows have no value. Cf. Heb 8: 5; 10: 1.' Wow – what a mouth full, especially if one consider what Yahshua said in Matthew 5: 17 – 20. In fact this footnote in The MacArthur Study Bible makes any suggestion that Elohim requires us to do anything physical, equivalent to belittling the tenets of our Nazarene Jewish faith.*

In agreement with what a recent Messianic visitor to our services insinuated when she said that we cannot judge a starving child in Africa for killing rats for food, the Christian argument goes as follows: *"people are dying by the thousands from starvation, and since J*e*s*u*s* told us to love our neighbor, we should not quibble over religious trivialities like what food is lawful to eat, we should get out there and put food in the mouths of the starving, rather than being overly concerned about the Sabbath and other 'Old Testament' observances."* Such reasoning is loaded with emotion and overlooks the basic Scriptural principle that it is not within man to determine what is right and wrong, as we cannot on our own determine what is important to Elohim and what is not, as we read from Proverbs 14: 12, in this way: ***'There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.'*** A second witness comes from Matthew 7: 13 & 14, where Yahshua himself said: ***"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. (14) For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it."***

Similarly many argue that if you observe the Sabbath and other Set-apart Days; you are a 'legalist'. Even though the Pharisees used aspects of Elohim's law to justify their legalism, it does not mean the fault lies with the law itself. However, this is exactly the argument frequently used against Elohim's Sabbath and Set-apart Days. The best way to respond to such reasoning is in Colossians 2: 16 & 17, since critics of Sabbath-observance use these verses to commence their reasoning that since the reality has now come, the shadows have disappeared. As we have seen earlier, this interpretation of this passage is not new, as religious writers have interpreted it this way as far back as the second century CE. The problem is that Rav Shaul wrote the book of Colossians to Nazarene believers in Messiah, who lived in Colossae. These believers were like Rav Shaul part of the Nazarene sect of the Pharisees who believed in Messiah, as may be read from Acts 24: 5, 14 as well as Acts 15: 5. Yes these believers were definitely not Christian as may be seen from the fourth century Christian

*point in Romans 14? He was essentially saying that depending upon their consciences, early believers had several options open to them whilst traveling or living in certain communities. If they did not want to eat meat that had been sacrificed to idols, they could choose to eat only vegetables. However, if there was not a regular source of kosher meat available, believers could eat meat slaughtered by Moslem butchers, since they also know how to bleed the animal, in the prescribed way, even though they offer such meat up to their deity. Romans 14 is all about a person's conscience within the framework of the Torah. Rav Shaul was not here discussing Scriptural kosher laws, but as we see from verse 20 where the word clean is 'katharos', i.e. free from impure mixture, spotless. The word 'katharos' is used in the Scriptures to describe all kinds of cleanliness, including clean dishes (Matthew 23: 26), clothing (Revelation 15: 6; 19: 8 & 14), and pure religion (James 1: 27). We need to understand that in both verses 14 and 20 of Romans 14, the word food or meat was not in the original wording. In fact no specific entity is mentioned relative to clean or uncleanness. These verses are simply stating that **'nothing is unclean' ('koinos' - common or ceremonially unclean) in itself** and **'all is clean' ('katharos' – without blemish or spot).'** Rav Shaul was essentially saying that any association of food with idolatrous activity had no influence on whether the food was suitable for eating.*

“Church Father’s” description of the Nazarenes, as Follows: *‘But these sectarians...did not call themselves Christians – but “Nazarenes,”...However they are simply complete Jews. They use not only the New Testament but the Old Testament as well, as the Jews do... They have no different ideas, but confess everything exactly as the Law proclaims it and in the Jewish fashion except for their belief in Messiah, if you please! For they acknowledge both the resurrection of the dead and the divine creation of all things, and declare that G-d is one, and that his son is Y’shua the Messiah. They are trained to a nicety in Hebrew. For among them the entire Law, the Prophets, and the ...Writings... are read in Hebrew, as they surely are by the Jews. They are different from the Jews, and different from Christians, only in the following. They disagree with Jews because they have come to faith in Messiah; but since they are still fettered by the Law...circumcision, the Sabbath, and the rest...they are not in accord with Christians...they are nothing but Jews.... They have the Goodnews according to Matthew in its entirety in Hebrew. For it is clear that they still preserve this, in the Hebrew alphabet, as it was originally written.’*

Even so, Rav Shaul was addressing false teachers in Colossae who asserted that worship through Messiah was not enough, as they taught that believers also had to work through angels as intermediaries as may be seen from what he wrote in Colossians 2: 18, in this way: ***‘Let no one keep defrauding you of your prize by delighting in self-abasement and the worship of the angels, taking his stand on visions he has seen, inflated without cause by his fleshly mind.’*** (This calls to mind two things: firstly it reminds me of a ‘believer’ who attended with us a number of years ago, who insisted that he had a vision that we should not sing the Psalms that we sometimes sing before services; and secondly it reminds me of the Roman Catholics who prays to Mary as a mediator to their G-d.) However, these false teachers in Colossae taught that the way to true spirituality also requires prohibition of tasting and touching (v 21) and severe treatment of the body (v 23). Those who read verses 16 & 17 in the same light as verses 18 – 23, do not understand that in verses 16 & 17 Rav Shaul was telling Nazarene believers that the body of Messiah, meaning the ecclesia should be the judge, as to what we eat or drink, or in respect to the festivals, new moons or Sabbath Day observances, and certainly not outsiders, as may be understood from reading the same from the King James Version, as follows: ***‘Let no man therefore judge you in meat, or in drink, or in respect of an holyday, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: (17) Which are a shadow of things to come: but the body is of Messiah.’*** (Note the underlined words are printed in italics in the KJV, indicating that they were added to make the passage more understandable and that it was not in the original text. As believers we are all aware that the body of Messiah refers to the ecclesia, as may be read from Ephesians 4: 11 - 16²) The mistake in this Bible commentators’ interpretation (and that of Christianity) lies in assuming that the topic in question was whether we should be concerned about clean and unclean meats—or observances of Set-apart days or the Sabbath. But, the Colossian heretics were criticizing believers for eating and drinking during their festival celebrations. The question was not whether these believers should observe Set-apart Days or the Sabbath – it was a matter of how they observed these festivals.

Rav Shaul simply encourage Colossian believers not to listen to such criticism and continue to enjoy their eating and drinking during their religious celebrations, since it was the function of the body of

² Ephesians 4: 11 – 16, ***‘And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Messiah; until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of Elohim, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Messiah. As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves, and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Messiah, from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.’***

Messiah or the ecclesia, to judge believer's behavior in general. Why don't Christian teachers who espouse this erroneous view, stop to ask why Rav Shaul did not include sacrifices in the list of shadows in verses 16 & 17 of Colossians 2, if the point of these verses were to show that believers need not keep such things any longer? The question is: Are shadows outdated? I would like to encourage those who believe so, to consider Yahshua who is the ultimate example of how we as believers should live our lives. We need to realize that Yahshua did not take shadows lightly. We have an example in the Renewed Covenant where Yahshua marched into the temple in Jerusalem and took sweeping action, despite the fact that the temple was only a shadow as may be read from Hebrews 8: 5. Yahshua became angry when He saw this shadow desecrated. We read Yahshua's reaction from Mark 11: 17, in this way: ***'And He began to teach and say to them, "Is it not written, 'MY HOUSE SHALL BE CALLED A HOUSE OF PRAYER FOR ALL THE NATIONS? But you have made it a ROBBERS' DEN.'"*** Yahshua risked His personal safety when He angrily rebuked those who disregarded the spiritual significance of a physical location in which the priests performed physical sacrifices.

Messiah's example showed that we must not ignore the shadows that the Scriptures specify. To treat these shadows lightly will result in our missing out, as Yahshua taught in Matthew 5: 19, saying: ***'Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and so teaches others, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.'*** To label attempts to keep the laws given in the Tanach observed by both Yahshua and His early Nazarene followers as Judaizing or legalistic, contradicts Yahshua's own words and examples. The point is that the Renewed Covenant reveals a number of shadows that we should keep, conclusively putting the anti-shadow argument to bed. The most obvious ones are water immersion, which is a symbol or shadow of Messiah's death and His memorial Passover in remembrance of His death. The bread and wine that we partake of during the Passover are representative or shadows of Yahshua's body and blood sacrificed for the sins of the world. Then there are such shadows as the laying on of hands in Hebrews 6: 2; anointing with oil in James 5: 14; foot-washing in John 13: 14 commanded to assist in our spiritual understanding, as we perform them. The point is, if the Passover and immersion are worth keeping, should we dare to label others as worthless. Colossians 2: 16 & 17 certainly does not say any such thing. Consider for a moment what Rav Shaul teaches in 1 Corinthians 5: 7 – 8. Whereas Nazarene believers see this as simply an instruction to de-leaven their homes during the Days of Unleavened Bread, but also understand the deeper meaning that we should also spiritually clean up our lives, by repenting and returning to Torah obedience. Whilst Christianity believes that this passage has nothing to do with de-leavening, but only with spirituality. The point of what Rav Shaul is saying here is that since Messiah has been sacrificed for us, we need to keep the feast of Unleavened Bread, not with old leaven, nor with leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth. This passage tells us to keep the feast of Unleavened Bread literally and spiritually. But this is also saying that we as believers should clean up our lives on a daily basis. From reading 1 Corinthians 16: 8, we see that Rav Shaul also kept Pentecost the same year that he wrote about Passover (in 1 Corinthians 11) and the Days of Unleavened Bread (in 1 Corinthians 5), as follows: ***'But I shall remain in Ephesus until Pentecost.'***

Yahshua was our perfect example and we need to follow Him in everything that He did during His lifetime. We need to be mindful of Rav Shaul's teaching in 1 Corinthians 11: 1, where he said: ***"Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Messiah."*** Rav Yochanan said the same thing in 1 John 2: 6, in this way: ***'The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked.'*** If Yahshua kept the Scriptural Feast Days, then we ought to do the same. However, similar to the way the shadow of yourself does not reveal everything there is to know about you, so spiritual shadows do not tell us everything there is to know about what is to come. The Sabbath, as well as the Feast of Tabernacles should be a shadow of the coming kingdom of Elohim and as I said at the beginning, we keep the Feast Days of Elohim to rehearse for this blessed future event.

We should not be concerned about those in other religions making judgment about the Feast Days that we keep and foods we eat, since as Rav Shaul wrote in verse 17 of Colossians 2, the body of Messiah, meaning the ecclesia of Elohim should judge us in the way we obey these Torah commands. As I said in a previous sermon, not one of the covenants made with our forefathers in the Tanach have been abolished. A prime example being the rainbow – why if any of the original covenants were abolished do we still see the rainbow after a rainstorm? So the last thing that we should be concerned about is what Christian believers say and understand from the word of Elohim. We know that one day YHVH will personally open the books of the Scriptures to all those blinded to His truths, as is confirmed in Isaiah 25: 7 – 9, as follows: ***‘And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations. (8) He will swallow up death for all time*** (we know from Revelation 20: 14, that this will only happen after the Great White Throne Judgment), ***and YHVH Elohim will wipe tears away from all faces, and He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; for YHVH has spoken. (9) And it will be said in that day, “Behold, this is our Elohim for whom we have waited that He might save us. This is YHVH for whom we have waited; Let us rejoice and be glad in His salvation.”*** We are looking forward to that blessed day. HalleluYah!

Chapter 4: The Fear of Elohim.

When we were children, boys played with miniature model cars of that time, and girls played with dolls. However, I notice that today, boys play with all sorts of gruesome looking monsters, and cars that can be transformed into man-eating monsters, the sort of things that used to scare the living daylights out of us when we were children. I believe this to be indicative of the mindset of modern society – nobody fears anything any longer. I recall my mother telling us, how when she was a teenager, when children her age saw a policeman approaching on horseback, they were so afraid that they dropped down to their knees.

As children we were also afraid of people in authority, such as our teachers and parents, but somehow that has all changed due to the mindset of modern society, in that no one is allowed to give disobedient children a good spanking any longer. Similarly criminals continue to rape and murder because the punishment meted out to them, by the law courts are limited, as they are required to take the human rights of such perpetrators into account. As a result criminals are no longer punished proportionate to their crimes. Murderers and rapists are not allowed to be executed in countries like South Africa any longer and many are permitted back in to society after only a few years in prison. Instead of learning from their incarceration most of them go right back to committing the same crime as soon as they are released. Today, by the time children are ready to go to the first grade, most have seen numerous animated movies where people are either chased or killed by monsters. They play video games and watch animated TV shows especially made for children, which in our days could not be aired because of the violent natures of such games and movies. Somehow, young children are not scared by such movies any longer. We as grown-ups have become even more de-sensitized to violent movies and TV shows. We see hundreds of people being killed in movies and TV shows annually, without even batting an eyelid. This only worsened mankind's rebellious attitude and lack of fear.

Ever since Adam and Eve were expelled from the Garden of Eden, mankind does not want to be prescribed to as to what they should or should not do, even if it is for their own good. We all act like rebellious teenage children today; whatever we are told not to do, is exactly what we will experiment with, as that is what Satan continues to broadcast into the minds of people, as witnessed in Proverbs 9: 17 & 18, in this way: ***“Stolen water is sweet; and bread eaten in secret is pleasant.”*** (18) ***But he does not know that the dead are there, that her guests are in the depths of Sheol*** (the grave).’ Proverbs 9, from verse 13 on, describes a woman of ill repute who is like any other source of temptation simply an agent of Satan, seeking someone to devour. If the word of Elohim tells us not to eat pork, most will go right ahead and eat bacon, ham and gammon steaks. Satan has indeed deceived the whole world as it states in Revelation 12: 9; he wants us to be rebellious like him. He knows that his time is short and continues to deceive mankind daily.

As witnessed in Jeremiah 17: 9, we cannot and will not obey our heavenly Father, even with our best intentions: ***“The heart is more deceitful than all else and is desperately sick; who can understand it?”*** By their disobedience to the commandments of YHVH in the Garden of Eden, our forebears implied that they wanted to decide for themselves what is right and wrong and we are no different today, even knowing what is right and what is wrong. However, we need to decide: Do we want to be in the Kingdom of Elohim or not? If we want to be in Elohim's eternal Kingdom, we need to determine what Elohim require of us. We find the answer to this question in Deuteronomy 10: 12 & 13 as follows: ***“And now, Israel, what does YHVH your Elohim require from you, but to fear YHVH your Elohim, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve YHVH your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, (13) and to keep (YHVH)'s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?”***

When Messiah returns He will reward each one of us according to our deeds; the positive fruits that result from an accumulated attitude and character developed over time will be rewarded with a better position – ruler ship over more cities, as may be read from Yahshua’s parable in Luke 19: 12 - 26. We must not forget that according to 1 Peter 4: 17, judgment is now upon the household of Elohim. YHVH is at this time calling us to come out of the world to be instructed about His coming Kingdom, so that we may rule under Yahshua our Messiah during His millennium rule and beyond. The role of a priest is similar to that of a Rabbi or teacher, in that they will teach those people who survive into the millennium and beyond the second resurrection, about Elohim and His ways. We are being judged at this time as is also witnessed in Ezekiel 20: 34 – 38, in this way: ***‘And I shall bring you out from the peoples and gather you from the lands where you are scattered, with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm and with wrath poured out; (35) and I shall bring you into the wilderness of the peoples, and there I shall enter into judgment with you face to face. (36) As I entered into judgment with your fathers in the wilderness of the land of Egypt, so I will enter into judgment with you,’ declares YHVH Elohim. (37) “And I shall make you pass under the rod, and I shall bring you into the bond of the covenant; (38) and I shall purge from you the rebels and those who transgress against Me; I shall bring them out of the land where they sojourn, but they will not enter the land of Israel. Thus you will know that I am YHVH.”’***

This leaves us with the following questions: What is the fear of Elohim and how do we learn it? Let’s determine the answers to these questions, by reflecting on the related scriptures in the word of Elohim. We turn to Hebrews 11: 7 where we read about the faith and fear of our fathers in the faith, as follows: ***‘By faith Noah, being warned by Elohim about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.’*** Noah had a fear of Elohim and translated his fear into action, by faith. He feared when YHVH told him to build an ark, despite his neighbor’s mocking him and trying to persuade him to disobey YHVH. Other than most people today, he was not concerned about what the people think or say – he carried on doing what YHVH told him to do.

We read from Genesis 22: 10 -12 how our father Abraham translated his fear of Elohim into faith, as follows: ***‘And Abraham stretched out his hand, and took the knife to slay his son. (11) But the angel of YHVH called to him from heaven, and said, “Abraham, Abraham!” And he said, “Here I am.” (12) And he said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear Elohim, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.’*** We see according to Hebrews 11: 17 that Abraham’s fear came through faith, in this way: ***‘By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac; and he who had received the promises was offering up his only begotten son.’***

We all know that true fear involves trembling – almost as if it is very cold. Most people, when confronted by a fearsome dog will shake like a leaf in the wind. YHVH declares in the last part of Isaiah 66: 2, ***“But to this one I will look, to him who is humble and contrite, and who trembles at my word.”*** Yes brethren, the fear of Elohim involves trembling: Fear and trembling at the thought of disobeying Him. We read accordingly from Psalm 147: 11, ***‘YHVH favors those who fear Him, those who wait for His loving-kindness.’*** We need to stand in awe of Elohim; we need to have a finely tuned conscience and develop the fear that will motivate changes in us for the better.

According to 2 Peter 3: 9, ***‘YHVH is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.’*** Even so, we read the following warning from Hebrews 10: 26, ***‘For if we go on sinning willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins.’*** A second witness to this is found in Acts 17: 30 & 31 in this way: ***“Therefore having overlooked the times of ignorance, Elohim is now declaring to men that all everywhere should repent, (31) because He has fixed a day in***

which He will judge the world in righteousness through a Man whom He has appointed, having furnished proof to all men by raising Him from the dead.” We know that there will be two resurrections after Messiah, as recorded in 1 Corinthians 15: 23, as follows: ***‘But each in his own order, Messiah the first Fruit(s), after that those who are Messiah’s at His coming (1st Resurrection), then comes the end (2nd Resurrection), when He delivers up the kingdom to Elohim the Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power.’*** Each person who has ever lived has a day fixed, when they will get their chance to repent; those who have never heard or known about Yahshua during this age, will get their only chance after the second resurrection. However, we who are called during this age are being judged at this time and as confirmed in verse 26 of Hebrews 10, we need to be very careful how we live, as we could because of reckless living, even now lose our crowns.

This should motivate us to fear enough to change our evil ways and start serving YHVH for our own good. However, fear does not mean a lack of faith, or to be fearful, cowardly or insecure. Being fearful is certainly not the fear of Elohim, as Rav Yaa’cov wrote in James 2: 19 in this way: ***‘You believe that Elohim is one, you do well; the demons also believe and shudder.’*** We read further about the wrong fear in Revelation 21: 7 & 8, as follows: ***“He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his Elohim and he will be My son. (8) But for the cowardly and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and immoral persons and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part will be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”***

The fear of Elohim stirs to action – it inspires us to want to obey YHVH from the bottom of our hearts. We read fittingly from Psalm 60: 4, ***‘Thou hast given a banner to those who fear Thee, that it may be displayed because of truth.’*** However, we see according to Psalm 36: 1, that: ***‘Transgression speaks to the ungodly (sinner) within his heart; there is no fear of Elohim before his eyes.’*** The process of sinning started with Satan as may be read from Isaiah 14: 12; Satan lost the fear of Elohim and therefore sinned. Ever since the Garden of Eden, Satan weakened people, by getting them to lose their fear of Elohim. We see from Genesis 3: 1- 3 that initially Eve feared Elohim. Satan’s tactic then, as today was to destroy her fear of Elohim and as witnessed in Genesis 3: 6. he destroyed Eve’s fear of wrongdoing. We need to be very careful of Satan and his human agents, who want to destroy us by getting us to lose our fear of wrongdoing.

When we sin a different type of fear enters us, as we read from Genesis 3: 9 & 10 as follows: ***‘Then YHVH Elohim called to the man, and said to him, “Where are you?” (10) And he said, “I heard the sound of Thee in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid myself.”*** This is the exact opposite of what the fear of Elohim will get us to do. The fear of Elohim encourages us to be brave. However, every man is tempted when he draws away from YHVH, as witnessed in James 1: 13 & 14, in this way: ***‘Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by Elohim”; for Elohim cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. (14) But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust.’***

As already mentioned, the opposite of the fear of Elohim is being fearful – an attitude which gives up before it starts, as witnessed in 1 Samuel 3: 11 – 18, as follows: ***‘And YHVH said to Samuel, “Behold, I am about to do a thing in Israel at which both ears of everyone who hears it will tingle. (12) In that day I will carry out against Eli all that I have spoken concerning his house, from beginning to end. (13) For I have told him that I am about to judge his house forever for the iniquity which he knew, because his sons brought a curse on themselves and he did not rebuke them. (14) And therefore I have sworn to the house of Eli that the iniquity of Eli’s house shall not be atoned for by sacrifice or offering forever.” (15) So Samuel lay down until morning. Then he opened the doors of the house of YHVH. But Samuel was afraid to tell the vision to Eli. (16) Then Eli called Samuel and said, “Samuel my son.” And he said. “Here I am.” (17) And he said, “What is the word that He spoke to you? Please do not hide it from me. May Elohim do so to you, and more also, if you hide***

anything from me of all the words that He spoke to you.” (18) So Samuel told him everything and hid nothing from him. And he said, “It is YHVH; let Him do what seems good to Him.”

A very good example of right fear is recorded for us in Matthew 25: 14 – 16, in this way: ***“For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. (15) And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. (16) Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents.”*** In verse 18 of the same chapter we see an example of wrong fear (fearfulness), as follows: ***“But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master’s money.”*** Right fear brings about contentment, whereas the wrong fear brings about unhappiness.

We are admonished in Hebrews 4: 1 & 2, as follows: ***‘Therefore let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it. (2) For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard.’*** We know that this is talking about the ancient nation of Israel, but are fully aware of the fact that the Israelite nations of today are no different, as witnessed in Romans 3: 18, in this way: ***“There is no fear of Elohim before their eyes.”*** The people of the world today, lack the fear of Elohim as well as the fear of any authority. Do we also lack the fear of Elohim? I believe most of us do. Every time that we lose our temper, we show a lack of fear of Elohim. The way we talk show our fear or lack of fear of Elohim. Holding on to grudges is indicative of a lack of the fear of Elohim. The way in which we keep Elohim’s Sabbath and Set-apart days shows how much we fear YHVH our Elohim.

We read from 1 John 4: 18: ***‘There is no fear in love; but perfect love casts out fear, because fear involves punishment, and the one who fears is not perfected in love.’*** Yes, perfect love casts out fear and results in obedience to Torah and commandment keeping - the fear of Elohim never has torment. We read in Proverbs 2: 5, ***‘Then you will discern the fear of YHVH, and discover the knowledge of Elohim.’*** The wisest man who ever lived expressed it in Ecclesiastes 12: 13, as follows: ***‘The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear Elohim and keep His commandments, because this applies to every person.’*** The fear of YHVH does not come naturally and has to be taught, as David wrote in Psalm 34: 11 ***‘Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of YHVH.’*** If we study the Psalms and indeed the entire Word of YHVH we will learn to fear YHVH our Elohim. If we fear YHVH enough, each one of us will individually examine the Scriptures for ourselves to determine what YHVH requires of us. It is as we read from Psalm 111: 10, ***‘The fear of YHVH is the beginning of wisdom; a good understanding have all those who do His commandments.’*** Yes, we will listen to what our teachers say, but then we will like the Berean’s also examine the Scriptures to verify what they teach us, as we read from Acts 17: 10 & 11, in this way: ***“And the brethren immediately sent Paul and Silas away by night to Berea; and when they arrived, they went into the synagogue of the Jews. (11) Now these were more noble minded than those in Thessalonica, for they received the word with great eagerness, examining the Scriptures daily to see whether these things were so.”*** One sure way in which to learn how to fear Elohim, is recorded in Deuteronomy 14: 22 & 23 as follows: ***“You shall surely tithe all the produce from what you sow, which comes out of the field every year. (23) And you shall eat it in the presence of YHVH your Elohim, at the place where He chooses to establish His name, the tithe of your grain, your new wine, your oil, and the first-born of your herd and your flock, in order that you may learn to fear YHVH your Elohim always.”***

Torah observant Jews have been keeping Elohim’s Feast Days from the time YHVH told them to do so in Leviticus 23. They obey Elohim’s Torah teachings at this time, because they fear the consequences of being disobedient. It is for this reason that Yahshua told His followers in Matthew

5: 20: ***“For I say to you, that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven.”*** What need we do to surpass the righteousness of the scribes and the Pharisees? If we fear YHVH enough to follow in the footsteps of Messiah, we will make it, since His way of interpreting the Torah was even stricter than that of the religious leaders of His day. After all the prophesy about Him in Isaiah 11: 2, reads: ***‘And the Spirit of YHVH will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and strength, the spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHVH.’*** However, to be able to do so, we need to repent and develop the right fear of Elohim, as we read from 2 Corinthians 7: 8 – 11, as follows: ***‘For though I caused you sorrow by my letter, I do not regret it; though I did regret it—for I see that that letter caused you sorrow, though only for a while— (9) I now rejoice, not that you were made sorrowful, but that were made sorrowful to the point of repentance; for you were made sorrowful according to the will of Elohim, in order that you might not suffer loss in anything through us. (10) For the sorrow that is according to the will of Elohim produces repentance without regret, leading to salvation; but the sorrow of the world produces death. (11) For behold what earnestness this very thing, this godly sorrow has produced in you; what vindication of yourselves, what indignation, what fear, what longing, what zeal, what avenging of wrong! In everything you demonstrated yourselves to be innocent in the matter.’*** Without the proper fear, we cannot please Elohim.

We who are called at this time need to develop that fear in this life, so that like our Jewish Brothers we will keep the Torah teachings of Elohim fully, by the time our Master returns one day. We see from Jeremiah 31: 31 – 33 that when Yahshua returns YHVH will write His Law within the hearts of the house of Israel, in this way: ***“Behold, days are coming,” declares YHVH, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, (32) not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares YHVH. (33) But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares YHVH, “I will put My law within them, and on their heart will write it; and I will be their Elohim, and they shall be My people.”*** We read further from Jeremiah 32: 36 – 40: ***“Now therefore thus says YHVH Elohim of Israel concerning this city of which you say, ‘It is given into the hand of the king of Babylon by sword, by famine, and by pestilence.’ (37) Behold, I will gather them out of the lands to which I have driven them in My anger, in My wrath, and in great indignation; and I will bring them back to this place and make them dwell in safety. (38) And they shall be My people and I will be their Elohim; (39) and I will give them one heart and one way, that they may fear Me always, for their own good, and for the good of their children after them. (40) “And I will make an everlasting covenant with them that I will not turn away from them, to do them good; and I will put the fear of Me in their hearts so that they will not turn away from Me.”***

We see here that YHVH will put His fear in the hearts of Israel; the question is why not in the hearts of Judah. The reason is that Judah already fear YHVH enough to be Torah observant, as He wrote their sins on their hearts through all their sufferings during the past centuries, as witnessed in Jeremiah 17: 1, as follows: ***‘The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus; with a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars.’*** By remembering why YHVH punished them in the past, they fear YHVH enough to obey Him without any further motivation. This is why we need not question their loyalty and the way they intercalate the calendar for Elohim’s people to observe. They ensure that they are absolutely correct, because they learnt from their many sufferings in the past, not to be negligent. In addition, there are numerous Scriptural witnesses that they have been given the Oracles of Elohim³. It is very important

³ Romans 3: 1 – 4; Romans 9: 1 – 5; Psalm 147: 19 & 20 (the Israel which King David ruled before the house of Israel were scattered throughout the world because of idolatry); Nehemiah 9: 14 (when Judah returned to the land of Israel after 70 years of captivity); Nahum 1: 15, Malachi 2: 1 – 8; Numbers 17: 1 – 10; Deuteronomy 17: 8 – 12; Deuteronomy 33: 8 – 11; Isaiah 47: 13; Jeremiah 23: 32 – 36 & 39; Ezekiel 13: 2 – 4 & 9; Zechariah 8: 23;

for us who understand the signs of the times to observe Elohim's Feast Days at the same time as our Jewish Brothers and become fully Torah observant, so that we may become one nation with them when our Messiah returns, as prophesied in Ezekiel 37: 15 - 28. May it be so in our day. Amein and Amein.

Zechariah 12: 10 – 14; Genesis 49: 10; Psalm 60: 7; Psalm 108: 8; Psalm 78: 67 & 68; the correct translation of Hosea 11: 12(KJV); Matthew 23: 1 & 2; and John 4: 21 – 22.

Chapter 5: Why can we expect Messiah's return?

Despite the fact that the prophet Daniel prophesied, that in the end of days knowledge will increase, a great deal of the knowledge which Yahshua shared with His disciples, from the Tanach has been 'lost' by those who profess to believe in Him. This happened because religious leaders have due to their own hidden agendas started withholding truth from the masses and followed the traditions of men, rather than the Torah teachings of Elohim. We find that today; even when the truth is taught by those outside of the religious circles of the world, religious leaders reject it outright, as it could cause them to lose their following and financial support. It is as YHVH says through Hosea in Hosea 4: 6, as follows: ***"My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge. Because you have rejected knowledge, I also will reject you from being My priest. Since you have forgotten the law of your Elohim, I also will forget your children."*** This tells us that the people lack knowledge, because they have rejected knowledge which was once available and known. The point is that it is not because knowledge is not available, or that it is unclear, but that it was rejected.

There are numerous witnesses in the Scriptures describing Messiah's return. Yahshua Himself described the earthshattering events that will pave the way to His return one day, in Matthew 24: 29 – 31, as follows: ***"But immediately after the tribulation of those days THE SUN WILL BE DARKENED, AND THE MOON WILL NOT GIVE ITS LIGHT, AND THE STARS WILL FALL from the sky, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken, (30) and then the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the SON OF MAN COMING ON THE CLOUDS OF THE SKY with power and great glory. (31) And He will send forth His angels with A GREAT TRUMPET and THEY WILL GATHER TOGETHER His elect from the four winds, from the one end of the sky to the other."*** Knowing the exact date does not matter, as He will gather His elect at the right time.

Rav Shaul also described the gathering of the elect in 1 Thessalonians 4: 14 – 16, in this way: ***'For if we believe that Yahshua died and rose again, even so Elohim will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Yahshua. (15) For this we say to you by the word of YHVH, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Master, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Master Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of Elohim; and the dead in Messiah shall rise first.'*** Rav Shaul gives us more details about how this will occur in 1 Corinthians 15: 50 – 53, as follows: ***'Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of Elohim; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (51) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (53) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality.'*** This makes it abundantly clear, that at Messiah's return those who died in Messiah will be raised imperishable, and Messiah's faithful followers will be changed in an instant from mortal human beings to immortal spiritual children of Elohim. Note: Elohim will only give these faithful followers of Messiah eternal life at His return.

Rav Yochanan describes this blessed event in Revelation 20: 6, saying: ***'Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of Elohim and of Messiah and will reign with Him for a thousand years.'*** He also writes in Revelation 5: 10, ***"And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our Elohim; and they will reign upon the earth."*** So we see that those who will be resurrected at Messiah's return will reign upon the earth and will not reside in heaven. The question that some might ask at this point, is why will these followers of Messiah rule on earth and not in heaven? We find the answer to this question in Revelation 11: 15, as follows: ***'And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of YHVH and of His Messiah; and He will reign forever and ever."*** Yochanan shows that this will happen when the

seventh angel sounds his trumpet, and as we've seen mentioned in the previously quoted scriptures, this powerful blast will finally usher in the kingdom of Elohim, of which Yahshua our Messiah spoke about at the beginning of His ministry in Mark 1: 14 & 15⁴.

Isaiah prophesied at length about Messiah's first and second coming. Even though Isaiah 61: 1 and the first part of verse two was fulfilled when Yahshua gave His first teaching in the synagogue on the Sabbath, as recorded in Luke 4: 16 – 19, the second part of verse 2 – 11 of Isaiah 61 is about Yahshua's second coming and those of us who will make it into the kingdom as firstborn children of Elohim, as follows: ***'And the day of vengeance of our Elohim; to comfort all who mourn, (3) to grant those who mourn in Zion, giving them a garland (a peer priestly head covering) instead of ashes, the oil of gladness instead of mourning, the mantle of praise instead of a spirit of fainting. So they will be called oaks of righteousness, the planting of YHVH that He may be glorified. (4) Then they will rebuild the ancient ruins, they will raise up the former devastations, and they will repair the ruined cities, the desolations of many generations. (5) And strangers will stand and pasture your flocks, and foreigners will be your farmers and vinedressers. (6) But you will be called the priests of YHVH; you will be spoken of as ministers of Elohim. You will eat the wealth of nations, and in their riches you will boast. (7) Instead of your shame you will have a double portion, and instead of humiliation they will shout for joy over their portion. Therefore they will possess a double portion in their land, everlasting joy will be theirs. (8) For I, YHVH, love justice, I hate robbery in the burnt offering; and I will faithfully give them their recompense, and I will make an everlasting covenant with them. (9) Then their offspring will be known among the nations, and their descendants in the midst of the peoples. All who see them will recognize them because they are the offspring whom YHVH has blessed. (10) I will rejoice greatly in YHVH, my soul will exult in my Elohim; for He has clothed me with garments of salvation, He has wrapped me with a robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decks himself with a garland, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels. (11) For as the earth brings forth its sprouts, and as a garden causes the things sown in it to spring up, so YHVH Elohim will cause righteousness and praise to spring up before all the nations.'***

However, despite all these and other Scriptural witnesses that Yahshua will return one day to rule the world from Jerusalem, Christianity does not teach this good news to their members. The question is: Why does Christianity not accept the Scriptural truth of Elohim's kingdom coming to earth, at Messiah's return? Why is this message not understood or taught from their pulpits? The reason is not because it cannot be understood from the pages of the Scriptures, but that they simply reject it. The reason why Christianity rejects the many Scriptural witnesses to the coming kingdom of Elohim is because they lack understanding. But, in most cases their lack of understanding stems from personal agendas, which blinds their minds. For example, Protestants believe that the return of Messiah could be compared to a vestigial (functionless) organ in the human body. A vestigial organ in scientific or medical terms, refer to part of the human body that is believed to have had a specific function once, but no longer serves a useful purpose. It is for this reason that they see no point in Messiah's return.

Orthodox theology sees no need for a physical resurrection. They reason that if human beings have immortal souls, there is no need to be resurrected? Why do you want to resurrect someone to life, if he/she does not die? They hold, that if we are judged at the point of death, and our so-called 'immortal' souls are consigned to either heaven or hell, depending how we lived, why should we be resurrected? If after the body is buried and it turns back to the dust from which we are made, and the soul continues, what is the purpose of reviving the body later? These are but a few of the questions which un-enlightened Christians and others grapple with, without coming to an understanding. Even so, we see clearly from Revelation 20; 11 – 13 that numerous people will be

⁴ Mark 1: 14 & 15, ***'And after Yochanan (the Immerser) had been taken into custody, Yahshua came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of Elohim, and saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of Elohim is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel.'***

judged after Messiah's return, and not at the time of their death. If we truly have immortal souls like Christianity and others believe, why is there such a long wait after we died before we will finally be judged? In order to resolve the contrasts between their beliefs and what is taught in the Scriptures, early religious teachers came up with the idea of purgatory⁵, or different forms of limbo (or a halfway house)⁶ where human souls are kept before they finally get to heaven. By coming up with non-scriptural ideas like that, they have no need for the kingdom of Elohim. But there are some theologians in Christianity who teach about the resurrection of the dead, since it cannot be argued away. However, they teach the reason for the resurrection of the body to be united with the soul again, so that it may continue eternity in either heaven or hell.

The Roman Catholic Church also formed a theology whereby the church is seen as Elohim's kingdom on Earth. In so doing, they did away with the need for Messiah to return. The Catholic Church holds that the church is the kingdom of Elohim, with the Pope being the vicar in place of Messiah as the head of the kingdom. The leaders of the Protestant religion took an opposing view; in that they regard the Kingdom as the Christian institution of salvation. In other words the Kingdom of Elohim came to be defined as salvation, and not the church. They hold that once a believer accepted '*Christ*' he/she is considered to be saved, and therefore considered to be part of the kingdom, as the collective body of saved believers become the kingdom of Elohim. But, since that was an early church view, the kingdom of Elohim has now become the community, i.e. church and state combined with all things good and beautiful to make up the Kingdom.

There are over 300 prophecies in the Tanach about the first coming of Yahshua Messiah. Most Christian churches incorporate these prophecies in their teachings about '*Jesus*' who died for their sins. The question is why don't these same Christian churches refer to the hundreds of scriptures that teach about Yahshua's second coming and the establishment of the kingdom of Elohim? Instead they perpetuate their lies, by teaching that the kingdom of Elohim is already here. However, it is clear that the kingdom of Elohim is definitely not here, because if Messiah is not currently ruling the world, as prophesied by Isaiah in Isaiah 11: 1 – 16; why do wolves still kill sheep? Why is it still dangerous for little children to play by the hole of the cobra? We also know that children will not dare to lead lions around, at this time. No, the kingdom of Elohim is definitely not here, since it is clear from the above that knowledge of Elohim does not fill the earth— Isaiah's prophecy of Elohim's kingdom, do not describe our current world. By rejecting the understanding of Yahshua's return to the earth to rule the world from Jerusalem, as King of kings and Lords of lords, Christianity also unintentionally rejects the gospel taught by Yahshua in Mark 1: 14 & 15; Luke 4: 43; Luke 8: 1 and 9: 11. Our world is in a mess, and it cannot ever be expected to improve, unless Yahshua our Messiah returns one day. Even with our best intentions and efforts we are only able to establish temporary peace and there can be no lasting peace as long as mankind rules the world.

The only part of the Scriptural message which Christianity believes is that Elohim loves us enough to have given us His only begotten Son. However, it would be a serious mistake to misinterpret His love for us with tolerance of sin. Even though Elohim has made it obvious throughout the Scriptures that He is patient and forgiving, He also informs us that His patience has a limit. Yahshua's disciples questioned Him about His return in Matthew 24: 3, saying: ***"Tell us, when will these things be and what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?"*** Messiah's reply must have

⁵ Purgatory: In comparative religion, any place or state succeeding the present life and serving as means of moral purification. In Catholic theology, it is a place in which souls who depart this life in the grace of Elohim suffer for a time, because they still need to be cleansed from venial sins or have still to pay the temporal punishment due to mortal sins, the guilt and eternal punishment of which have been remitted.

⁶ Limbo: Some Messianic/Nazarene Israelites believe that believers went to Abraham's bosom until Yahshua's resurrection and ascension to heaven, after which time their souls also went to heaven to be with Elohim. They somehow deduced this from Yahshua's parable of Lazarus and the rich man.

shocked them, as the signs of His return would not be pleasant. As He explained in Matthew 24, immediately prior to His return, there will be many who will come in His name, saying they are believers in Him, i.e. Christians, Messianic and even some Nazarenes, who will mislead many. Continuing in verses 6 – 8, He said: ***“And you will be hearing of wars and rumors of wars; see that you are not frightened, for those things must take place, but that is not yet the end. (7) For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom, and in various places there will be famines and earthquakes. (8) But all these things are merely the beginning of birth pangs.”***

What Yahshua said next was even more scary because we as believers never in our wildest dreams thought that we will be affected adversely for believing in Him, as Yahshua continued to explain in verse 9 – 13, saying: ***“Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations on account of My name. (10) And at that time many will fall away and will deliver up one another and hate one another. (11) And many false prophets will arise, and mislead many. (I believe that this is happening right now, as there are many agents of Satan, who contradict the words of Yahshua our Messiah by coming up with prophecies to make true believers doubt the basic tenets of our faith, such as the Oneness of Elohim, the validity of the Hebrew calendar, the pronunciation of (YHVH)’s name, Kosher foods, etc.) (12) And because lawlessness is increased, most people’s love will grow cold. (13) But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved.”***

Yahshua was essentially telling us of an age prior to His return, which will be characterized by lawlessness, meaning a general disregard for Torah, but also for civil law. However, it will be during such a period of lawlessness that the gospel of the kingdom of Elohim shall be proclaimed into the world, as He said in verse 14 of Matthew 24, in this way: ***“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come.”*** I am personally aware of groups who started preaching the good news about the coming kingdom of Elohim since before World War II. Even so only a few people realize that the gospel preached by Messiah, includes His return and the setting up of the Kingdom of Elohim on the earth. In fact many believe the true gospel to be only about Messiah’s birth, life on earth, death, resurrection and ascension to heaven. Unfortunately, the marvelous truths regarding His second coming are dismissed by most as allegorical.

In verses 15 - 22 of Matthew 24 Yahshua informs us that the world will not be a tranquil place before His return, as follows: ***‘Therefore when you see the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION which was spoken of through Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place, (16) then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains; (17) let him who is on the housetop not go down to get the things out that are in his house; (18) let him who is in the field not turn back to get his cloak. (19) But woe to those who are with child and to those who nurse babes in those days! (20) But pray that your flight may not be in winter, or on a Sabbath; (21) for then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. (22) And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.’*** Yahshua will return to a world on the brink of self-annihilation, to come and save us from ourselves.

However, instead of welcoming Yahshua when He returns, the Scriptures tells us that the nations of the world will have mobilized huge armies for a confrontation against each other in the land of Israel, at that time. But, when Messiah returns they will turn the war against Him, as Rav Yochanan documented in his vision in Revelation 19: 11 – 16, in this way: ***‘And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. (12) And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. (13) And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of Elohim. (14) And the armies which***

are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses. (15) And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of Elohim, the Almighty. (16) And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND MASTER OF MASTERS." The question is why will there be a war at the end of this age? The reason is because mankind has been rejecting Elohim's teachings from the time Satan influenced Adam and Eve to reject Elohim's instructions. Put in simple terms; **they do not want Elohim in their lives!**

Yahshua will have to intervene to save us from ourselves, to keep our hatred for one another from erasing all life on earth – that is the condition of the world we built because of rejecting Elohim's knowledge. Like a loving Father YHVH will put up with His children's rebellion and hostility towards Him for only so long, before correcting us. Like with a human father, it does not mean that He hates us, it shows that He wants us to live according to His will for us. That is why Messiah will return to put an end to our rebellion. Yahshua plainly said that no one will know the day or hour of His return. We may be able to identify the conditions and general period when He will return, as Yahshua said in Matthew 24: 32 & 33, ***"Now learn the parable from the fig tree: when its branch has already become tender, and puts forth its leaves, you know that summer is near; (33) even so you too, when you see all these things, recognize that He is near, right at the door."*** The question is: Why does Elohim not give us the exact timing of Messiah's return. It is because He knows our nature and the way we as humans think, knowing that if we knew, we would lose our focus. This is why Yahshua specifically warned us to remain alert and diligent to the end in Matthew 24: 42 – 44, as follows: ***"Therefore be on the alert, for you do not know which day your Master is coming. (43) But be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what time of the night the thief was coming, he would have been on the alert and would not have allowed his house to be broken into. (44) For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will."***

During the next few years life is going to become very difficult and it will require much of our attention to make ends meet. However, it is at this time that we need to consider Yahshua's words in Matthew 6: 31 – 33, and put our trust in Elohim, in this way: ***"Do not be anxious then, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'With what shall we clothe ourselves?' (32) For all these things the Gentiles eagerly seek; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. (33) But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you."*** If we truly want our current situation of exile to come to an end, we will put every effort into ensuring that the good news about the coming kingdom of Elohim is proclaimed as a witness to all nations, and then the end will come, as Yahshua said in Matthew 24: 14. We need to instill in our mind's eye the same vision that our Father Abraham had, as witnessed in Hebrews 11: 10, as follows: ***'for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is Elohim.'*** We need to search the Scriptures to find out more about the wonderful world to come and the future which Elohim prepared for those who serve Him.

Without that vision firmly established in our hearts (belief system) and souls (the way we live) we will perish, as we read from Proverbs 29: 18, ***'Where there is no vision, the people are unrestrained, but happy is he who keeps the law.'*** It is because Christianity and some amongst us rejected knowledge (Torah and the gospel about the coming kingdom of Elohim); that they do not have the hope and understanding that the evil of this present age will soon come to an end when Yahshua our Messiah returns, as YHVH promised Abraham. It is as I've read from one of the Churches of G-d's publications recently: Elohim wants us to be happy, healthy and prosperous; we should therefore do everything in our power to get this all-powerful Being on our side. We should put the same urgency in preparation for our spiritual rebirth as children of Elohim at Messiah's return, as a woman does in preparation for the birth of a first child. Even though most women know more or less when her baby

is due, not one is able to predict the exact timing (or hour) of a natural birth with accuracy. **People, we need to wake up!**

Chapter 6: Forgive us our debt.

As Nazarene Israelites we all know the model prayer that our Master Yahshua communicated to His disciples, when He taught them how to pray. Nonetheless, we should not forget that in addition to giving them the specific elements to include in their daily prayer requests to our heavenly Father (Avinu), He also told them not to use meaningless repetition, as the gentiles do, as they believe they will be heard for their many words. This means that we may use elements of the model prayer in Matthew 6: 9 – 13 in our daily prayers, but should not like some in Christianity recite the same prayer over a number of times at a time. YHWH wants us to talk to Him from the heart, but in so doing we need to be ever mindful that He is our Creator and He demands that we come before Him respectfully. We should also remember that we can only come to YHWH the Father in and through the blood of Messiah, and therefore always conclude our prayers in and through the name of Yahshua our Messiah, adding the words Amein (meaning, 'so be it') at the end.

Because we are human most of us have or are experiencing feelings of pain because a loved one said or did something to offend us; or sorrow that will not go away, or guilt that keep us captive; or even bitterness that promotes resentment of others because of the grief they caused us. When someone offends us, or sin against us; our first reaction is usually to hit back by saying or doing something equally nasty. However, if we truly believe in what Yahshua taught whilst He was on earth, we will recall His words in Matthew 5: 38 & 39, as follows: ***"You have heard that it was said, 'AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH.'*** (39) ***But I say to you, do not resist him who is evil; but whoever slaps you on the right cheek, turn to him the other also."*** Yahshua did not here abolish a Torah command, but merely informed His disciples that the section that He quoted from in Deuteronomy 19: 21, namely: ***"Thus you shall not show pity: life for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot,"*** was reserved for capital punishment meted out by a court of law, and not for interaction between people. In reading from verses 43 – 48 of Matthew 5, we see that Yahshua was actually associating verbal abuse to physical violence against us, in this way: ***"You have heard that it was said, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR, and hate your enemy.'*** (44) ***But I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for those who persecute you*** (45) ***in order that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous.*** (46) ***For if you love those who love you, what reward have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?*** (47) ***And if you greet your brothers only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?*** (48) ***Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect."*** It is clear; the starting point for our healing is to obey the teachings and advice of our Master Yahshua the Messiah.

Resuming His lesson about prayer Yahshua added in Mark 11: 25 & 26, saying: ***"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions.*** (26) ***But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions."*** If we truly want to be in the kingdom of Elohim one day, we will take these words of Messiah very seriously, since we cannot enter the Kingdom, without being forgiven our past sins. Yes, we are forgiven our sins, conditional that we also forgive those who sin against us! Forgiveness is vital in us getting rid of bitterness, resentment and hatred. When Kepha asked Yahshua in Matthew 18: 21, saying: ***"Master, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"*** In answering Kepha, Yahshua related the parable in verses 22 – 35 to him, saying: ***"I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.*** (23) ***For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves.*** (24) ***And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents.*** (25) ***But since he did not have the means to repay, his master commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made.*** (26) ***The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.'*** (27) ***And the master of that slave***

felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt. (28) But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him saying, 'Pay back what you owe.' (29) So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.' (30) He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed. (31) So when his fellow slaves saw what happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their master all that had happened. (32) Then summoning him, his master said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me. (33) Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?' (34) And his master, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him. (35) So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

As human beings we react in accordance with our emotions and the destructive influence that Satan continues to broadcast into our minds, as he is fully aware of the condition required by YHVH for forgiveness and wants us to be permanently antagonistic toward each other. In day 32 of counting the Omer we considered the attribute of *'Netzach of Hod'* or Endurance in Humility. Endurance in humility stresses the fact that real humility does not make you into a spineless person for others to walk all over; but gives you enduring strength, so that others do not take advantage of you. We should learn to react to curses and negative comments about us by blessing and making positive comments/remarks about those who abuse us verbally. However, this is easier said than done and because of our pride we sometimes refuse to forgive, as at times we consider someone's sin against us as purely too great to forgive. This is when we feel that the offender needs to be taught a lesson, before we will even consider forgiving him or her. If we feel this way, we need to realize that our own foolish pride often prevents us from forgiving others. As mentioned in a previous sermon such reasoning is loaded with emotion and overlooks the basic Scriptural principle that it is not within us to know what is right and wrong, as we cannot on our own determine what is important to Elohim and what is not, as we read from Proverbs 14: 12, in this way: ***'There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.'*** Reading Rav Shaul's admonition in Romans 12: 17 – 21, we see that Elohim's words does not allow us to take revenge, as follows: ***'Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. (18) If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. (19) Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of Elohim, for it is written, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY," says YHVH. (20) "BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS UPON HIS HEAD." (21) Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.'***

We read the example Rav Shaul left us regarding forgiveness and his admonition of the brethren in Corinth to forgive a sinner amongst them, who he expelled from the congregation earlier for his sins, in second Corinthians 2: 6 – 8, in this way: ***"Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, (7) so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, lest somehow such a one be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. (8) Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him."*** It is essential for us to stay in a forgiving frame of mind, as the peace that is produced by a forgiving attitude is far better than incapacitating hate and resentment. We need to be ever mindful that Yahshua our Messiah gave His very life for the forgiveness of our sins, as He said when He gave His disciples the cup at His last Passover in Matthew 26: 27 & 28, as follows: ***"Drink from it, all of you; (28) for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins."***

Even though it is very difficult to suddenly develop a forgiving attitude if we have been our worldly self for most of our lifetime, it is possible for us to change as we are assured by Yahshua in Mark 9: 23, where He said: ***'All things are possible to him who believes.'*** In addition we read from Hebrews 9: 13 & 14: ***'For if the blood of goats and bulls and the ashes of a heifer sprinkling those who have***

been defiled, sanctify for the cleansing of the flesh, (14) how much more will the blood of Messiah, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without blemish to Elohim, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living Elohim? We simply need to deeply convince ourselves to forgive others and ask Elohim to help us do so. We need to understand that just as insincere forgiveness will not remove feelings of resentment and bitterness, so faith without works is dead as witnessed by Rav Yaa'cov in James 2: 26. We need to comfort ourselves with the knowledge that Elohim will never allow trials to come upon us that are more than we can bear. He always provides us with a way to escape and the wherewithal to handle our problems, as Rav Shaul assures us in first Corinthians 10: 13, as follows: ***'No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and Elohim is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.'***

YHVH gave us the ability to forgive as a way to escape – provided we personally choose to do so. The alternative is to remain captive by our feelings of guilt and resentment. We need to ask ourselves: When we at times ask Elohim to heal such feelings, do we reject the ways that He provides to accomplish the healing? Do we ignore the fact that spiritual as well as emotional healing requires our forgiveness, i.e. by putting our faith into works? One thing is certain, forgiveness does not ignore or condone crime. However it requires an understanding for the transgression and a readiness to help the offender with his problem. As we practice forgiveness, we will learn that by doing so, we are released from our feelings of guilt and resentment. As soon as we forgive we also start the healing process. In addition to getting rid of our suffering and sorrow, we are also assured forgiveness of our own personal sins, when we repent. Rav Yochanan tells us in first John 1: 9, ***'If we confess our sins, He (Elohim) is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.'*** YHVH tells us through David in Psalm 103: 12 & 13, ***'As far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us. (13) Just as a father has compassion on his children, so YHVH has compassion on those who fear Him.'*** The prophet Isaiah tells us in Isaiah 1: 18 that Elohim's forgiveness is absolute, as follows: ***"Though your sins are as scarlet, they will be as white as snow; though they are red like crimson, they will be like wool."*** We may remind YHVH of His promise that Yahshua gave us in and at the end of the model prayer that He gave His disciples in Matthew 6: 12 & 14, by including it in our daily prayers, as follows: ***'And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (14) For if you forgive men their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.'*** It is necessary to understand that it is easier to forgive someone, if we do not obsessively turn their wrong actions over in our minds. We need to stop ourselves before we become hardhearted and eventually bitter and twisted. We also need to ask Elohim to forgive those who sin against us and to lead them to repentance. By so-doing we become co-workers with Elohim in pursuing the wrongdoer's forgiveness.

We need to remember that Yahshua suffered much more injustice and rejection than what most of us ever will as we witnessed in John 1: 10 & 11, ***'He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. (10) He came to His own, and those who were His own did not receive Him.'*** We read accordingly from the prophesy in Isaiah in chapter 53: 2 & 3, ***'For He grew up before Him like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. (3) He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men hide their face, He was despised, and we did not esteem Him.'*** Yahshua was never concerned about His own feelings, but always considered that of others. The rebellious condition into which mankind progressed after Adam and Eve's expulsion from the Garden of Eden, required YHVH to come as 'one of us' to pay the penalty for our sins, so that we may be reconciled back to Him in a sinless state. This is so aptly put in Romans 8: 2 to the first part of verse 4, as follows: ***'For the law of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yahshua has set you free from the law of sin and of death. (3) For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, Elohim did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He***

condemned sin in the flesh, (4) in order that the requirements of the Law might be fulfilled in us.”

Yahshua endured by patiently accepting and waiting on Elohim for the reconciliation of mankind. If we who claim to be His followers, we should do the same.

However, it will take a lot of practice to overcome our normal antagonistic fight or flight nature. It can be likened to a body builder who has to continue to push and pull against huge weights in resistance training until his body is sculptured into that of a champion. It takes months, even years for a body builder to develop from a skinny or overweight body to what is required to enter into competitions. Because forgiveness is not something that we can do naturally; we have to learn and practice to forgive. Similar to a body builder we have to practice to overcome our resistance to forgive those who sin against us, if we eventually want to be awarded the crown that Rav Shaul spoke about in 2 Timothy 4: 7 & 8, in this way: ***‘I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; (8) in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which YHVH, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.’*** If we practice forgiveness daily, it will become a habit with us and slowly but surely we will conform to the image of Elohim, namely Yahshua our Messiah. He forgave those who tortured Him to death, saying in Luke 23: 34, ***“Father, forgive them: for they do not know what they are doing”***, thus leaving us a perfect example of forgiveness. Think about it!

Chapter 7: Why do believers sin?

As Nazarene Israelites we count the Omer between Passover and Shavuot (Pentecost) because we are commanded to do so, but also to conform to the image of Elohim, namely Yahshua. As Nazarene believers in Messiah, we like father Abraham have been called out of the way we used to live, to follow the way of Elohim. It is as we read from Romans 8: 28 & 29, ***'And we know that Elohim causes all things to work together for good to those who love Elohim, to those who are called according to His purpose. (29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.'***

When Yahshua our Messiah was resurrected from the dead, He became the first *'human being'* to be born again from the dead, as witnessed from first Colossians 1: 15, as follows: ***'And He is the image of the invisible Elohim, the first-born of all creation.'*** As our perfect example, He was showing us how we will one day be born again, as we read from Romans 8: 11, in this way: ***'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Yahshua from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Messiah Yahshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.'***

However, to get to the point where we are ready to be changed into immortal spiritual sons or daughters of Elohim, we need to overcome those sins which so beset us - the things we do knowingly and sometimes unknowingly. YHVH wants us to become more aware of what we do and say, every minute of the day and throughout our lives. This is why it is so important for us as believers to continue to study Torah, year after year to remind us what to do and what not to do. As human beings it is necessary for us to become re- sensitized to what is right and what is wrong from (YHVH)'s perspective. To be able to become more sensitive to our every doing, we need to determine, why do we who claim to believe in YHVH, sin.

To begin with, we need to understand that sin is a human problem – something that we all do. Rav Shaul explained it in Romans 7: 15, as follows: ***'For that which I am doing, I do not understand; for I am not practicing what I would like to do, but I am doing the very thing I hate.'*** Even with our best intentions we sin daily. The question is why? Why do we battle to meet Elohim's standards and our own expectations? Rav Shaul understood that like us, he was a physical human being and accordingly told us in verse 18 of Romans 7, ***'For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh, for the wishing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not.'*** As flesh and blood beings we have a limited ability to live up to Elohim's standards and values. As a result, we repeatedly fall short of the behavior expected from us by Elohim. Yahshua our Messiah put it as follows in Matthew 26: 41, saying: ***"Keep watching and praying that you may not enter into temptation; the spirit is willing but the flesh is weak."***

What did Yahshua mean by saying, *'keep watching'*? What are we supposed to watch for? Very few people today, realize what Yahshua meant by these words. But, if we consider His words carefully, we will come to understand that He was saying that we should become more aware of our conduct. How we act and react in certain situations. An example being, how do you react if someone cuts you off in traffic? Do you fly off the handle and curse the offending driver, or do you keep your cool and carry on regardless. YHVH wants us to become totally aware of everything we do and say. As believers He wants us to continually compare our conduct with the standards that He set for us in His word. Similar to the way we check labels when we are shopping for food, He wants us to check our conduct against His word to make sure that we are overcoming our old self towards becoming a whole new man.

Both Yahshua our Messiah and Rav Shaul explained that the weakness of the flesh causes us to sin. We succumb to sin when inappropriate enticements become sufficiently appealing to us. The very nature of our flesh – our bodies and minds, make us weak enough to cave in to inappropriate desires. Because we are physical beings, created from the same substance as animals, the system

which supports our lives are essentially the same as may be read from Ecclesiastes 3: 18 – 20, as follows: ***‘I said to myself concerning the sons of men, “Elohim has surely tested them in order for them to see that they are but beasts.” (19) For the fate of the sons of men and the fate of beasts is the same. As one dies so dies the other; indeed, they all have the same breath and there is no advantage for man over beast, for all is vanity (futility). (20) All go to the same place. All came from the dust and all return to the dust.’*** Yes, Elohim created us as living souls from the dust of the ground, as is recorded in Genesis 2: 7, as follows: ***‘Then YHVH Elohim formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being (another word for soul).’***

The transliterated Hebrew word *‘nephesh’* translated as living soul in English, does not mean that we have immortal souls, as both Christianity and Moslems teach, but simply that we are living beings. As a result our physical bodies are prone to weaknesses that can lead to sin. Even though human flesh is not inherently evil, it is inherently weak. Rav Yaa’cov explained in James 1: 12 - 15 that sin is generated through our desires, in this way: ***‘Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Master has promised to those who love Him. (13) Let no one say when he is tempted, “I am being tempted by Elohim”; for Elohim cannot be tempted by evil, and He Himself does not tempt anyone. (14) But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. (15) Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and when sin is accomplished, it brings forth death.’***

How is it possible to avoid the pulls of the flesh? This is exactly what Rav Shaul asks in Romans 7: 24, saying: ***‘Wretched man that I am! Who will set me free from the body of this death?’*** He gives us the answer to this question in verse 25 of Romans 7, as follows: ***‘Thanks be to Elohim through Yahshua Messiah our Master! So then, on the one hand I myself with my mind am serving the law of Elohim, but in the other, with my flesh the law of sin.’*** Our sin comes from uncontrolled desires, but we have hope in Messiah, as we read from Hebrews 2: 16 – 18, in this way: ***‘For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendants of Abraham. (17) Therefore, He had to be made like His brethren in all things, that He might become a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to Elohim, to make propitiation for the sins of the people. (18) For since He Himself was tempted in that which He has suffered, He is able to come to the aid of those who are tempted.’***

Even so, we need to understand that desire is not always bad. Flesh and blood is neither evil nor good, it is neutral as far as sin and righteousness is concerned. In fact after YHVH our Elohim created man, He observed in Genesis 1: 31, ***‘And Elohim saw all that He had made, and behold, it was very good.’*** Most of us are aware that all our desires and needs have healthy purposes. However, those same desires and needs, when not properly controlled can lead to sin. If we do not get hungry, we will simply starve to death without knowing it. But, if we do not control our appetites we could become gluttons, overeating ourselves. So we see that the natural desires or appetites of the flesh are not sinful in themselves, but without us controlling our desires and appetites could lead to sin. Elohim created desires in us to serve as motivating forces in our lives. Without such desires we will lack the will to live. The challenge is to properly manage our desires and to channel it into the right direction. Elohim expects us to use the help that He provided us with to direct our desires into legitimate channels.

We are required to always maintain self-control under very difficult circumstances, as Rav Shaul cautioned in Romans 13: 13 & 14, saying: ***‘Let us behave properly as in the day, not in carousing and drunkenness, not in sexual promiscuity and sensuality, not in strife and jealousy. (14) But put on the Master Yahshua Messiah, and make no provision for the flesh in regard to its lusts.’*** We should watch ourselves, to make sure that we remain in control of our desires, so that they do not become sinful lusts. This brings us to the question: What is lust? To put simply; lust is nothing more

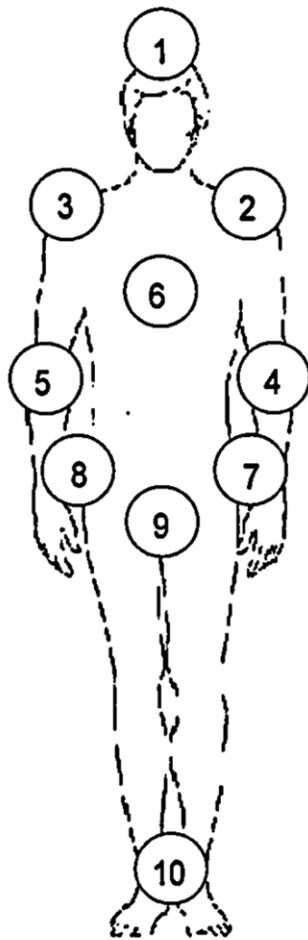
than uncontrolled desire. Whereas all lust is desire, not all desire is lust. Lust is harmful desires causing us to break Elohim's commandments. Torah defines the limits which Elohim set for us, to live happy productive lives, as Rav Shaul testified in Romans 3: 19 & 20, saying: ***Now we know that whatever the Law says, it speaks to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be closed, and all the world may become accountable to Elohim; (20) because by the works of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight; for through the Law comes the knowledge of sin.***

Commandments forbidding us not to commit adultery or murder places boundaries on our behavior; the commandments not to covet places a boundary on how we control our desires. Desiring our neighbor's car or house could lead to sin, but to legitimately desire a house or car could motivate us to start saving our money, in order to eventually acquire our desires. It is also not wrong to desire to be married, provided we go about it in a responsible and legitimate way. Yahshua did not condemn men and women who have a legitimate desire to marry, but condemned sinful desires for sexual immorality, as may be read from Matthew 5: 27 & 28, as follows: ***'You have heard that it was said, "YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY"; (28) but I say to you, that everyone who looks on a woman to lust for her committed adultery with her already in his heart.'***

We should however also be aware that our human nature affects far more than what our desires do. It also stimulates our emotions, some of which may be good, but some may also be evil. Our emotions can be beneficial, but can also be sinful and destructive. For example feeling such emotions as envy, jealousy, bitterness, and hatred are listed amongst the deeds of the flesh in Galatians 5: 19 – 21. Feelings of pride or the opinion that one is superior to others can lead to problems in human relationships. We read accordingly from Proverbs 16: 5, ***'Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to YHVH; assuredly, he will not be unpunished.'*** We read further from verse 18 of Proverbs 16, ***'Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.'***

Even so, we need to understand that our temptations to sin are not limited to our own human ability to control our emotions and desires. Our weaknesses are also manipulated by Satan and his agents. Satan is a master at manipulating the human mind, influencing the way we think. Similar to the way he influenced Eve to believe that Elohim lied to her, when he forbid her to acquire something that could give her understanding about what is good and evil, making her wise like Him. Satan stimulated in Eve the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes (human reasoning) and the pride of life (she desired to become wise), and she took matters into her own hands, as we read from Genesis 3: 6, as follows: ***'When the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was desirable to make one wise, she took from its fruit and ate; and she gave also to her husband with her, and he ate.'***

Satan knows how human sin is initiated and uses our own desires and emotions to get us to sin. It is for this reason that Rav Kepha warned us in first Peter 5: 8 & 9, saying: ***'Be of a sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (9) But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.'*** Rav Shaul gave us a fail-safe way to resist Satan and his schemes in Ephesians 6: 11 - 13, saying: ***'Put on the full armor of Elohim, that you may be able to stand firm against the schemes of the devil. (12) For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of this darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. (13) Therefore, take up the full armor of Elohim, that you may be able to resist in the evil day, and having done everything, to stand firm.'***



As I explained in a sermon entitled: 'The Image of Elohim', the first three attributes of the image of Elohim; namely the Crown (1), Wisdom (2) & Understanding (3) relate to the Helmet of Salvation. The second three attributes; namely Harmony (6) (or beauty), Mercy (4) & Severity (or power) (5) relate to the heart or Breastplate of Righteousness. The third three attributes; namely Victory (7), Humility (8) & Foundation (9) relate to the groin and hand or The Belt of Truth. And the last attribute; namely Kingdom (10) relates to the feet or Shoes of Peace or Nobility (Kingship). We are admonished by Rav Shaul to put the full armor of Elohim on, to protect us from principalities (rulers), powers, the world forces of darkness and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. These are four classes of demons which in turn relate to the body segments of the image of Elohim, which they use to deceive us; attack and lead us astray. By putting on the full armor of Elohim, we are protected from head to toe. The Helmet of Salvation (belief in Yahshua our Messiah) protects us from the evil spirits under heaven, known as

principalities. The Breastplate of Righteousness (doing righteous deeds) protects us from powers, the Belt of Truth (Torah) protects us from the rulers of darkness of this world, and the Shoes of Peace (the gospel of the Kingdom of Elohim) protect us from the forces of wickedness in heavenly places. The four pieces of armor, is put in place to protect us from the four strategies that Satan use to deceive mankind. If we believe in Yahshua the Helmet of Salvation, practice righteousness, study and obey Torah, and believe in the true gospel we will have put on the full armor of Elohim to protect us from all evil.

Satan, the god of this world has blinded the minds of people, as we read from second Corinthians 4: 3 & 4, in this way: ***'And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, (4) in whose case the god of this world (Satan) has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of Elohim.'*** Except for a few called out of the world and its ways, who have turned to Elohim in repentance, the blindness of mankind is world-wide. Rav Shaul described the difference between those who serve YHVH and those who serve Satan or sin in Romans 6: 16 – 18, in this way: ***'Do you not know that when you present yourselves to someone as slaves for obedience, you are slaves of the one whom you obey, either of sin resulting in death, or of obedience resulting in righteousness? (17) But thanks be to Elohim that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, (18) and having been freed from sin, you became slaves to righteousness.'***

In Romans 7: 12 & 14 Rav Shaul explained that Elohim's Torah is righteous and good, and that it is also spiritual. He further explained that it is by studying Torah that we get to know what sin is. This helps us understand why it is necessary to study and (try to) obey Elohim's Torah to the best of our ability. It also helps us understand why Christianity is not fully protected, since they believe that Torah has been abolished, and are also not aware of the true gospel about the coming kingdom of Elohim. These two areas are part of the armor of Elohim, helping us to overcome Satan, the world and ourselves. We put the belt of truth on by studying Torah weekly, to make us aware of areas in which we may sin. The shoes of peace, protects us against Satan's tactic of oppression. It is by believing in the gospel of the Kingdom of Elohim that we have hope for a better life in the world to come.

After discussing our father's in the faith in Hebrews 11, we read fittingly from Hebrews 12: 1- 3, ***'Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, let us also lay aside every encumbrance, and the sin which so easily entangles us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, (2) fixing our eyes on Yahshua, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of Elohim. (3) For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart.'*** Rav Shaul informs us of the effort he had to put into disciplining himself against the desires that tempted him to sin in first Corinthians 9: 24 – 27, as follows: ***'Do you not know that those who run a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. (25) And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. (26) Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; (27) but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.'*** Even so, Rav Shaul admits that he never fully succeeded in his efforts to reach perfection, but gives us the correct perspective to adopt in Philippians 3: 13 & 14, saying: ***'Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do; forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, (14) I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of Elohim in Messiah Yahshua.'***

In addition to resisting sin, we should also be prepared to assist our brethren in their fight against the pull of the flesh, as Rav Yaa'cov wrote in James 5: 19 & 20, as follows: ***'My brethren, if any among you strays from the truth, and one turns him back, (20) let him know that he who turns a sinner from the error of his way will save his soul from death, and will cover a multitude of sins.'*** We need to remain ever aware how easily we are tempted, but not ever give in to discouragement and defeat. We should like Rav Shaul, always reach forward towards the goal which lies ahead, remembering that Torah gives us knowledge of sin, but provides no power to subdue the flesh. The power to rule our desires comes only through the Set-apart Spirit.

Chapter 8: What's next?

At this time the two houses of Israel are two separate and distinct groups of people. Even so, despite being two separate entities they remain bound to the calling which they inherited from Jacob, to be a chosen nation of kings and priests. But, we are given the two house truth in Isaiah 8: 14, as follows: ***"Then He shall become a sanctuary; but to both the houses of Israel, a stone to strike and a rock to stumble over, and a snare and a trap for the inhabitants of Jerusalem."*** As long as Israel and Judah stumble and take offense over the One who is their Rock, they will remain two separate entities. Today, the house of Judah is made up of Jews who have been preserved by Almighty YHVH and never lost their identity. On the other hand the house of Ephraim, which was sown into the nations of the world has become the fullness of nations, as Jacob said in Genesis 48: 19, in this way: ***"I know, my son, I know; he also shall become a people and he also shall be great. However, his younger brother shall be greater than he, and his descendants shall become a multitude of nations."***

The Olive tree mentioned in Romans 11, is the same olive tree planted by YHVH in Jeremiah 11: 16 & 17, as follows: ***'YHVH called your name "A green olive tree, beautiful in fruit and form"; with the noise of a great tumult He has kindled fire on it, and its branches are worthless. (17) And YHVH of hosts, who planted you, has pronounced evil against you because of the evil the house of Israel and the house of Judah, which they have done to provoke Me by offering sacrifices to Baal.'*** The root of the olive tree is Yahshua as seen in Isaiah 11: 10 and Revelation 22: 16. As explained by Rav Shaul in Romans 11 the house of Judah is presently blinded to Yahshua's identity to allow a remnant of the lost ten tribes who are being called out of mainly Christianity to return to obeying YHVH and His Torah teachings, according to Elohim's gracious choice (v5). They are once again keeping the Feast Days of Elohim, in accordance with the calendar preserved by Judah and are making Judah jealous (v11), because they are keeping the same Feast Days with understanding Elohim's plan of salvation for all mankind. They are studying Torah with a view to clean up their lives of sin and becoming Torah observant, to eventually become acceptable to Brother Judah as worshippers of YHVH and become Jewish in nature. I say this, because two years ago, I received a booklet from a Jewish synagogue in Johannesburg, containing the following article:

Yes, our Jewish Brothers are expecting us back, but they believe that we are fully Jewish, meaning that we are completely Torah observant. It is therefore important that we touch base with them, to determine where we are still lacking. This is after all what is prophesied to start happening during our time as witnessed in Zechariah 8: 23, as follows: ***"Thus says YHVH of hosts, 'In those days, ten***

'Moshiach & the lost ten tribes.'

The Jewish people were made up of twelve tribes. Ten of the tribes were exiled during the First Temple era- over two thousand years ago, and have been separated from the rest of Jewry ever since.

Yet they will return and be reunited in the messianic era... or are they lost forever? This and other questions will be analyzed in the days ahead.

An explicit prophesy from Jeremiah at the time of the exile of the ten tribes (Ephraim) from the remaining tribes (Judah) describes the reunion of the tribe of Yosef (Ephraim) with Judah. Yosef (Ephraim) represents the ten tribes that were exiled. The union will be a tearful one, "With cries they will come, and with mercy I will lead them." (Jeremiah 31: 8).

The prophet Ezekiel (37: 19 -22) speaks of this union: "I am taking the rod of Joseph, which is in the hand of Ephraim, and the tribes of Israel – his friends, and I will put on them the rod of Judah, and I will make them into one rod, and they will be one in my hand. Now I am taking the sons of Israel from the nations to which they went and I will gather them from around and bring them to their land. And I will make them into one nation, in the land, in the mountains of Israel. And one king will rule over them, and no longer will they be two nations. And they will not be separated into two kingdoms anymore.

i.e. Until now there has been separation within Jewry. First in the form of two kingdoms and later they were separated completely. When Moshiach comes. G-d will make us "into one nation and no longer will we be divided into two nations."

men from all the nations will grasp the garment (the tallit to which tzitzit is attached) of a Jew

saying, ***“Let us go with you, for we have heard that Elohim is with you.”*** I believe it is time for us to ask our heavenly Father in prayer to facilitate such meetings with Brother Judah so that we may start cooperating towards our common goal. Our reason for wanting to do so should be Scriptural and therefore obvious to them, since it is only once all hostility between our two groups are removed, that the Arab hordes around the Jewish nation of Israel in the middle-east will be conquered, as witnessed in Obadiah verses 18 & 19, as follows: ***“Then the house of Jacob will be a fire and the house of Joseph a flame; but the house of Esau will be as stubble. And they will set them on fire and consume them, so that there will be no survivor of the house of Esau,”*** for YHVH has spoken. (19) ***Then those of the Negev*** (the south country) ***will possess the mountain of Esau, and those of the Shephelah*** (the foothills) ***the Philistine plain; also, they will possess the territory of Ephraim and the territory of Samaria, and Benjamin will possess Gilead.*** This is also confirmed in Isaiah 11: 14, in this way: ***‘And they will swoop down on the slopes of the Philistines on the west; together they will plunder the sons of the east; they will possess Edom and Moab; and the sons of Ammon will be subject to them.’***

A key to understanding the end time scriptures is to watch for Judah’s lead. Judah never lost their identity, the covenants, and their faith, and has been preserved by YHVH, as He promised through Hosea the prophet in Hosea 1: 7, as follows: ***“But I will have compassion on the house of Judah and deliver (save) them by YHVH their Elohim, and will not deliver (save) them by bow, sword, battle horses or horsemen.”*** This is in fact confirmed by Yahshua in Matthew 24, where He told His disciple what world conditions will be like immediately prior to His return, saying in verse 34: ***“Truly I say to you, this generation (race) will not pass away until all these things take place.”*** We read further about these end time events from Isaiah 11: 12, ***‘And He (YHVH) will lift up a standard (Yahshua) for the nations, and will assemble the banished ones of Israel (Ephraim) and gather together the dispersed (but preserved and recognizable) of Judah from the four corners of the earth (this has and is happening since 1948).’*** We see also from the first half of Ezekiel 37: 16, that Judah is gathered first, in this way: ***“And you, son of man, take for yourself one stick and write on it, ‘For Judah and for the sons of Israel, his companions.’”*** We also see that since that time the stick of Joseph/Ephraim is also being gathered as we read in the remainder of verse 16 & 17, as follows: ***“Then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim and all the house of Israel his companions.’ (17) Then join them for yourself one to another into one stick, that they may become one in your hand.”*** We know that Joseph is made up of the English speaking nations of the world, but here we see that the other tribes are also included, when Judah and the 10 lost tribes of Israel will come together in the end of days.

Since the re-establishment of the Jewish nation in the land of Israel in the Middle East, the nations surrounding them were hostile and became more so over time. Because of the aid that nations like the USA and the UK have given the small nation of Israel, the Arab nations have also launched terrorist attacks against them. As a result we are living in a dangerous uncertain world. With war and other catastrophic events looming, it is necessary for us to gain an understanding of the prophetic perspective about to play out in the short time ahead. According to the prophets of the Scriptures, our days are marked with wars and great chaos. However, when we realize that all of this has been predicted before, we can rejoice in the knowledge that our redemption is near. The two houses of Israel will soon be united. We read a prophesy about Yahshua from Hosea 5: 15 – 6: 4 in this way: ***‘I will go away and return to My place until they acknowledge their guilt and seek My face; in their affliction they will earnestly seek Me.’*** (Since the beginning of 2009 things started going wrong and the world’s economy is in turmoil; for the first time the predictions that we were warned about during the seventies started happening. During the next few years it will go from bad to worse; So much so that most of those who doubted in the past will turn to Yahshua/YHVH for help.) (1) ***“Come let us return to YHVH. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. (2) He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him. (Yahshua will return after 2000 years and resurrect those who died in Him) (3) So let***

us know, let us press on to know YHVH. His going forth is as certain as the dawn; and He will come to us like the rain, like the spring rain watering the earth.”(4) What shall I do with you, O Ephraim? What shall I do with you, O Judah? For your loyalty is like a morning cloud, and like the dew which goes away early.’ We are told here that Yahshua will not return until we, the remnant of the lost ten tribes has become fully Torah observant. It will only be once we are fully Torah observant that Judah will recognize us as their brother. This is in agreement with what Yahshua taught in Matthew 5: 17 – 20. When we observe all the Torah commandments better than the Pharisees, i.e. from the heart; then our Jewish Messiah will return. This is one of the conditions that have to be satisfied before Yahshua will come to cut short the duration of the great tribulation in order to save the lives of the elect. A second condition which Yahshua himself mentioned, was as given in Matthew 24: 14, as follows: ***‘And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.’***

Judah cannot rebuild the nation of Israel alone. There might be Jews who believe in their hearts that the lost ten tribes are lost forever and that they will have to rebuild the nation on their own, but there are also Nazarene/Messianic Israelite and likeminded believers known as the Assemblies/congregations of YHVH who believe that they will be saved without Brother Judah. But both these groups are mistaken, despite being very sincere. There are many Scriptural proofs that both Judah and Israel will be saved together, one of which is recorded in Jeremiah 33: 6 - 11, as follows: ***‘Behold, I will bring to it health and healing, and I will heal them; and I will reveal to them an abundance of peace and truth. (7) And I will restore the fortunes of Judah and the fortunes of Israel, and I will rebuild them as they were at first. (8) And I will cleanse them from all their iniquity by which they have sinned against Me, and I will pardon all their iniquities by which they have sinned against Me, and by which they have transgressed against Me. (9) And it shall be to Me a name of joy, praise, and glory before all the nations of the earth, which shall hear of all the good that I do for them, and they shall fear and tremble because of all the good and all the peace that I make for it. (10) “Thus says YHVH, ‘Yet again there shall be heard in this place, of which you say, “It is a waste, without man and without beast,” that is, in the cities of Judah and the streets of Jerusalem that are desolate, without man and without inhabitant and without beast, (11) the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who say, “Give thanks to YHVH of hosts, for YHVH is good, for His lovingkindness is everlasting”; and of those who bring a thank offering into the house of YHVH. For I will restore the fortunes of the land as they were at first,’ says YHVH.’*** The question is why do some in the two camps think and believe that they can make it on their own. The reason is a jealousy in both groups which will only disappear near the end of this age, as prophesied in Isaiah 11: 13, in this way: ***‘Then the jealousy of Ephraim will depart, and those who harass Judah will be cut off; Ephraim will not be jealous of Judah, and Judah will not harass Ephraim.’***

We also read about the same restoration of the fortunes of both Israel and Judah from Jeremiah 30. This will occur during a time of great distress, when YHVH will intervene for His people once again, as we read from verses 2 – 9, ***“Thus says YHVH, the Elohim of Israel, ‘Write all the words which I have spoken to you in a book. (3) For, behold, days are coming,’ declares YHVH, ‘when I will restore the fortunes of My people Israel and Judah.’ YHVH says, ‘I will also bring them back to the land that I gave to their forefathers, and they shall possess it.” (4) ‘Now these are the words which YHVH spoke concerning Israel and concerning Judah.’ (5) “For thus says YHVH, ‘I have heard a sound of terror, of dread, and there is no peace. (6) Ask now, and see, If a male can give birth. Why do I see every man with his hands on his loins, as a woman in childbirth? And why have all faces turned pale? (7) Alas! for that day is great, there is none like it; and it is the time of Jacob’s distress, but he will be saved from it. (If you are part of Jacob, you will already be distressed; Israelites are in deep trouble, especially those in the USA, the UK, South Africa, and indeed throughout the western world). (8) ‘And it shall come about on that day,’ declares YHVH of hosts, ‘that I will break his yoke from off their neck, and will tear off their bonds; and strangers shall no longer make them their***

slaves. (9) But they shall serve YHVH their Elohim, and David their king, whom I will raise up for them."

Torah observant Jews remained faithful to YHVH as we read from the correct translation of Hosea 11: 12 in the King James Version of the Scriptures, in this way: **'Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with Elohim and is faithful with the saints.'** Because of their persecution and sufferings over the past 2500 years, YHVH has written Judah's sins on their hearts, as witnessed in Jeremiah 17: 1, as follows: **'The sin of Judah is written down with an iron stylus; with a diamond point it is engraved upon the tablet of their heart, and on the horns of their altars.'** After the Second World War, there were some Jews who like their European counterparts, lost their faith, but many remained loyal to YHVH and **'yet ruleth with Elohim.'** Our Jewish brothers are presently blinded to the identity of Yahshua and are keeping Torah, to show their good works, and not by faith, as confirmed in verses 32 & 33 of Romans 9, in this way: **'Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, (33) just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENCE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED."**' Their fear of disobedience ensures that they are very meticulous about keeping the Oracles entrusted to them by Elohim, as we read from Romans 3: 1 - 4.

Rav Shaul, talks about the Jews, being his blood relatives in Romans 10: 1 – 3, as follows: **'Brethren, my heart's desire and my prayer to Elohim for them (Judah) is for their salvation. (2) For I bear them witness that they have a zeal for Elohim, but not in accordance with knowledge. (3) For not knowing about Elohim's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of Elohim.'** Because of fear, the Jews have an almost mechanistic view of Torah and do not fully understand Elohim's righteousness. They keep Torah because they try to establish their own righteousness and do not subject themselves to Elohim's righteousness. They do not fully understand that without Yahshua, who is the way the truth and the life, we have no righteousness. He is the goal of the Torah for those who believe, as we read from verse 4, in this way: **'For Messiah is the end (goal) of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.'** It is as we read from verses 5 – 10 of Romans 10, in this way: **'For Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on law shall live by that righteousness. (6) But the righteousness based on faith speaks thus, "DO NOT SAY IN YOUR HEART, 'WHO WILL ASCEND INTO HEAVEN?' (that is, to bring Messiah down), (7) or 'WHO WILL DESCEND INTO THE ABYSS?' (that is, to bring Messiah up from the dead)." (8) But what does it say? "THE WORD IS NEAR YOU, IN YOUR MOUTH AND IN YOUR HEART"— that is, the word of faith which we are preaching, (9) that if you confess with your mouth Yahshua as Master, and believe in your heart that Elohim raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved; (10) for with the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation.'** However, according to Romans 11: 25 – 28, we need not be concerned about their 'lack' of faith, since we are the ones who are required to return to Elohim at this time, as follows: **'For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel (meaning Judah) until the fullness of the Gentiles (members of the lost ten tribes who believe that they are Gentiles) has come in: (26) and thus all Israel will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. (27) AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."** (28) From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of Elohim's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.'

As called out believers in the word of Elohim we need to concentrate on two things at this time. The first being what Yahshua taught in Luke 12: 31, **"But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you."** If we do everything in our power to please YHVH and to make it into His Eternal Kingdom, our needs in this life will also be met. Secondly, we should hold Torah up like a mirror to

determine our shortcomings. We need to understand that sin is the transgression of the law (as per first John 3: 4), and if we want to stop sinning we should stop transgressing Torah. We should even keep and teach those commandments considered least, as Yahshua taught in Matthew 5: 19. However, we need to understand that we cannot keep the commandments on our own. As witnessed in first Corinthians 2: 11 & 12 human beings cannot understand the Spiritual things of Elohim, unless we have a portion of His Set-apart Spirit indwelling us, as follows: ***‘For who among men know the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? Even so the thoughts of Elohim no one knows except the Spirit of Elohim. (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from Elohim, that we might know the things freely given to us by Elohim.’*** It is important therefore, that those of us called by Elohim at this time be immersed in the saving name of Yahshua our Messiah to receive the Set-apart Spirit (as per Acts 2: 38).

We need to understand that Torah shows us what is sin, and if we start practicing righteousness; eating only kosher (including not mixing meat and milk products); keeping the weekly and annual Sabbaths of Elohim; wearing tzitzit; circumcise both our hearts (being immersed) and flesh (only applicable to men), as well as keeping all other commands applicable to us as kings and priests in the making, we do what YHVH requires of each one of us, as recorded in Deuteronomy 10: 12 & 13, as follows: ***‘And now, Israel, what does YHVH your Elohim require from you, but to fear YHVH you Elohim, to walk in all His ways and love Him, and to serve YHVH your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul, (13) and to keep (YHVH)’s commandments and His statutes which I am commanding you today for your good?’***

Chapter 9: Where are we heading?

Is there a relationship between current world conditions and Messiah's return? To answer these questions we need to turn to the book of Revelation, since it is here where Yahshua our Messiah revealed to Rav Yochanan (John) what is shortly to take place to us the true followers of Elohim, as witnessed in Revelation 1: 1 & 2, in this way: ***'The Revelation of Yahshua Messiah, which Elohim gave Him to show to His bond servants, the things which must shortly take place; and He sent and communicated it by His angel to His bond servant Yochanan, (2) who bore witness to the word of Elohim and to the testimony of Yahshua Messiah, even to all that he saw.'***

For a detailed description concerning current world conditions and Messiah's return, we turn to Revelation 18: 5, where we are told about a dominant international commercial system, supported by corrupt political religious authorities whose *'sins have piled up as high as heaven.'* However, we are shown in an earlier chapter of Revelation that the return of Yahshua our Messiah will herald the collapse of this system. This system will exercise control over the lives of the inhabitants of earth, as we see from verse 17 of Revelation 13, as follows: ***'and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name.'*** This tells us that this system will strictly control all business transactions in the near future. Because most of us who live in the western world are used to individual freedom, it seems hard to imagine such a drastic global change in economic policies and practices. What could persuade us, the citizens of the so-called civilized world to accept such invasive controls over our freedom to buy and sell what we please?

We read from Ecclesiastes 1: 9, ***'That which has been is that which will be, and that which has been done is that which will be done. So, there is nothing new under the sun.'*** It is true history repeats itself, but because we are human, we quickly forget what happened in the past. But, if we recall recent twentieth century history, we will remember that such a scenario played out between 1929 and 1934, and eventually resulted in World War II. More than eighty years ago the world's economic system collapsed and resulted in trade wars and ultimately in a world-wide depression. This helped putting Adolf Hitler into power in Germany and over a few short years he restored Germany to become a powerful nation, making him into a hero in the eyes of most of his people. However, because it happened more than 70 years ago, most of us alive today have forgotten what lead to the war, and the atrocities that played out during that time. The parents of those of us over fifty, lived during and after the Great Depression, but there are not many of their generation alive any longer. Suicide was rampant immediately after the collapse of the stock markets during 1929. People lost their jobs and the wages of those still employed were drastically reduced. People could not meet their obligations any longer and many lost their homes, when the banks took properties back for debt. Eventually even the banks went bankrupt and many people walked around hungry looking for jobs and food.

It is difficult for people who lived through extended periods of excess to imagine the destructive forces of a prolonged deflation. In fact this is what is beginning to happen to large numbers of people in the world today. As wages drop, it becomes more and more difficult to make a living. Consumers buy less luxury goods and spend most of their income on feeding their families. As a result business earnings drop and before long some go bankrupt. During such times of economic scarcity people respond favorably to extraordinarily powerful and resolute leaders that show promise of rapidly bringing order out of chaos. Major problems require drastic solutions and people want immediate action to put an end to their suffering. The prophecy in Revelation 17 shows that a similar scenario will occur again prior to Messiah's return. Scriptures describes the super leader who will control the citizens of this world, as a powerful animal or beast, as we read from verses 11 – 13, as follows: ***"And the beast which was and is not, is himself also an eighth, and is one of the seven, and he goes to destruction. (12) And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet***

received a kingdom, but they received authority as kings with the beast for one hour. (13) These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast.” The global economic crises that we are experiencing currently may eventually require such drastic steps to try and correct matters from spiraling out of control. But, as shown in recent history, the leaders with enough drive to spur their followers to do what is required are usually those who do not object to walk over the rights and freedom of others to achieve their agendas. Such leaders get things done at the cost of the freedom and self-respect of their followers, as witnessed throughout history, where such despotic leaders only rewarded those who supported them to remain in power.

If the current austerity measures introduced in Europe fail, another such foolhardy plan will be implemented; and as in the past, individual rights and freedom will have to be given up, when such a plan may be presented as a temporary solution to sort out the problems, once for all. However, the Scriptures show that what follows will become horrendous, and only the return of Yahshua our Messiah will put an end to it. In recording the revelation that Yahshua gave him about this political, religious and business system, Rav Yochanan first introduces us to the spiritual roots of this wicked system; he refers to Satan as the great dragon, the serpent of old who deceives the whole world as in Revelation 12: 9. Here Satan is shown to prepare himself to make war with true believers, who *‘keep the commandments of Elohim and hold to the testimony of Yahshua’*, as witnessed in verse 17 of Revelation 9. Rav Shaul inform us in second Corinthians 4: 3 & 4 that an unseen spirit being, a fallen angel called Satan the devil rules the earth at present and is also responsible for the spiritual blindness of most of the inhabitants of the earth, in this way: ***‘And even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, (4) in whose case the god of this world has blinded the minds of the unbelieving, that they might not see the light of the gospel of the glory of Messiah, who is the image of Elohim.’***

In fact Satan is the driving force of what is happening behind the scenes at present. Rav Yochanan describes this in Revelation 13: 1 & 2, as follows: ***‘And he stood on the sand of the seashore. And I saw a beast coming up out of the sea, having ten horns and seven heads, and on his horns were ten diadems (crowns), and on his heads were blasphemous names. (2) And the beast which I saw was like a leopard, and his feet were like those of a bear, and his mouth like the mouth of a lion. And the dragon gave him his power and his throne and great authority.’*** Being familiar with the Scriptures we recall that these are the same characteristics that Daniel attributed to the ancient kingdoms of Greece, Persia and Babylon. In fact Yochanan tells us that there is a direct connection between these kingdoms and the kingdoms that Yahshua will destroy at his return.

The ancient Babylonians were responsible for the destruction of the temple that King Solomon built, when they invaded and conquered the kingdom of Judah. We see from verse 2 quoted above, that it is Satan who will control the world’s final dictator. Satan’s agenda has always been to have an effect on the policies of those in charge of the governments of the world. However, the end-time system described in Revelation represents more than just the political aspects of the control of the world. We read from verses 11 – 14 of Revelation 13, that it also has strong religious support, as follows: ***‘And I saw another beast coming up out of the earth; and he had two horns like a lamb, and he spoke as a dragon. (12) And he exercises all the authority of the first beast in his presence, and he makes the earth and those who dwell in it to worship the first beast, whose fatal wound was healed. (13) And he performs great signs, so that he even makes fire come down out of heaven to the earth in the presence of men. (14) And he deceives those who dwell on the earth because of the signs which it was given him to perform in the presence of the beast, telling those who dwell on the earth to make an image to the beast who had the wound of the sword and has come to life.’*** So we see that in addition to this system’s sociopolitical characteristics, it also has strong religious support. These verses describe a great religious deceiver, who is referred to as *‘the false prophet’* in Revelation 19: 20.

As can be seen from verses 15 - 18 of Revelation 13, his influence will be immense, in this way: ***'And there was given to him to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast might even speak and cause as many as do not worship the image of the beast to be killed. (16) And he causes all, the small and the great, and the rich and the poor, and the free men and the slaves, to be given a mark on their right hand, or on their forehead, (17) and he provides that no one should be able to buy or to sell, except the one who has the mark, either the name of the beast or the number of his name. (18) Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for the number is that of a man; and his number is six hundred and sixty six.'*** By combining the force of his deceptive religious power with the sociopolitical influence of the first beast, the false prophet will be the one responsible for convincing humanity to accept and support this major influence in the world's economic and political structure. All those who consent to this system will be enslaving themselves to this world ruling government. In the end, the merchants will assist to make this system, known as Babylon the Great (as we read from Revelation 17: 5, as follows: ***'And upon her forehead a name was written, a mystery, "BABYLON THE GREAT, THE MOTHER OF HARLOTS AND OF THE ABOMINATIONS OF THE EARTH."***'), operate. We see from Revelation 18: 12 & 13, that they will trade in ***'cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article made from ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, (13) and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives.'***

But thankfully Yahshua our Messiah will put an end to mankind's woes at His return, as we read from Revelation 19: 1 & 2, in this way: ***'After these things I heard, as it were, a loud voice of a great multitude in heaven, saying, "Hallelujah! Salvation and glory and power belong to our Elohim; (2) BECAUSE HIS JUDGMENTS ARE TRUE AND RIGHTEOUS; for He has judged the great harlot who was corrupting the earth with her immorality, and HE HAS AVENGED THE BLOOD OF HIS BOND-SERVANTS ON HER."*** The economic, political and religious system introduced by ancient Babylon will finally be destroyed. At that time the merchants who profited from these things will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, as witnessed in Revelation 18: 16 – 19 , as follows: ***'saying, "Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; (17) for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste!" And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, (18) and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning, saying, 'What city is like the great city?' (19) And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, 'Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!'***

Immediately prior to the resurrection of the first fruits at Messiah's return, Messiah will similar to the way Moses brought the ancient Israelites from slavery in Egypt, deliver the modern day descendants of Israel from the religious, political and economic confusion (Babylon), by which they were enslaved. We read consequently from Jeremiah 23: 5 – 8, ***"Behold, the days are coming," declares YHVH, "When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. (6) In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His name by which He will be called, 'YHVH our righteousness.' (7) Therefore behold, the days are coming," declares YHVH, "when they will no longer say, 'As YHVH lives, who brought up the sons of Israel from the land of Egypt,' (8) but, 'as YHVH lives, who brought up and led back the descendants of the household of Israel from the north land and from all the countries where I had driven them.' Then they will live on their own soil."*** It is important to understand that this end time prophesy is directed at the 'daughter' of Babylon, as witnessed in Isaiah 47: 1, as follows: ***"Come down and sit in the dust, O virgin daughter of Babylon; Sit on the***

ground without a throne, O daughter of the Chaldeans, For you shall no longer be called tender and delicate.” This is the daughter of Babylon of ancient times living in our day and age. As pictured in Revelation 17, this Babylon is the great whore sitting and ruling over many waters, interpreted in verse 15 as peoples and multitudes and nations and tongues.

Earlier in verse 5 of Revelation 17, Babylon was labeled as *‘a mystery, Babylon the Great, the Mother of Harlots’*. Because a woman in prophecy is generally referred to as a religious or church system, this is the religion of ancient Babylon which has since grown to become great and ruling over many nations of different languages. Continuing in Isaiah 47, we read from verses 5 & 6, ***“Sit silently, and go into darkness, o daughter of the Chaldeans; for you will no more be called the queen of kingdoms. (6) I was angry with My people, I profaned My heritage, and gave them into your hand. You did not show mercy on them, on the aged you made your yoke heavy.”*** The yoke of slavery was laid upon the lost ten tribes, and at this time it becomes clear that the great tribulation is the sevenfold intensive corrective punishment which Elohim is soon going to unleash on specifically Ephraim and Manasseh, better known as the English speaking nations of the world. Ezekiel describes this impending great tribulation, in chapter 5: 12 & 13, as follows: ***“One third of you will die by plague or be consumed by famine among you, one third will fall by the sword around you, and one third I will scatter to every wind, and I will unsheathe a sword behind them. (13) Thus My anger will be spent, and I will satisfy My wrath on them, and I shall be appeased; then they will know that I, YHVH, have spoken in My zeal when I spent My wrath upon them.”*** In chapter 6: 6 we read more about the punishment to be unleashed upon the latter day descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, in this way: ***“In all your dwellings, cities will become waste and the high places (places of religious worship) will be desolate, that your altars may become waste and desolate, your idols may be broken and brought to an end, your incense altars may be cut down, and your works may be blotted out.”*** Those who saw films about Hiroshima and Nagasaki in Japan will understand that this is talking about nuclear war. Because our national sin is ever increasing, Elohim is warning us that there will soon be a day of reckoning. World War III will unleash terrible nuclear devastation on mainly the English speaking peoples of the world. This will simply be punishment to correct mainly the modern day descendants of both houses of Israel and Judah for our own good.

However, if we as individual believers in Yahshua repent and return to Elohim by obeying His Torah teachings fully, we will be protected during the coming great tribulation, as witnessed in Luke 21: 34 - 36, as follows: ***“Be on guard, that your hearts may not be weighted down with dissipation and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day come on you suddenly like a trap; (35) for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. (36) But keep on alert at all times, praying in order that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man.”*** Only after Yahshua’s returns will He permanently put an end to the world’s last experiment with this Babylonian political, religious and economic system. The suffering caused by lawlessness and debt will come to an end when Yahshua our Messiah starts ruling for a thousand years. Halleluyah!

Chapter 10: Does it make a difference to Elohim?

When YHVH called ancient Israel out of Egypt He wanted them to become a model nation to the nations around them, in the way they followed Him, as indicated in Deuteronomy 4: 1 & 6 – 8, as follows: ***“And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, in order that you may live and go in and take possession of the land which YHVH, the Elohim of your fathers, is giving you. (6) So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, ‘Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people.’ (7) For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is YHVH your Elohim whenever we call on Him? (8) Or what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”*** The Israelites were to be an example to the other nations around them, to show them Elohim’s way and how it produces abundant blessings and benefits.

Whilst living in Egypt the Israelites were subjected to a foreign culture and people who worshipped a number of pagan gods. The Egyptians believed every creature and occurrence of nature to be holy and worthy of worship. It was for this reason that Elohim delivered the Israelites by causing the animals, insects and occurrences of nature that the Egyptians worshipped, to become a series of plagues to force them to set His people free⁷. A short time after Elohim miraculously delivered the Israelites from slavery in Egypt; He instructed them how He wanted them to worship Him. After a forty eight day journey from Egypt the Israelites arrived at the bottom of Mount Sinai, where Elohim instructed Moses to consecrate the people for two days; telling them to wash their clothes and to be ready on the third day when He will give them His commandments (Exodus 20) statutes and judgments (Exodus 21 – 23). Elohim told Israel about clean and unclean food (Leviticus 11); His Feast Days (Leviticus 23); directions regarding the priesthood; their clothing; the tabernacle and offerings (Exodus 25 – 31).

Elohim told Moses to come up to Him on Mount Sinai and gave him the two tablets of stone containing the Ten Commandments. However, when Moses delayed coming down from the mountain, the people convinced Aaron to mingle Egyptian worship with the instructions they received from Elohim. After making a golden calf Aaron made a proclamation and said: ***“Tomorrow shall be a feast to YHVH.”*** We read further from Exodus 32: 6, ***‘So the next day they rose early and offered burnt offerings and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, and rose up to play.’*** According to the footnote against the words ***rose up to play*** in *‘The MacArthur Study Bible’* the Hebrew word for play allows for the inclusion of drunken and immoral activities so common to fertility cults in their revelry. This celebration blended Elohim’s instructions with religious practices of the Egyptians. The Israelites became so accustomed to the religious practices and traditions of the Egyptians whilst living there, that syncretism⁸ had robbed them of all ethical alertness and moral discernment. Those of us who come from Christianity are fully aware how syncretism has robbed millions of their followers from the blessings to be had by obeying Elohim’s teachings.

In fact Rav Shaul warns fellow Nazarene Israelite believers in 1 Corinthians 10: 6 & 7, as follows: ***‘Now these things happened as examples for us, that we should not crave evil things, as they also***

⁷	<u>Plague</u>	<u>Egyptian god</u>	<u>Plague</u>	<u>Egyptian god</u>
	1. Blood	Hapi	6. Boils	Sekhmet
	2. Frogs	Heqt	7. Hail	Geb
	3. Gnats	Hathor	8. Locusts	Serapis
	4. Flies	Isis	9. Darkness	Ra
	5. Livestock	Apis	10. Death of the first-born -	

⁸ Syncretism is defined as the blending of religious beliefs, customs and practices.

craved. (7) And do not be idolaters, as some of them were; as it is written, "THE PEOPLE SAT DOWN TO EAT AND DRINK, AND STOOD UP TO PLAY." We also see from verses 7 & 8 of Exodus 32, that Elohim was not pleased with the Israelites, in this way: 'Then YHVH spoke to Moses, "Go down at once, for your people, whom you brought up from the land of Egypt have corrupted themselves. (8) They have quickly turned aside from the way which I commanded them. They have made for themselves a molten calf, and have worshipped it, and have sacrificed to it, and said, 'This is your god, O Israel, who brought you up from the land of Egypt!'"

YHVH our Elohim shows from His Word that He expects more from those who claim to follow Him. Being a spirit being, YHVH expects us to worship Him in spirit and in truth as Yahshua told the Samaritan woman at the well in John 4: 21 - 24, as follows: *'Yahshua said to her, "Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. (22) You worship that which you do not know; we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. (23) But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. (24) Elohim is spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth."* There was no reason for the Israelites to disobey Elohim's instructions introduced at Mount Sinai. We see from verse 10 of Exodus 32 that their actions angered Elohim, and He was ready to destroy them. However because of Moses's pleadings with Elohim in verses 11 – 13 of Exodus 32, He did not harm them, as is confirmed in verse 14, in this way: *'So YHVH changed His mind about the harm which He said He would do to His people.'*

We see from verses 25 - 28 of Exodus 32, that Israel's experimentation in blending Elohim's instructions with pagan customs and beliefs was disastrous, as follows: *'Now when Moses saw that the people were out of control— for Aaron had let them get out of control to be a derision among their enemies— (26) then Moses stood at the gate of the camp, and said, 'Whoever is for YHVH, come to me!' and all the sons of Levi gathered together to him. (27) And he said to them, "Thus says YHVH, the Elohim of Israel, 'Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'" (28) So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day.'* The people acted defiantly against Elohim's instructions and Moses described their action as a great sin as in verse 30, saying to them: *"You yourselves have committed a great sin; and now I am going up to YHVH, perhaps I can make atonement for your sin."* Elohim's teachings regarding defiant behavior is clearly stated in Numbers 15: 30 & 31, in this way: *'(But) the person who does anything defiantly, whether he is a native or an alien, that one is blaspheming YHVH; and that person shall be cut off from among his people. (31) Because he has despised the word of YHVH and has broken His commandment, that person shall be completely cut off; his guilt shall be on him.'* This same standard applies to us the modern day followers of the way of Elohim, as witnessed by Rav Shaul in Romans 15: 4, as follows: *'For whatever was written in earlier time was written for our instruction, that through perseverance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.'* Rav Shaul also wrote in 1 Corinthians 10: 11, *'Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.'*

We see further that the generation of Israelites who convinced Aaron to build the golden calf, never learnt to trust and obey Elohim, because later when they were preparing to enter the Promised Land, they became afraid of the inhabitants of the land and refused to enter. Consequently Elohim told them in Numbers 14: 30 - 32, saying: *'Surely you shall not come into the land in which I swore to settle you, except Caleb the son of Jephunneh and Joshua the son of Nun. (31) Your children, however, whom you said would become a prey—I will bring them in, and they shall know the land which you rejected. (32) But as for you, your corpses shall fall in this wilderness.'* Elohim's teachings (Torah) included a clear warning against incorporating pagan customs into the way they (and us their

modern day descendants) should worship Him, as is recorded for us in Deuteronomy 12: 29 – 31, as follows: ***“When YHVH your Elohim cuts off before you the nations which you are going in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, (30) beware that you are not ensnared to follow them, after they are destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire after their gods, saying, ‘How do these nations serve their gods, that I also may do likewise?’ (31) You shall not behave thus toward YHVH your Elohim, for every abominable act which YHVH hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and daughters in the fire to their gods.”***

Unfortunately the Israelites failed to pay attention to Elohim’s warning, and time and again they allowed their fascination with the religious practices of the nations around them, to get the better of them. YHVH gave Israel a number of warnings through His prophets. The first warning came through the prophet Jeremiah in Jeremiah 10: 1 – 5, in this way: ***‘Hear the word which YHVH speaks to you, O house of Israel. (2) Thus says YHVH, “Do not learn the way of the nations, and do not be terrified by the signs of the heavens although the nations are terrified by them; (3) For the customs of the peoples are delusion; because it is wood cut from the forest, the work of the hands of a craftsman with a cutting tool. (4) They decorate it with silver and with gold; they fasten it with nails and with hammers so that it will not totter. (5) Like a scarecrow in a cucumber field are they, and they cannot speak; they must be carried, because they cannot walk! Do not fear them, for they can do no harm, nor can they do any good.”’*** Here Elohim is warning specifically the house of Israel against following pagan practices of worshipping heavenly bodies (such as the sun on December 25) and putting up Xmas trees in their homes. But despite this warning, we are all aware that this very thing is being done by many modern day descendants of Israel today.

A number of years later Elohim again expressed His disdain for His people in Ezekiel 23: 37 – 39, saying through the prophet Ezekiel, ***“For they have committed adultery, and blood is on their hands. Thus they have committed adultery with their idols and even caused their sons, whom they bore to Me, to pass through the fire to them as food. (38) Again, they have done this to Me: they have defiled My sanctuary on the same day and have profaned My Sabbaths (weekly and annual Sabbaths). (39) For when they had slaughtered their children for their idols, they entered My sanctuary on the same day to profane it; and lo thus they did within My house.”*** Is this not what some modern day Israelites do today? They have abortions done (after which the unborn child {fetus} is burnt) so that they have enough money to buy a new car, TV or whatever they desire. Then to top it all they go to church services, acting as if they have done nothing wrong.

Christianity wrongly assumes that the so-called ‘Old Testament’ instruction condemning the mixing of paganism with the way they worship G-d, were annulled by the apostles after Yahshua’s death⁹. However, this is totally untrue. To prove the continuity of Elohim’s teachings of Torah in the Renewed Covenant, we need to consider the people of Corinth. However, to be able to understand what happened at Corinth, it is necessary to backtrack a bit to show that Rav Shaul was essentially the Apostle trained by Messiah personally to teach the Gentiles. We read accordingly from Acts 26, where Rav Shaul tells King Agrippa how he came to believe and work for Yahshua, in verses 12 – 18, as follows: ***“Whilst thus engaged as I was journeying to Damascus with the authority and commission of the chief priests, (13) at midday, O King, I saw on the way a light from heaven, brighter than the sun, shining all around me and those who were journeying with me. (14) And when we had all fallen to the ground, I heard a voice saying to me in the Hebrew dialect, ‘Saul,***

⁹ A footnote in ‘The MacArthur Study Bible’ against Acts 20: 7 reads: *The writings of the early church fathers confirm that the church continued to meet on Sunday after the close of the NT period. Scripture does not require Christians to observe the Saturday Sabbath. The Sabbath was the sign of the Mosaic Covenant (Ex 31: 16, 17; Ne 9: 14; Ezekiel 20: 12), whereas Christians are under the New Covenant (2 Co 3; Heb 8). Wow, have these so-called believers in Messiah forgotten Yahshua’s words in Matthew 5: 17 – 20 and especially in John 5: 46 & 47, where He said: “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words.”*

Saul, why are you persecuting Me? It is hard for you to kick against the goads.’ (15) And I said, “Who art Thou, Master?” And the Master said, ‘I am Yahshua whom you are persecuting. (16) But arise, and stand on your feet; for this purpose I have appeared to you, to appoint you a minister and a witness not only to the things which you have seen, but also to the things in which I will appear to you; (17) delivering you from the Jewish people and from the Gentiles to whom I am sending you, (18) to open their eyes so that they may turn from darkness to light and from the dominion of Satan to Elohim, in order that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who have been sanctified by faith in Me.’”

Having established Rav Shaul’s mission, let’s consider the people of Corinth in order to show how Rav Shaul continued preaching Elohim’s truth. Corinth of that time was where the most intrusive examples of paganism were incorporated into Nazarene Judaism. Corinth sat on an important trade route, south of the narrow strip of land connected to Greece. Its inhabitants became rich by transporting goods across the four-mile peninsula, which saved traders in Greece having to pay for a 200 mile trip on sea. Rav Shaul established a thriving ecclesia in Corinth, representing a cross section of worldly minded people who came to Corinth to partake in the available business adventures, gambling, legalized prostitution and amusements available in this first century coastal city. Rav Shaul was writing to this group consisting mainly of gentile believers who used to worship idols, as witnessed in 1 Corinthians 12: 2, in this way: ***‘You know that when you were pagans, you were led astray to the dumb idols, however you were led.’***

In 2 Corinthians 6: 14 – 7: 1 Rav Shaul discussed the subject of whether other religious customs and practices could be tolerated among Elohim’s people, as follows: ***‘Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness? (15) Or what harmony has Messiah with Belial, or what has a believer in common with an unbeliever? (16) Or what agreement has the temple of Elohim with idols? For we are the temple of the living Elohim; just as Elohim said, “I WILL DWELL IN THEM AND WALK AMONG THEM; AND I WILL BE THEIR ELOHIM, AND THEY SHALL BE MY PEOPLE. (17) Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says YHVH. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; and I will welcome you. (18) And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says YHVH Almighty. (1) Therefore, having these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all defilement of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of Elohim.’*** Instead of allowing new believers to retain some of their pagan practices, or renaming some of the pagan customs as Nazarene, Rav Shaul instructed them to immediately stop practicing all their previous forms of worship. Rav Shaul also condemned sexual immorality so common with pagan fertility rites, as we read from verses 13 & 16 – 20 of 1 Corinthians 6, in this way: ***‘Food is for the stomach, and the stomach is for food; but Elohim will do away with both of them. Yet the body is not for immorality, but for YHVH; and YHVH is for the body. (16) Or do you not know that the one who joins himself to a harlot is one body with her? For He says, “THE TWO WILL BECOME ONE FLESH.” (17) But the one who joins himself to YHVH is one spirit with Him. (18) Flee immorality, Every other sin that a man commits is outside the body, but the immoral man sins against his own body. (19) Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Set-apart Spirit who is in you, whom you have from Elohim, and that you are not your own? (20) For you have been bought with a price: therefore glorify Elohim in your body.’***

As part of our immersion ceremony the elder or Torah teacher immersing new believers should read and explain the instructions that Rav Shaul wrote in this regard in Roman 6: 1 – 8, and especially verse 6, as follows: ***‘Knowing this, that our old self was crucified with Him, that our body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves to sin.’*** Rav Shaul made it clear in Ephesians 4: 22 – 24 that new believers should not retain any of their past religious practices and traditions, in this way: ***‘That, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, (23) and that you be renewed in***

the spirit of your mind, (24) and put on the new self, which in the likeness of Elohim has been created in righteousness and holiness of truth. A second witness comes from Colossians 3: 9 & 10, as follows: ***‘Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, (10) and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him.’***

It is important for those of us coming from Christianity to remember that unlike the Feast Days ordained by Elohim, which our Jewish Brothers have been keeping from the time that YHVH gave it to them through Moses, the Christian feasts including the calendar that they are using, have never been ordained by Elohim. YHVH our Elohim is strongly opposed to altering the Feast Days that He gave His people through Moses, as is recorded in Deuteronomy 12: 32, as follows: ***‘Whatever I command you, you shall be careful to do; you shall not add nor take away from it.’*** A renewed Covenant witness comes from Revelation 22: 18 & 19, in this way: ***‘I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: if anyone adds to them, Elohim shall add to him the plagues which are written in this book; (19) and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, Elohim shall take away his part from the tree of life and from the set-apart city, which are written in this book.’*** How and by what authority did people who say they believe in the Messiah, change the days they observe? The first human conceived changes made to the Feast Days that Elohim ordained in The Scriptures, was to worship on Sunday, in place of the seventh day Sabbath specified in Torah. The consolidated-Webster Comprehensive Encyclopedic Dictionary states under **Sunday**, *the first day of the week. In ancient times it was the day on which the sun was worshipped. In the early days of the church Christians began to observe the first day of the week in honor of the Resurrection in addition to keeping the seventh-day Sabbath of the Decalogue. Gradually the seventh-day Sabbath was abandoned and the first day adopted, though without any Biblical authority, as the Christian rest day. The first Sunday law was that of Constantine the Great A. D. 321. Notice it was done without any Scriptural authority.*

Elohim’s annual Feast Days were similarly replaced with pagan holidays. It started when the kingdom of Israel was divided after King Solomon’s death; King Jeroboam who ruled the northern ten tribes known as the house of Israel, instituted a feast in the eighth month on the fifteenth day of the month, like the Feast of Tabernacles kept by Judah from the fifteenth of the seventh Month (Tishri), as may be read from 1 Kings 12: 32 – 33. Jeroboam was the first king of the house of Israel who corrupted the pattern in the nation’s religious life, and this eventually caused the house of Israel to be taken captive by the Assyrian Empire. Most of us who come from Christianity followed their traditions which were all contrary to Elohim’s instructions, without ever questioning the same. During Messiah’s time, the Pharisees found themselves in a similar situation, resulting in Him admonishing them in Mark 7: 6 – 8, saying: ***“Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR FROM ME, (7) BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ (8) neglecting the commandment of Elohim, you hold the tradition of men.”*** We need to understand that only the days and times consecrated by YHVH are set-apart (or holy). It does not matter what our traditions have been or what explanations we use to justify them, it is evident from the Scriptures that we must follow YHVH our Creator’s teachings regarding His Set-apart Days and forms of worship.

Rav Shaul similarly warned believers about the traditions of men in Colossians 2: 8, saying: ***‘See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Messiah.’*** One of the final messages contained in the Scriptures (in Revelation 18: 4 & 5) warns people who are currently caught up in a worldwide religious system, established in opposition to Elohim, as follows: ***‘And I heard another voice from heaven, saying, “Come out of her, my people, that you may not participate in her sins and that you may not receive of her plagues; (5) for her sins have piled up as high as heaven, and Elohim has remembered her iniquities.”’***

At this time we may choose between the feast days instituted by men or the Feast Days of Elohim, but it is important to realize that our choices will affect our relationship with Elohim and ultimately our destiny. Think about it!

Chapter 11: What is the reason for our creation?

Why were we born? Is there a purpose to human life? Why are we here and where are we heading? These questions have been deliberated by mankind for thousands of years. Scientists and Theologians have tried to find answers to these questions for millennia, but only came up with confusing and opposing viewpoints. If these clever people could not resolve these puzzles for us, is it possible for us to ever find answers to these seemingly unsolvable issues of life?

The reason why most Theologians and Scientist cannot find the answers to these questions is that they have been searching in the wrong places, since Elohim clearly stated the purpose for our creation, right at the beginning of His Word. We read accordingly from Genesis 1: 26 & 27, ***‘Then Elohim said, “Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth.” (27) And Elohim created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim He created him; male and female He created them.’*** Both men and women are created to be like Elohim. The Scriptures frequently speaks of physical human beings as children or sons of Elohim. The Scriptures make use of the word ‘sons’ to mean that we are both male and female descendants of Elohim. Even though we were created from physical matter, Elohim intended for us to eventually become like He is, as David also testified in Psalm 17: 15, saying: ***‘As for me, I shall behold Thy face in righteousness; I will be satisfied with Thy likeness when I awake.’***

Rav Shaul clearly stated in Romans 8: 16 & 17, ***‘The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of Elohim, (17) and if children, heirs also, heirs of Elohim and fellow heirs with Messiah, if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified (exalted) with Him.’*** Do you fully understand the importance of this statement? In fact this statement tells us why we are here; the reason why we were born. It explains why Elohim wants all human beings to come to the knowledge of the truth. As Human beings we have the opportunity to become part of Elohim’s family. Elohim’s family includes physical men and women, as recorded by Rav Shaul in Galatians 3: 26 – 29, in this way: ***‘For you are all sons of Elohim through faith in Messiah Yahshua. (27) For all of you who were immersed into Messiah have clothed yourselves with Messiah. (28) There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yahshua. (29) And if you believe to Messiah, then you are Abraham’s offspring, heirs according to promise.’*** Rav Shaul specifically told those of us called out of the world by YHVH our Elohim that He will be our Father and we shall be His sons and daughters, in 2 Corinthians 6: 17 & 18, as follows: ***“Therefore, COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE,” says YHVH. “AND DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN; and I will welcome you. (18) “And I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” Says YHVH Almighty.’***

Elohim’s purpose is to ultimately make us fully like Yahshua our Messiah, who is the visible image of the invisible Elohim, as we read from Colossians 1: 15, in this way: ***‘And He is the image of the invisible Elohim, the first-born of all creation.’*** Rav Shaul makes Elohim’s purpose crystal clear in Ephesians 1: 3 – 5, as follows: ***‘Blessed be the Elohim and Father of our Master Yahshua Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah, (4) just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and blameless before Him in love. (5) He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yahshua Messiah to himself, according to the kind intention of His will.’*** Continuing in verses 13 & 14 of Ephesians 1, we read: ***‘In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation — having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Set-apart Spirit of promise, (14) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view of the redemption of Elohim’s own possession, to the praise of His glory.’***

Rav Shaul explains in Ephesians 4: 11 - 13, that Elohim established a discipleship program for equipping the saints; to the building up of the body of Messiah (the ecclesia); to attain unity of faith

and knowledge of the Son of Elohim; to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Messiah. The same concept is stated in different words in Galatians 4: 19, as follows: ***‘My children, with whom I am again in labor until Messiah is formed in you.’*** Do you understand the significance of this statement? We are ultimately to become completely like Elohim’s perfect example for us, namely Yahshua Messiah. From the time that we are called out of the ways of the world, we have to grow in grace and knowledge so that we will eventually not only look like Yahshua Messiah the image of Elohim, but also develop His righteous character. Rav Yochanan makes is clear in first John 3: 1 – 3, in this way: ***‘See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of Elohim; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (2) Beloved, now we are children of Elohim, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.’*** The incredible human potential presented to us in the Scriptures is too incredible to believe by most. However, this is the whole purpose for salvation: the reason Elohim made mankind; the reason why we were born. This is perhaps why David wrote in Psalm 82: 6, ***‘I said, “You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.”’*** That is how YHVH our Elohim wants us as human beings to relate to Him: as children of the Most High. Yahshua our Messiah quoted this verse to the Jews in John 10: 34, to show them that He was not blaspheming, by claiming to be Elohim’s Son. Even the promises made to ancient Israel related to Elohim’s intention to ultimately bring them into a family relationship with Him. It is also for this reason that Rav Shaul wrote in Romans 9: 3 & 4, saying: ***‘For I could wish that I myself were accursed, separated from Messiah for the sake of my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh, (4) who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises.’***

The prophet Isaiah prophesied of a humbled remnant of Israel in the future, in Isaiah 43: 1 & 5 – 7 , as follows: ***‘But now, thus says YHVH, your Creator, O Jacob, and He who formed you, O Israel, “Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name; you are mine! (5) Do not fear, for I am with you; I will bring your offspring from the east, and gather you from the west. (6) I will say to the north, ‘Give them up!’ And to the south, ‘Do not hold back. Bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth, (7) everyone who is called by My name, and whom I have created for My glory, whom I have formed, even whom I have made.”’*** It was always Elohim’s purpose to make human beings His children. It was for that very reason that He gave us His Torah as a guiding principle (or manual) in our lives. He also gave us Yahshua the salvation of YHVH, to show us how to treat one another in our daily lives. We read accordingly from John 3: 16 & 17, ***‘For Elohim so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. (17) For Elohim did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.’***

Many have wondered why Elohim chose Abraham’s descendants as His special people, if He is impartial in offering salvation to all mankind. Elohim called Abraham His friend and promised him to use his children in a special way, provided he followed Elohim wholeheartedly. Elohim told Abraham’s descendants in Deuteronomy 4: 1,& 6 – 8, saying: ***“And now, O Israel, listen to the statutes and the judgments which I am teaching you to perform, in order that you may live and go and take possession of the land which YHVH, the Elohim of your fathers, is giving you. (6) So keep and do them, for that is your wisdom and your understanding in the sight of the peoples who will hear all these statutes and say, “Surely this great nation is a wise and understanding people. (7) For what great nation is there that has a god so near to it as is YHVH our Elohim whenever we call on Him? (8) For what great nation is there that has statutes and judgments as righteous as this whole law which I am setting before you today?”’*** The nation of Israel agreed to become Elohim’s model nation. Even so, they like all other human beings, were still a carnal selfish people. Elohim gave the Israelites knowledge about His laws – everything to know about what is right and what is

wrong. But they did not have the required change of mind whereby they would obey Elohim from the heart. As a nation they failed to set the right example to the nations around them. In fact they showed the nations around them how time after time they abandoned their commitments to Elohim; leaving us their modern day descendants an example how not to act, as testified by Rav Shaul in first Corinthians 10: 11, in this way: ***'Now these things happened to them as an example, and they were written for our instruction, upon whom the ends of the ages have come.'*** The point is that neither nations nor individuals are able to please Elohim, without His Set-apart Spirit indwelling them, even if Elohim gave them explicit knowledge about right and wrong. In fact it will only be once we are resurrected (or changed) one day that we will be able to serve and obey Elohim fully. At that time we will have become His born again spiritual sons and daughters.

Elohim's family will consist of those called out of the world by Him, who repented of their sins and were immersed into Yahshua's saving name, after which they were given a portion of His Set-apart Spirit. By receiving the Set-apart Spirit, they become members of Messiah's spiritual body, as testified in first Corinthians 12; 12 & 13, as follows: ***'For even as the body is one and yet has many members, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, so also is Messiah. (13) For by one Spirit we were all immersed into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, and we were all made to drink of one Spirit.'*** Rav Shaul explains the importance of the Set-apart Spirit in us becoming saved as children of Elohim in Romans 8: 11, in this way: ***'But if the Spirit of Him who raised Yahshua from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Messiah Yahshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.'*** We see clearly from the last part of Romans 8: 9, ***'But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Messiah, he does not belong to Him.'*** This is also confirmed in verse 14 of Romans 8, as follows: ***'For all who are being led by the Spirit of Elohim, these are sons of Elohim.'***

We are considered to be children of Elohim after repentance and immersion into Yahshua's saving name. However, we will only be born again when we are resurrected at Yahshua's return one day, as Rav Shaul explained in first Corinthians 15: 42 – 44, in this way: ***'So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown a perishable body, it is raised an imperishable body; (43) it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; (44) it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body, if there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body.'*** Here we are given an awesome picture of how we, if we qualify, will be changed into spirit beings. It is for this reason that Rav Shaul wrote in Romans 8: 18, ***'For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed to us.'*** Yes, to be born into Elohim's family as His children, is so wonderful that it cannot be compared to anything that we have ever known. No amount of human suffering could ever be compared to the incalculable value of eternal life as children of Elohim, and of following in Messiah's footsteps. That is the reason for being born. It is no wonder that Rav Shaul wrote in Romans 8: 19, ***'For the anxious longing of the creation waits eagerly for the revealing of the sons of Elohim.'*** This is also why Rav Kepha said in second Peter 3: 9, ***'YHVH is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.'*** YHVH is patient and wants to bring all human beings into His family. It is for this reason that we read from Revelation 21: 7, ***"He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his Elohim and he will be My son."***

The coming Kingdom of Elohim will be ushered in when Yahshua our Messiah returns to rule the world from Jerusalem. We see from Revelation 11: 15, ***'And the seventh angel sounded; and there arose loud voices in heaven, saying, "The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of YHVH and of His Messiah; and He will reign forever and ever.'*** Those sons and daughters who were called out of the world and who were immersed into Yahshua's saving name, and who remained faithful to the end, will become kings and priests under Yahshua, as per Yahshua's promise in Revelation 3: 21, as follows: ***"He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne."*** How is it possible for mere human beings

to hope that Yahshua Messiah will share His awesome responsibility with us. But that is exactly the point of these and other scriptures, as is witnessed in first Corinthians 15: 50 – 52, in this way: ***‘Now I say this, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of Elohim; nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. (51) Behold, I tell you a mystery; we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed.’***

The prophet Daniel described a marvelous vision that Elohim has shown Him regarding His everlasting kingdom in Daniel 7: 13 & 14, as follows: ***‘I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the ancient of days and was presented before Him. (14) And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, that all the peoples, nations, and men of every language might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion which will not pass away; and His kingdom is one which will not be destroyed.’*** We read further from verse 27 of Daniel 7, ***‘Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’***

However, those who become kings and priests under Yahshua the Messiah will not rule like some of the unprincipled leaders of this present world do. Elohim is presently busy perfecting those whom He called out of the world, by developing His perfect character in them, through the indwelling of His Set-apart Spirit; they are the first-fruits of His spiritual harvest, as witnessed in James 1: 18, in this way: ***‘In the exercise of His will He brought us forth by the word of truth, so that we might be, as it were, the first fruits among His creatures.’*** Rav Kepha speaks about the divine nature, which YHVH is creating in us in second Peter 1: 2 – 8, as follows: ***‘Grace and peace be multiplied to you in the knowledge of Elohim and of Yahshua our Messiah; (3) seeing that His divine power has granted to us everything pertaining to life and godliness, through the true knowledge of Him who called us by His own glory and excellence. (4) For by these He has granted to us His precious and magnificent promises, in order that by them you might become partakers of the divine nature, having escaped the corruption that is in the world by lust. (5) Now for this very reason also, applying all diligence, in your faith supply moral excellence, and in your moral excellence knowledge. (6) and in your knowledge, self-control, and in your self-control, perseverance, and in your perseverance, godliness; (7) and in your godliness, brotherly kindness, and in your brotherly kindness, love. (8) For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they render you neither useless nor unfruitful in the true knowledge of our Master Yahshua Messiah.’***

Knowing this should motivate us to do everything possible to make it into the kingdom of Elohim, by obediently follow the way that Yahshua showed us whilst He was on earth. Bless the name of YHVH!

Chapter 12: Why do we need Yahshua?

There are Israelites, who upon discovering that they are descended from the lost ten tribes of Israel, question the need for 'Yeshua' (the name they use to refer to our savior and Messiah) in their return to the Torah covenant with YHVH. Some of them immediately join the local Jewish synagogue and embark upon a lengthy conversion process, requiring them to deny 'Yeshua'. I am not talking about Messianic Jews, who are full-blooded Jews that eventually decide to go back to Rabbinic Judaism, no I am talking about people like us; half-Jews and Israelites from the lost ten tribes.

Think about it for a moment. Don't you think that such people have a lot of nerve (or as they say in Yiddish '*chutzpah*') to believe that they can simply go back and call themselves Israel? What gives them the right? Our forefathers who travelled to Europe and beyond committed a serious offense against YHVH and even though we know that Israel is our spiritual home, we are too impoverished by the multitude of our sins and spiritual adulteries, to assume that we may return on our own merit. Since we started studying Torah, we have learnt that there is a specific provision made for us; Torah specifically teaches that if an Israelite loses his connection with his inheritance and is too deprived to buy it back, his kinsman may redeem it on his behalf. This is recorded for us in Leviticus 25: 25, as follow: ***'If a fellow countryman of yours become so poor he has to sell part of his property, then his nearest kinsman is to come and buy back what his relative has sold.'*** An example of this may be found in the Book of Ruth in the Scriptures. The kinsman redeemer is according to the law of lineage the designated person to purchase the property of an impoverished relative so as to keep it in the family.

The house of Judah has returned to the land of Israel, which they lost temporarily because of mainly the sins of Manasseh who followed his father King Hezekiah up, as king over Judah as is recorded in 2 Kings 21: 16, in this way: ***'Moreover, Manasseh shed very much innocent blood until he had filled Jerusalem from one end to another; besides his sin which he made Judah sin, in doing evil in the sight of YHVH.'*** Even though Manasseh repented later in his life, his sins were considered so severe and YHVH did not relent from punishing Judah for it, as we read from 2 Kings 23: 26 & 27, as follows: ***'However, YHVH did not turn from the fierceness of His great wrath with which His anger burned against Judah, because of all the provocations with which Manasseh had provoked Him. (27) And YHVH said, "I will remove Judah also from My sight, as I have removed Israel. And I will cast off Jerusalem, this city which I have chosen, and the temple of which I said, "My name shall be there."'*** But, the house of Israel which lost all their rights because they abandoned Elohim's covenant altogether, need to have their place in Elohim's country purchased back, if they want it to be lawfully and rightfully theirs once again.

The kinsman redeemer for the lost ten tribes will therefore have to be someone who is even now totally devoted to the covenant with Elohim. As recorded in the correct translation of Hosea 11: 12 (KJV)¹⁰, Judah is in such a position, so the kinsman redeemer would have to come from that tribe. This is how Yahshua our Messiah fits into the puzzle. The Messiah had to be a descendant of David and was therefore also from the tribe of Judah, as witnessed from Jeremiah 33: 15 & 16, in this way: ***"In those days and at that time I will cause a righteous Branch of David to spring forth; and He shall execute justice and righteousness on the earth."*** We read from Isaiah 49: 6, ***'He says, "It is too small a thing that You should be My Servant to raise up (from the dead) the tribes of Jacob, and to restore the preserved ones of Israel; I will also make You a light of the nations so that My salvation may reach to the end of the earth."'*** We see consequently that Messiah will be the one responsible to bring back the house of Israel to their inheritance. He is absolutely indispensable to bring us back in repentance (Teshuvah) to the Father.

¹⁰ Hosea 11: 12, ***'Ephraim compasseth me about with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit: but Judah yet ruleth with Elohim and is faithful with the saints.'***

Daniel prophesied the time frame when Yahshua would arrive on the scene in Daniel 9: 24 - 27, as follows: ***“Seventy weeks have been decreed for your people and your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sin, to make atonement for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the most holy (set-apart) place. (25) So you are to know and discern that from the issuing of a decree to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince there will be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; it will be built again with plaza and moat, even in times of distress. (26) Then after the sixty two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolations are determined. (27) And he will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain (wave sheaf) offering; and on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate, even until a complete destruction (the KJV reads: the consummation, meaning the end time here), one that is decreed, is poured out on the one who makes desolate.”*** The year of Yahshua’s impalement and the Passover, can be confirmed by correlating the prophecy of Daniel 9 with the occurrence described in Ezra 7.

Daniel explained that there would be a time period of ‘seventy weeks’ that is to say 490 prophetic days. We are also told that 69 of these ‘weeks’, i.e. 483 years would run from the time of the decree to rebuilt Jerusalem until the Messiah’s appearance. This decree of King Artaxerxes that commences the count of the prophetic ‘weeks’ is recorded in Ezra 7. Ezra arrived in Jerusalem with the decree in the summer of 457 BCE. Adding 483 years to 457 BCE, brings us to 27 CE. This is the year during which Yahshua was immersed; He was about 30 years of age and His ministry began at the time when Yochanan the Immerser came to an end. Most researchers agree that His ministry lasted for 3½ years. He started His ministry in the fall (September/October) of 27 CE and was impaled in the spring of 31 CE. We know that Yahshua was impaled on the 4th day (or the middle) of the week and was resurrected three days and three nights later, at the end of the weekly Sabbath. This means that the Passover of 31 CE, the scripturally established time of His impalement, occurred on a Wednesday of that week. (For interest sake: Yahshua was cut off in the middle of the week, or after a ministry of only 3½ years. It is also believed that He will cut the 7 year period of the Great Tribulation (short) in half, at His return; thereby accounting for the difference of one week (7 years) between the 69 and 70 ‘weeks’ prophesied in Daniel 9.)

Both the British and U.S. Naval Observatories confirm that, that particular Passover occurred on the fourth day of the week (or Wednesday) that year. This agrees with the prophecy in Daniel 9: 27, which predicted that Yahshua would be cut off in the middle of the week. He was in the grave for three full days and three full nights according to His claim in Matthew 12: 40 and as witnessed of His resurrection in Matthew 28: 1 – 6. Titus a Roman general overpowered Jerusalem on the 7th of September 70 CE. His soldiers burned the Temple against his orders, with the result that the gold in the Temple melted down into the temple stones. It took another seven months to remove the melted gold from the destroyed Temple building, bringing us to about the same time in 71 CE, when Yahshua was impaled 40 years earlier. Titus returned to Rome in the spring of 71 CE. Yahshua predicted the destruction of the Temple in Matthew 24: 1 & 2, and added in Matthew 24: 34, saying: ***“Truly I say to you, this generation will not pass away until all these things take place.”*** In Scriptural times a generation was said to be 40 years as may be read from Psalm 95: 10 and Hebrews 3: 9 – 10; from the spring of 31 CE to spring of 71 CE is exactly 40 years, which is in total agreement with what Yahshua said.

Zechariah even gives us Messiah’s name. The righteous Branch spoken about in Jeremiah 33: 15 refers to the Messiah. In Zechariah 3: 8 & 9 he tells us that the name of ***‘My servant the Branch’*** is Joshua and in Zechariah 6: 11 & 12 Joshua is crowned. We read further from verse 13, ***“Yes, it is He who will build the temple of YHVH (meaning us, the ecclesia of called out believers), and He who will bear the honor and sit and rule on His throne. Thus He will be a priest on His throne, and the***

counsel of peace will be between the two offices.” Many orthodox Jews are busy coming to the conclusion that Yahshua was indeed the Messiah. The great Kabbalist Rabbi Yitzach Kaduri passed away on January 29, 2005. Just prior to his death, he gave an envelope containing a letter in which he said he will reveal the coming Messiah’s name. However, he told his students to only open the letter a year later, on the date that he died. When they opened the letter they found the name written in his hand, stating the name of Messiah to be Yehoshua. Even so, these Torah keeping Jews did not because of this revelation become Christians, since they understood Messiah’s message to be ***‘to the Jew first’***, as is confirmed in Romans 1: 16.

We who have been called from the Christian churches of the world need to realize that there is a major difference between believing in Yahshua the Messiah and *‘J*e*s*u*s* C* h*r*i*s*t’* of Christianity. The one whom Christianity serve is the one who performed many miracles, but denied Torah, and is therefore not acceptable to Judaism in accordance with Deuteronomy 13: 1 – 3, as follows: ***“If a prophet or a dreamer of dreams arises among you and gives you a sign or a wonder, (2) and the sign or the wonder comes true, concerning which he spoke to you, saying ‘Let us go after other gods (whom you have not known) and let us serve them, (3) you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams: for YHVH your Elohim is testing you to find out if you love YHVH your Elohim with all your heart and with all your soul.”*** Forty days after Yahshua’s resurrection, when He was about to ascend to heaven and He together with His disciples began climbing the Mount of Olives, His disciples became very excited since they knew that according to Zechariah 14: 14, the kingdom (of Elohim) would come when Messiah’s feet touches the same mountain. That is also why they asked Him at that time in Acts 1: 6 saying, ***“Master is it at this time You are restoring the kingdom to Israel?”*** Yahshua replied in verse 7 & 8, saying to them, ***“It is not for you to know times or epochs which the Father has fixed by His own authority; (8) but you shall receive power when the Holy (Set-apart) Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be My witnesses both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth.”***

Yahshua’s parable of the prodigal son, who asked His father to give him his portion of his inheritance and then went and squandered it on living it up, pictures Ephraim, who is representative of the lost ten tribes. Judah is pictured by the Father’s eldest son, who remained with Him. Though YHVH had forsaken Ephraim for a time, He says of him in Jeremiah 31: 10, ***‘And declare in the coastlands afar off, and say, “He who scattered Israel will gather him, and keep him as a shepherd keeps his flock.”’*** We see in John 10: 11, Yahshua identified Himself to the Jews as being the *‘good shepherd’*. Continuing in verse 16 of John 10, He also said to them: ***“And I have other sheep, which are not of this fold; I must bring them also, and they shall hear My voice; and they shall become one flock with one shepherd.”*** Yahshua was referring here to Ezekiel’s prophesy in Ezekiel 34: 23, as follows: ***“Then I will set over them one shepherd, My servant David, and he will feed them; he feed them himself and be their shepherd.”*** Yahshua never denied that He had come to restore the kingdom of Israel. Far from it! In fact all He did was to turn His disciples’ focus on finding the subjects of the house of Israel, as we read from Matthew 10: 5 & 6, saying: ***“Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; (6) but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”*** Yahshua also said to the Canaanite woman who asked Him to show mercy to her demon possessed daughter in Matthew 15: 24 ***“I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”***

In fact Yahshua was sending His disciples out to draw Ephraim back to the covenant that they forsook, as He was the Kinsman Redeemer for the prodigal tribes. The leaders in Yahshua’s community laid down four ground-rules in Acts 15 for new believers to follow at the beginning of their walk in the way of Elohim. The basics of Kashrut and niddah, and the forsaking of idolatry and immorality were the first requirements for new believers. These are the things which today’s Christians do not even keep, let alone the fact that they ignore the very next qualifying statement in Acts 15: 21, in this way: ***“For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”*** This is saying that repentance to full Torah

observance is a process, where initially we follow the basic four ground-rules, and then as we learn about the Sabbath and Feast Days of Elohim, the wearing of tzitzit, and circumcision, we will eventually grow to a point where we are fully Torah observant.

Rav Shaul was a Pharisee and continued to call himself that long after he started following Yahshua (as per Acts 23: 6). Rav Kepha warned in 2 Peter 3: 16 that Rav Shaul's letters should not be taken lightly, admitting that ***'as also in all his letters speaking in them of these things in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.'*** That is basically the story of Christianity over the past 2,000 years. However, we need to understand that since we were separated from our Father, as well as from brother Judah, because of our sins of idolatry, that it was Yahshua who brought us back, as Rav Shaul explains at length in Ephesians 2: 11 – 22, in this way: ***'Therefore remember, that formerly you, the Gentiles in the flesh, who are called "Uncircumcision" by the so-called "Circumcision," which is performed in the flesh by human hands— (12) remember that you were at that time separate from Messiah, excluded from the commonwealth of Israel, and strangers to the covenants of promise, having no hope and without Elohim in the world. (13) But now in Messiah Yahshua you who formerly were far off have been brought near by the blood of Messiah. (14) For He Himself is our peace who made both groups into one, and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall, (15) by abolishing in His flesh the enmity, which is the Law of commandments contained in ordinances, that in Himself He might make the two into one new man, thus establishing peace, (16) and might reconcile them both in one body to Elohim through the cross, by it having put to death the enmity. (17) AND HE CAME AND PREACHED PEACE TO YOU WHO WERE FAR AWAY AND PEACE TO THOSE WHO WERE NEAR; (18) for through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. (19) So then you are no longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saint, and are of Elohim's household, (20) having been built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Messiah Yahshua Himself being the corner stone, (21) in whom the whole building, being fitted together is growing into a holy temple in YHVH; (22) in whom you also are being built together into a dwelling of Elohim in the Spirit.'*** Yes, it was the Father who called us out of the world, but it was because of Messiah's sacrifice that we are able to be reconciled back to the Father. It is by immersion into Yahshua's saving name that we are forgiven our past sins and given a portion of the Set-apart Spirit, thereby giving us access to the Father in prayer, but also to be ultimately resurrected (or changed) into spirit-born children of Elohim at the Messiah's return one day.

According to Ezekiel 37, it will be YHVH who will ensure that once the fullness of the Gentiles have come out of the world and started keeping the Sabbath and the annual Feast Days of Elohim, eating only kosher foods and studying and obeying Torah, so much so that our conduct make our Jewish brothers jealous, that the two houses of Israel, will once more become one in His hand. Yahshua died for the sins of the world, but also to be able to remarry His bride, whom He divorced because of Idolatry. We read accordingly from Roman 7: 1 – 4, in this way: ***'Or do you not know, brethren (for I am speaking to those who know the law of divorce and remarriage), that the law has jurisdiction over a person as long as he lives? (2) For the married woman is bound by law to her husband while he is living; but if her husband dies, she is released from the law concerning her husband. (3) So then if, while her husband is living, she is joined to another man, she shall be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from the law, so that she is not an adulteress, though she is joined to another man. (4) Therefore, my brethren, you also were made to die to the law through the body of Messiah, that you might be joined to another, to Him who was raised from the dead, that we might bear fruit for Elohim.'*** As mentioned in an earlier sermon, that was why Yahshua's dying words on the stake was ***'Kallah'*** meaning *'it is finished'* but also *'My bride'*. When He died He confirmed that because we died in immersion in Him, He will now be able to remarry us, His ecclesia of called out believers, who will be resurrected or changed, at His return to earth.

When we come to YHVH through the only door available to us, we should not be reluctant to confess Him to those who ask us about the hope that is within us, through Yahshua our Messiah. It is for this reason that Yahshua said in Matthew 10: 32 & 33, ***“Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. (33) But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.”*** No matter who or what we believe Yahshua is, we need to be aware of what Rav Shaul wrote about Him in Philippians 2: 5 – 11, in this way: ***‘Have this attitude in yourselves which was also in Messiah Yahshua, (6) who, although He existed in the form of Elohim, did not regard equality with Elohim a thing to be grasped, (7) but emptied Himself, taking the form of a bond-servant, and being made in the likeness of men. (8) And being found in appearance as a man, He humbled Himself by becoming obedient to the point of death, even death on a cross. (9) Therefore also Elohim highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Yahshua EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth and under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Yahshua Messiah is Master, to the glory of Elohim the Father.’*** This is quoted from Isaiah 45: 23, where we read: ***“I have sworn by Myself; The word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, ever tongue will swear allegiance.”*** We continue to read from verse 24 of Isaiah 45, ***“They will say of Me, ‘Only in YHVH are righteousness and strength.’ Men will come to Him, and all who are angry at Him shall be put to shame.”*** It is important for those of us who are returning from the lost ten tribes, not to deny our Master and Savior, even if we are compelled through circumstances to join the synagogue, which is the last thing that I will recommend, as we are already following in the way of Elohim, shown us by Yahshua our Savior.

We see from 1st Timothy 6: 16 that no one has ever seen or can see YHVH, as He is a Spirit Being. Yahshua our Messiah; the visible image of the invisible Elohim (as per Colossians 1: 15) is the only way in which we as flesh and blood human beings can relate to the Father. It is for that reason that Yahshua the Messiah will rule us during the millennium and will remain with us until after the great white throne judgment, as witnessed in 1st Corinthians 15: 22 – 28, in this way: ***‘For as in Adam all die, so also in Messiah all shall be made alive (as spiritual children of Elohim). (23) But each in his own order: Messiah the first fruit(s), after that those who are Messiah’s at His coming, (24) then comes the end (ones), when He delivers up the kingdom to the Elohim and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. (25) For He must reign until He has put all enemies under His feet. (26) The last enemy that will be abolished is death (as may be read from Revelation 20: 14, when there will not be any physical human beings prone to death any longer). (27) For HE HAS PUT ALL THINGS IN SUBJECTION UNDER HIS FEET. But when He says, “All things are put in subjection,” it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. (28) And when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that Elohim may be all in all.’*** Yes, Yahshua the visible image of the invisible Elohim will be around until all human beings have been changed into spirit-born children of Elohim.

Even though the Scriptures do not say so directly, but from reading Revelation 22: 1 – 4, it appears as if Yahshua the lamb of Elohim, will go back into the Father, from where He came (John 1: 18), as follows: ***‘And he showed me a river of the water of life, clear as crystal, coming from the throne (singular) of Elohim and the Lamb (The footnote against the words the Lamb in the NASB reads: or the Lamb), (2) In the middle of its street. And on either side of the river was the tree of life, bearing twelve kinds of fruit, yielding its fruit every month; and the leaves of the tree were for the healing of the nations. (3) And there shall no longer be any curse; and the throne of Elohim and of the Lamb shall be in it, and His bond-servants shall serve Him; (4) and they shall see His face, and His name shall be on their foreheads.’*** Selah!

Chapter 13: YHWH – The Eternal?

Our faith as Nazarene Jews/Israelites should like that of all Jews be based on truth and able to withstand any legitimate challenge. It is therefore important that we create a solid intellectual foundation for Elohim's ecclesia of called out believers, and everything we teach should be based on Scriptural evidence and logic, and not on fables or emotions. We know that Torah is truth, but what is logic? Let me first explain, what it is not. Someone (it could have been a lecturer of mine) explained it this way more than forty years ago: *'If it takes a week to walk a fortnight, how many apples in a bunch of grapes. He gave us an answer by saying a paw-paw this (forming the shape of a paw-paw with his two cupped hands) color.'* Obviously, it is not logical to compare apples with anything else, unless you are perhaps comparing the nutritional values of the different fruits. With that in mind let's continue to consider the question asked at the beginning.

When Moses spoke to Elohim in Exodus 3: 13, he said: ***"Behold I am going to the sons of Israel, and I shall say to them, 'The Elohim of your fathers has sent me to you.' Now they may say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"*** Elohim identified Himself to Moses saying in verse 14, ***"I AM¹¹ WHO I AM", and He said, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, I AM has sent me to you."*** The words 'I AM' essentially means that Elohim is, was and will be forever (eternally), as may be understood from verse 15, as follows: ***'And Elohim, furthermore, said to Moses, "Thus you shall say to the sons of Israel, YHWH, the Elohim of your fathers, the Elohim of Abraham, the Elohim of Isaac, and the Elohim of Jacob, has sent me to you. 'This is My name forever, and this My memorial-name to all generations.'"***

Think for a moment, Elohim reveals Himself as the creator of everything that exists. If He created all there is, then He must have existed before they did. Elohim continues to exist today and has been around eternally. One of His promises is to give us eternal life in His coming Kingdom. Could He give us something that He does not have? Would we exist forever in the future and Elohim cease to exist? Obviously not! Elohim will exist forever, meaning He did in the past, is presently and will exist in the future. Think again for a moment, can something come from nothing by itself? Could an empty garage suddenly become filled with a motor vehicle without a cause? Could empty 'space' suddenly be filled with stars, planets like earth, animals, plants and human life, an orderly universe where an instant before there was nothing? Definitely not! Something must have preceded it. Creation could not take place without something causing it!

The universe is not only a figment of our imagination – it is real! Modern science describes the universe in mathematical terms. From the tiniest speck of dust, to the motions of stars – all can be described by means of mathematical equations. Yes, our universe has so perfectly been constructed that it can be represented by numerical relationships. The lack of confusion in nature proves that the material world exists. The mathematics is based on substance which exists, as much as a house built upon its foundation. How can anybody claim that only the mathematics exists – and that its foundation does not? A house built upon sand may only stand for a short time, but a house that does away with its foundation has already tumbled. The universe is definitely not an illusion and the lack of confusion does not make it less real.

If the universe existed eternally, it would require no Creator. But, is it possible that the universe existed eternally? Both the Scriptures and Science attest to its beginning. The Scriptures insist that everything was created as described in the event of the creation in Genesis 1 & 2. Science anxiously assigns dates associated with creation or to creation itself. According to the scientist our moon, has slowly moved away from the earth by a few feet annually. The moon is presently about 239,000 miles away from earth. If we could turn the clock a few thousand million years back, the moon

¹¹ The footnote against 'I AM' in the New American Standard Version reads: 'Related to the name of G-d, YHWH rendered LORD, which is derived from the verb HAYAH, to be'.

would be very close or even joined to the earth. That means that creation must have taken place less than a thousand million years ago, with the moon being created some distance away from the earth.

Other methods used for dating creation give similar enormous statistics. It is known that Uranium and other radioactive components disintegrate at a constant rate. By comparing the amount of disintegrated material with the original amount of material which existed, a date for its creation can be determined. The earth's age is according to this method estimated to be several thousand years old – and not eternal! The same method of dating is applied to meteorites reaching earth from outer space, containing small amounts of radioactive material. These measurements prove without a doubt, that creation could not have been earlier than several thousand million years ago. In other words there was a beginning. Even though the world of man was created about 4000 BCE the heavens and the earth were created at an earlier time. They were created before everything else, as stated in Genesis 1: 1, ***'In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.'*** We know for a fact that In the very beginning Elohim created the earth in harmony and order, since we are told by Rav Shaul in 1st Corinthians 14: 33, ***'for Elohim is not an Elohim of confusion but of peace, as in all the ecclesia of the saints.'*** It is clear therefore that the condition we find the earth in, in Genesis 1: 2 where it is described as being *'formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep'*, refers to a time after the original creation was destroyed. In fact this is confirmed in Isaiah 45: 18, as follows: ***'For thus says YHVH, who created the heavens (He is the Elohim who formed the earth and made it, He established it and did not create it a waste place, but formed it to be inhabited), I am YHVH and there is none else.'***

When Elohim created the universe at the very beginning, it was perfect and extremely beautiful, so much so that the angels shouted for joy, as we read from Job 38: 7, ***'When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of Elohim shouted for joy?'*** Right from the start YHVH planned to create beings that could become his 'helpers'; He planned for these helpers to eventually become like Him, in every respect. Over time they would have His character reproduced in them by His Set-apart Spirit. Initially Elohim started by creating spiritual beings called angels. They were free moral agents, with the ability to choose between right and wrong, and for many years they followed Elohim's instructions in detail. However, one day, a third of them followed the archangel Lucifer in rebellion against Elohim, when he decided to take over the throne of Elohim in the third heaven. They fought against the other two thirds of the angels, who remained loyal to Elohim, but, were defeated and thrown down to earth, where they are now living as fallen angels or demons. These angels, who are spirit beings, sinned with full knowledge and as a result could not change once they decided to follow a life of wrongdoing. We read consequently from Isaiah 14: 12 – 14, ***"How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, you who have weakened the nations! (13) But you said in your heart, 'I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of Elohim, and I will sit on the mount of the assembly in the recesses of the north. (14) I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.'"*** This universe-wide rebellion by Satan and his demons resulted in the destruction and chaos of the surface of the earth and the rest of the planets, to the condition we find the earth in before YHVH re-created it in Genesis 1: 2.

The heavens and the earth spoken about in Genesis 1: 3 – 28, are the atmosphere (or sky) of the earth. These were formed from darkness and a state of waste to order in a period of six literal days. The creation of the heavens containing the sun, moon, stars and planets (including the earth) occurred at a time prior to the second recreation of the earth. No date for the original creation is given in the Scriptures. Even so, it is not really important to a believer's way of life when exactly the material heavens and earth were created. But to Elohim, whose existence goes back eternally, a thousand million years would not be even a fraction of His life. If a study to determine the age of the universe prove without any doubt that creation was two or three thousand million years ago, it would only add to the glory of Elohim. It would further bring us to the sober awareness that the

threescore and ten years allotted us, are but an instant in the life of our Creator. It was for this reason that David wrote in Psalm 8, asking in verses 3 & 4, ***‘When I consider Thy heavens, the work of Thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which Thou hast ordained; (4) What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him?’*** Like it did with David, a study of the stars can teach us to be humble and bring us closer to YHWH the Creator of the universe. David often looked up at the sun, the moon and the stars and was so awe-inspired by it that he wrote a number of Psalms singing songs in honor of Elohim, one of which is found in Psalm 19: 1 & 2, as follows: ***‘The heavens are telling of the glory of Elohim; and their expanse is declaring the work of His hands.’***

Let’s therefore take another look up into the heavens to see the esteem of Elohim. Numerous stars are visible to the naked eyes of those of us blessed with perfect vision. However, uncountable billions of stars become visible through a powerful telescope. But many more stars lie beyond the range of our best telescopes – to many for anyone to dare and make an estimate. The problem is that we look at the heavens from man’s point of view. We struggle to estimate the stars in a small section of the universe, but if for example we could view the heavens through Elohim’s eyes, we would possibly understand what David wrote in Psalm 147: 4 & 5, in this way: ***‘He counts the number of the stars; He gives names to all of them. (5) Great is our Master, and abundant in strength; He understands the infinite.’*** Here we see that Elohim understands the infinite. This agrees with 1st Kings 8: 27, as follows: ***“But will Elohim dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built!”*** It is for this reason that man’s mind cannot understand Elohim, as He cannot be defined nor can He be bordered. Because we are finite human beings, we cannot understand something which is limitless. The number of stars that Elohim created is a finite number. Numbers go on forever, but the stars do not. Yet, all of the about 7 billion people on earth could not count all the stars in their entire lifetimes. On the contrary Yahshua said in Matthew 10: 29 & 30, ***“Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. (30) But the very hairs of your head are all numbered.”***

The estimate given for the number of stars in any encyclopedia, if it should contain such information, is not the total number in the universe, but only the nearest visible ones. No man knows for sure, how far out Elohim’s creation extends, as witnessed in Proverbs 25: 2 & 3, in this way: ***‘It is the glory of Elohim to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter. (3) As the heavens for height and the earth for depth, so the heart of kings is unsearchable.’*** According to astronomers, all stars appear to move away from our vicinity of the universe. The ones further away also appear to withdraw the fastest. By calculating the distance and speed of the withdrawal of these stars, we are able to conclude that they all left our approximate position an estimated two thousand million years ago. Consequently, another measurement of the heavens confirms a remote but definite moment in the past, when the universe was created.

The vast distances between stars point to the age of the universe in yet another way. These distances are determined in terms of the length of time it requires light from them to reach our earth. For example the sun needs about eight and one third minutes to travel 93 million miles to earth. The light from the stars nearest to earth, needs between three and four years to reach us. However the light from the stars farthest away, photographed thus far is estimated to have left them a thousand million years ago and has only reached us today. We are therefore able to conclude that such distant stars were then in existence. Even though we are unaccustomed to these figures, the conclusion from them is very important. Firstly the science of the heavens proves the need of a Creator; Secondly, the creation could not have happened before a definite time – which some scientists estimate to be about four million years ago; and thirdly the creation seems to have happened at least a thousand million years ago.

It is therefore clear that the heavens are not eternal. There is not one single method of calculation that we are able to depend on. However, together they are all pointing to an ancient universe – old in years, but still created at a definite time in the past – possibly between one and four thousand million years ago. If we compare this with the inspired record in the Scriptures in Genesis 1: 1, in this way: ***'In the beginning Elohim created the heavens and the earth.'*** We notice that no time is given for creation, it simply states a definite occurrence that took place at a definite time. The date is not given, but is hidden for man to search out to the glory of Elohim. But how does all this prove the eternity of Elohim? It becomes very straightforward when we understand that someone or something has to be eternal, and since the universe is not eternal, there is something separate from it that must be. The universe includes everything that exists, except for Elohim who shows himself as the Creator of it. He must therefore have been in existence eternally in the past!

At this point we have revealed from the Scriptures and from creation that our universe is not eternal. It had to have a creator and a time of creation. Elohim existed before it. But who created Him! Things that have not always been, require a creator. But Elohim is eternal. He has always been. Do you need a creator for a being who has always existed? I do not believe so! As mentioned before, the difficulty to understand eternity is a human problem. We deal with finite things which we can see and touch, such as dollars and cents, years, miles, gallons, etc. We count, measure and estimate in units, constantly arriving at a certain quantity. Eternity being without a beginning and an end, cannot be limited to a certain number of years. Similarly to what numbers can go forever, so does Elohim's life go into both the future and the past.

All things that are finite, which have been brought into being, require a creator. But things which have always existed do not require a creator. The universe was created, and at a certain time in the past. Consequently the creation is temporal and required a creator. Since everything in existence except this Creator is temporal, it is logical to conclude that YHVH our Elohim is the only One who is ETERNAL, as is also confirmed in Psalm 90: 2, as follows: ***'Before the mountains were born, or Thou didst give birth to the earth and the world, even from everlasting to everlasting, Thou art Elohim.'***

Chapter 14: Thou shalt not covet!

Our world is presently in great financial trouble due to covetousness. Yahshua our Messiah once said that *'it is more blessed to give than to receive'*. We know, that when we practice giving, both the giver and the receiver benefits. However, the prevalent practice in our world today is the exact opposite. Mankind has been afflicted by the curse of covetousness for a long time. Yahshua warned people of his day about greed in Luke 12: 15, saying: ***"Beware, and be on guard against every form of greed; for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions."*** Coveting or greed is a problem that should be taken very seriously, as Rav Shaul also warns in Colossians 3: 5, saying: ***'Therefore consider the members of your body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed which amounts to idolatry.'***

Why is covetousness likened unto idolatry? What is the connection? A dictionary definition of the word covet is to desire, to obtain or possess with a greedy or envious longing. Why is coveting a sin? The Ten Commandments forbid human beings to coveting a variety of things that belongs to others – your neighbor's house, wife, servant, ox, donkey or anything that belongs to your neighbor. Even though some of the possessions listed in Exodus 20 might sound a bit antiquated to our modern way of life, the forbidden list includes in principle everything we could desire in modern society. The list includes property, marriage relationships, tools and transportation. In other words, Elohim forbids us to covet another person's mate, TV set, tool set, car or motorbike. Coveting applies today, as it did in the time of Moses. Coveting applies specifically to this day and age, during which so many people is drowning in debt because they have bought things that they craved but could not afford. Human sin is leading to the worldwide crises that Messiah described in Matthew 24: 21 & 22, as follows: ***'For then there will be a great tribulation, such as has not occurred since the beginning of the world until now, nor ever shall. (22) And unless those days had been cut short, no life would have been saved; but for the sake of the elect those days shall be cut short.'***

Why in Elohim's eyes is unlawful desire considered equivalent to committing idolatry? To answer the question, we need to answer another question, namely, why do we take pleasure in physical things we should not have? We want such things, because they give us a feeling of fulfillment – they make us happy, be it only for a short duration of time. In the end the forbidden coveted fruit attracts us through our senses of smell, touch, taste, sight and hearing, but the initial act of wanting which is not ours, takes place in the mind. But once the act of coveting is carried out, it can easily become the sin of adultery, stealing or lying. Our tendency to covet can lead us to idolizing physical objects as a source of contentment. Similar to the way in which pagan worshippers bowed down to inanimate objects they thought could make them happy, we convince ourselves that physical things will make us happy and provide us with peace and joy.

Pointing out mankind's obsession with idols in Isaiah 44: 17, Elohim depicts a man who pays honor to an inanimate object and prays to it, saying: ***"Deliver me, for thou art my god."*** It is a human tendency to look to an idol of our choice to deliver us from difficulties and disappointments. We expect the physical things on which we set our hearts and minds to bring us happiness. Elohim is not pleased with us enlisting physical things to compete with Him. These are things we set our hearts and minds on to compete directly with Elohim and interfere with our relationship with Him. Somehow we believe that the objects of our affection will satisfy our innermost cravings, even though Elohim says in Galatians 5: 22, that His Spirit alone can really do so, as follows: ***"But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness."*** The fruits of the Set-apart Spirit listed here should be visible in our lives whether we have all that we desire or not. If we only feel good when we obtain what we crave, we revere our physical possessions and are guilty of coveting and therefore also of idolatry.

The point is that happiness is a mode of transport and not a destination. We travel through life towards our ultimate goal, namely, the Kingdom of Elohim and we are supposed to be happy in

doing so. However, what do we do during situations that do not lend themselves to peace and a sense of well-being? Rav Shaul spoke about such situations in Philippians 4: 11 – 13, in this way: ***‘Not that I speak from want; for I have learnt to be content in whatever circumstances I am. (12) I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstances I have learnt the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. (13) I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.’*** These words were written by Rav Shaul to the ecclesia in Philippi, whilst he was shackled as a prisoner, yet he was content. At this point in Rav Shaul’s life, he had learned that contentment did not depend on material possessions.

Rav Shaul spent most of his adult life as a sojourner starting, building and strengthening the ecclesia of Elohim; and concluded his final few years as a prisoner. So it could definitely not be said that he has led a covetous life. Rav Shaul realized that he had much to be happy about; the glory and majesty that he will inherit in the Kingdom of Elohim. When we keep our focus on the reality and importance of our calling, we will find it easier to ignore the glitz and glamour of the material world. This is in fact what Yahshua said regarding our priorities in Matthew 6: 33 – 34, as follows: ***“But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness; and all these things shall be added to you. (34) Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow: for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”*** Yahshua pointed out that if we keep the Kingdom of Elohim as our goal, by obeying His Torah, everything else will be taken care of, and we need not be concerned about things we do not have.

This gets us to the subject of how to overcome our covetous thoughts. The Scriptures give us three ways in which we can overcome this sin. The first way is to love and obey Elohim. This is found in the commandment against idolatry. After Elohim spoke against idolatry in Exodus 20: 4 & 5, He stated in verse 6: ***“But showing lovingkindness to thousands, to those who love Me and keep My commandments.”*** If we contrast this with what the Scriptures tell us about those of us living in the last days in 2nd Timothy 3: 2, i.e. ***‘lovers of self, lovers of money’***, Elohim assures us that if we love Him first and foremost, we will not be guilty of covetousness. But if we love only ourselves, we will covet that which gives us power to obtain *‘everything’* we always wanted, namely, money. If we think about it, we will come to the understanding that loving ourselves more than Elohim does not make sense. After all YHWH our Elohim is spiritual and therefore eternal; and we are physical and temporal. Elohim can give us eternal life, whereas most of us will live physically for only 70 – 80 years. We need to realize that all that is good and perfect comes from Elohim. Everything physical is temporary and will only last for a certain number of years. Without a spiritual relationship with Elohim, we will die and be forgotten, as witnessed in Ecclesiastes 9: 5, as follows: ***‘For the living know they will die; but the dead do not know anything, nor have they any longer a reward, for their memory is forgotten.’***

The second way to overcome covetousness is to ask Elohim for faith. Rav Shaul warned against covetousness in Philippians 5: 5 in this way: ***‘For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Messiah and Elohim.’*** Covetousness is the lust of the senses. True faith in Elohim’s inheritance focusses desire on something far more important and permanent, things that we can’t see, as so aptly described in Hebrews 11: 1, as follows: ***“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen.”*** The focus of an idolater is on physical things, that can be seen and not on the unseen spiritual aspects of life. Those who believe in Yahshua; in the gospel that He proclaimed, believe in the coming Kingdom of Elohim, like father Abraham did, as testified in Hebrews 11: 10, as follows: ***‘For he (Abraham) was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is Elohim.’*** This is the New Jerusalem spoken about in Revelation 21: 1 – 3, in this way: ***‘And I saw a new heaven and a new earth; for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. (2) And I saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming***

down out of heaven from Elohim, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. (3) And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold the tabernacle of Elohim is among men, and He shall dwell among them, and they shall be His people, and Elohim Himself shall be among them."

Moses made a conscious decision to forsake the pleasures of sin and suffer affliction because as we read from Hebrews 11: 24 – 26, ***'By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; (25) choosing to endure ill-treatment with the people of Elohim, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; (26) considering the reproach of Messiah greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.'*** Yes, Moses believed Elohim, diligently sought Him and looked forward for his reward from Elohim. King David also focused on the *'fullness of joy'* and *'pleasures forever'* from Elohim, rather than material things of the world, as witnessed in Psalm 16: 11. When life becomes meaningless and you desire to embark on some kind of a binge to gratify your senses, by substituting material things for Elohim's Spirit; simply remember to ask Elohim for faith to wait for the worthier blessings that He has in store for you. Ask for faith to trust in Him and you will be content with His Spirit and the promise of happiness in His coming Kingdom. That is when Elohim will supply your needs according to His riches in glory in Messiah Yahshua (Philippians 4: 19).

The third way in which to overcome covetousness is to help others. Spend time with people less fortunate than yourself, such as widows, those who are incapacitated, and those who are ill. This will help you focus your mind on serving rather than to fulfilling your own desires. By helping others we receive fulfillment as well as contentment, which physical things cannot give us. When we practice the type of religion described in James 1: 27, i.e. ***'This is pure and undefiled religion in the sight of Elohim and Father, to visit the orphans and widows in their distress, and to keep oneself unstained by the world.'*** then we are truly fulfilling the perfect law of Elohim. It is by practicing the pure and undefiled religion that we learn to be aware of covetousness. This is when we understand Yahshua's words in Luke 12: 15, that ***'for not even when one has an abundance does his life consist of his possessions.'*** On the contrary, we find that we become more content by giving than by receiving - in fact we become more content and learn to love people and use things, rather than use people and love things. When we focus on giving rather than receiving, Elohim frees us from the distractions that could tempt us to covet and thereby prevent us from gaining eternal life. Elohim is fully aware that if He should allow a covetous person to gain eternal life, such a person will like Satan desire one additional thing: Elohim's throne. The covetous person is never satisfied and will always want more. That is why coveting is the same as idolatry.

Even so, when we reign under Yahshua in Elohim's eternal Kingdom, Elohim's Spirit will have convicted us and enabled us to overcome all sin, including covetousness, for ever and ever! It is as we read from Romans 8: 11, ***'(But) if the Spirit of Him who raised Yahshua from the dead dwells in you, He who raise Messiah Yahshua from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells you.'*** Nazarene Jews/Israelites who follow the way of Elohim in the form of Yahshua Messiah, our perfect example, bear the fruit of contentment and of the Spirit given them at immersion into Yahshua's saving name. They are known by the fruits of the Spirit of love, joy, peace, patience and the like. It is Elohim's Spirit in us that gives us the assurance of entry into the coming kingdom of Elohim, as witnessed in Ephesians 1: 13 & 14, in this way: ***'In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation –having also believed, you were sealed in Him with the Set-apart Spirit of promise, (14) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to redemption of Elohim's own possession to the praise of His glory.'***

Covetousness is a dangerous sin which Elohim equates with idolatry. Its fruit may seem to bring happiness, but it is never of a lasting nature. It is contrary to Elohim's nature and can keep us from Elohim's salvation and eternal life. Let's therefore use the three ways given in this sermon, to help us overcome this serious sin. Amen!

Chapter 15: Find the way to peace

The prophet Isaiah prophesied about Messiah in Isaiah 9: 6, saying: ***‘For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; and the government will rest on His shoulders; and His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty Elohim, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace.’*** Isaiah prophesied the coming of Messiah as a great event that would ultimately benefit all of mankind. One of the highlights of Messiah’s coming would be real lasting peace.

When Messiah appeared on the earth about 2,000 years ago, He practiced and taught the way of peace as no person before or after Him did. However, the first coming of Messiah did not leave the world a legacy of ongoing peace. So despite the announcement of the angel together with a multitude of heavenly hosts at Messiah’s birth in Luke 2: 14, praising Elohim and saying: ***“Glory to Elohim in the highest, and on earth peace among men with whom He is pleased”***, 2000 years later, there is not much evidence of universal peace. So, what went wrong?

The inhabitants of the earth have seen very little real peace even when Messiah’s name is honored. The land of Israel, also referred to as the Holy Land has experienced war after war and conflict after conflict. The periods of peace seem to be the short intervals leading up to the next armed conflict. Much of the world can only dream of peace, and only Messiah could make that dream come true. It’s no wonder that Isaiah wrote in Isaiah 59: 8, ***‘They do not know the way of peace, and there is no justice in their tracks; they have made their paths crooked; whoever treads on them does not know peace.’*** Isaiah’s statement is echoed in what Jeremiah wrote in the first part of Jeremiah 10: 23, as follows: ***‘I know, O YHVH, that a man’s way is not in himself; nor is it in a man who walks to direct his steps.’*** History confirms that left to our own devices mankind are incapable of preserving peace. The past hundred years has seen untold blood-stained incidents of conflict and war. The world has simply rejected the peace that Elohim freely offered.

But how have humanity rejected peace? They have rejected Yahshua Messiah and His message, thereby disregarding the way to reconciliation, respect and cooperation that He taught and personified. Even so, help is on the way, as Elohim will keep His promise as witnessed in Hebrews 9: 28, in this way: ***‘So Messiah also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.’*** However, the world as a whole will have to wait a little longer to experience peace. But, not everyone has to remain on a waiting list to experience peace. Some are called at this time to experience peace now, before the rest of mankind, as the ambassadors of Elohim’s way of life.

Those of us who answered Elohim’s call are already experiencing Yahshua’s promises given to us in John 14: 27, as follows: ***“Peace I leave with you; My peace I give to you; not as the world gives, do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, nor let it be fearful.”*** The peace that Messiah offers is real and as we read from Philippians 4: 7, it ***‘surpasses all comprehension.’*** It is ours for the asking; Messiah offers each one of us on an individual basis a once in a lifetime offer to take hold of peace today, rather than waiting for universal peace when Elohim intervenes in world affairs in the foreseeable future. But, living a life in which peace is the main object in our minds is not easy. In the chaotic world which is engulfed in chaos and strife, finding the way to peace necessitates a great deal of skill and creativity and has to be approached with humility. But it is nevertheless achievable.

If you delve into the recorded history of mankind over the past two thousand years, you will notice that the world honors its military heroes. Massive monuments have been erected in the major cities of the world in honor of people who lead their armies in defeating enemy forces. It is true that such men of fame registered remarkable military achievements during this age of man. But, greater conquests than the spoils of war, namely the accomplishments of peace are usually esteemed too lightly. King Solomon, one of the wisest men who ever lived wrote about it in Proverbs 16: 32, as follows: ***‘He who is slow to anger is better than the mighty, and he who rules his spirit, than he***

who captures a city.’ If we are able to control our own base instincts, our Creator views it as a great accomplishment, as Yahshua taught His disciples in Matthew 5: 5 – 9, in this way: ***“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. (6) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (7) Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (8) Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see Elohim. (9) Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of Elohim.”***

Notice Elohim’s words to King Solomon in 1st Kings 3: 11 – 13, who asked Elohim to give him wisdom and understanding to be able to rule His chosen people, as follows: ***“Because you have asked this thing and have not asked for yourself long life, nor have asked riches for yourself, nor have you asked for the life of your enemies, but have asked for yourself discernment to understand justice, (12) behold, I have done according to your words. Behold, I have given you a wise and discerning heart, so that there has been no one like you before you, nor shall one like you arise after you. (13) And I have also given you what you have not asked, both riches and honor, so that there will not be any among the kings like you all your days.”*** Elohim heard and granted Solomon’s request and he would be blessed as a peacemaker in a normally bloodstained, violent world. So it is clear that in the eyes of our Creator, honor and esteem goes to those who wage a battle for peace!

But the problem is human nature. Elohim understands our nature, since he has put up with our disobedience for the past 6,000 years. Soon after Elohim created Adam and Eve, Satan influenced their minds to disobey Him. Lacking the divine nature of Elohim’s Set-apart Spirit, Eve gave in to the deceit and manipulation of Satan, and Adam, though not deceived (as per 1st Timothy 2: 14), also ate of the forbidden fruit. Rav Shaul confirms our human weakness in Romans 8: 7, as follows: ***‘Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward Elohim; for it does not subject itself to the law of Elohim, for it is not even able to do so.’*** Our thoughts, without the Spirit of Elohim are motivated by *‘the law of sin’*.

War starts with selfishness and lust – when people fail to fill their selfish permissive agendas through deception and manipulation, they turn to violence resulting in full blown war. At this time Satan is fully aware that Elohim is adding men and women to His Spiritual family. He recognizes our destiny to become part of Elohim’s immortal spiritual family. Satan knows that when we are resurrected one day, we as per Messiah’s example gain eternal life in Elohim’s family and will exist on a higher plane than angels, since we will assist Elohim in even administering angelic affairs as witnessed in 1st Corinthians 6: 3, in this way: ***‘Do you not know that we shall judge angels? How much more, matters of this life?’*** In order to try and disrupt Elohim’s plan, Satan influences the minds of men to kill ourselves and others. Millions of people have died in wars, yet, Elohim will ultimately overcome Satan’s handiwork through the promise and power of the resurrection.

The Elohim inspired Scriptures make it clear that Messiah’s first coming; apart from His sacrifice for the sins of the world, served to invite a team of people from many nations to individually accept a life of peace during this age, as witnessed in John 16: 33, as follows: ***“These things I (Yahshua) have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world.”*** Surprising to some, Yahshua did not come the first time to establish universal peace at all. The promise of peace for the world in general is for a time yet in the future, at which time the Prince of Peace Himself will force humans to end war, as is recorded in Revelation 2: 27, in this way: ***“And He shall rule them with a rod of iron, as the vessels of the potter are broken in pieces, as I also have received authority from My Father.”*** At the beginning of Messiah’s millennial rule, He will teach the way of peace to one and all; assisted by converted individuals who have been resurrected (or changed) during the first resurrection, after being groomed during this lifetime on earth, as messengers of peace. This is recorded for us in Revelation 5: 10, as follows: ***“And Thou hast made them to be a kingdom and priests to our Elohim; and they will reign upon the earth.”***

Elohim will put an end to war through Yahshua the Messiah. In a prophecy about the coming Kingdom of Elohim in Micah 4: 1 – 3, Elohim says through Micah: ***“And it will come about in the last days that the mountain (government) of the house of YHVH will be established as the chief of the mountains. It will be raised above the hills, and the peoples will stream to it. (2) And many nations will come and say, ‘Come let us go up to the mountain of YHVH and to the house of the Elohim of Jacob, that He may teach us about His ways and that we may walk in His paths.’ For from Zion will go forth the law, even the word of YHVH from Jerusalem. (3) And He will judge between many peoples and render decisions for mighty, distant nations. Then they will hammer their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks; nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they train for war.’***

What is the peace that Yahshua Messiah taught 2,000 years ago that He will bring to the entire world at His return? That it is first and foremost, a way of life. Yes, it is a state of mind living in harmony with the Word of Elohim, as King David aptly put it in Psalm 119: 165, as follows: ***‘Those who love Thy law have great peace, and nothing causes them to stumble.’*** Those who put Messiah’s teachings regarding peace into practice, focus their minds on loving others rather than taking advantage of them. They will place the happiness and needs of others on par with, or even higher than their own needs and desires.

Some will even after Messiah’s return violently resist His rule and will suffer the consequences as we read from Revelation 19: 11 & 15, in this way: ***‘And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. (12) And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. (13) And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and His name is called The Word of Elohim. (14) And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean were following Him on white horses. (15) And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of Elohim, the Almighty.’*** Messiah has shown us the way to peace in the Scriptures, but how much do we make that way a part of our lives? Even though we may not be able to bring our influence to bear on the world at large in any convincing way, we can successfully heal damaged relationships and assist in proclaiming the good news about the coming Kingdom of Elohim.

To practice peace, as demonstrated by Messiah, we need to be at peace with ourselves and confidently believe that a peaceful approach is the only practical way to heal hurt feelings and build friendly, peaceful relationships. Yahshua Messiah came as Elohim’s perfect example for us to follow. He reached out to make peace with the Samaritan woman at the well, as recorded in John 4. At that time in history the relationship between Jews and Samaritans had deteriorated such that they were no longer on speaking terms. However, Yahshua did not agree with it, and as a result of his wish to heal broken bonds, He made it clear to this woman that salvation would be made available to Jews as well as to Samaritans. All people are of equal potential in Elohim’s sight, and he had come that all could ultimately experience the peace and salvation that can only come through Elohim.

Rav Shaul wrote about Yahshua the Prince of Peace in Ephesians 2: 17, as follows: ***‘And He came and preached peace to you who were far away (former Israelites who believe that they are Gentiles, including some genuine Gentiles), and peace to those who were near (the Jews).’*** Yahshua included all who were willing to pursue peace. No one is barred from imitating Yahshua Messiah as a messenger of peace. Making peace is a skill that we are able to learn by following Messiah’s example to guide us along the way. Yes, Yahshua came to reconcile us to the so-called ‘circumcised’ followers of Torah, as well as to Elohim. We read accordingly from verses 18 & 19 of Ephesians 2, in this way: ***‘For through Him we both have our access in one Spirit to the Father. (19) So then you are no***

longer strangers and aliens, but you are fellow citizens with the saints (true believers), and are of Elohim's household.'

However, every one called by the Father is expected to imitate Yahshua the messenger of peace. We read therefore from 2nd Corinthians 5: 17 – 21, as follows: ***'Therefore if any man is in Messiah, he is a new creature; the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. (18) Now all these things are from Elohim, who reconciled us to Himself through Messiah, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, (19) namely, that Elohim was in Messiah reconciling the world to Himself, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation. (20) Therefore, we are ambassadors for Messiah, as though Elohim were entreating through us; we beg you on behalf of Messiah, be reconciled to Elohim. (21) He made Him who knew no sin to be sin on our behalf, that we might become the righteousness of Elohim in Him.'***

Throughout man's history we have marked our lives on earth through war. After Messiah's return and the resurrection of those who died in Him, Messiah will teach mankind the utter futility of war. Man will come to realize that Satan is the primary instigator of all wars. But when Messiah rules on earth, man's history will be marked by peaceful achievements, as witnessed in Amos 9: 13 – 15, in this way: ***"Behold, days are coming," declares YHVH, "When the plowman will overtake the reaper and the treader of grapes him who sows seed: when the mountains will drip sweet wine, and all the hills will be dissolved. (14) Also I will restore the captivity of My people Israel, and they will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them, they will also plant vineyards and drink their wine, and make gardens and eat their fruit. (15) I will also plant them on their land, and they will not again be rooted out from their land which I have given them," says YHVH your Elohim.'***

Isaiah's prophecy of the Prince of Peace materialized 2,000 years ago. As ambassadors of the world to come to be ruled by Messiah, we should take Messiah up on His promise and become messengers of peace during this age. We should proclaim the gospel of the coming Kingdom of Elohim as instructed by Yahshua in Matthew 24: 14, as follows: ***"And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations, and then the end shall come."*** In addition it is mandatory that each and every one of us called at this time ensure that we go through a discipleship program as Yahshua described in Luke 6: 39 & 40, in this way: ***'And He also spoke a parable to them: "A blind man cannot guide a blind man can he? Will they not both fall into a pit? (40) A pupil is not above his teacher; but everyone, after he has been fully trained, will be like his teacher."***

The purpose of the discipleship program is to study the way of Elohim, as shown us by Yahshua our Messiah. The discipleship program requires that we bear fruit of righteousness, as described in verses 43 – 45 of Luke 6, as follows: ***"For there is no good tree that produces bad fruit; nor on the other hand, a bad tree which produces good fruit. (44) For each tree is known by its own fruit. For men do not gather figs from thorns, nor do they pick grapes from a briar bush. (45) The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil; for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart."*** In verse 46 of Luke 6, Yahshua tells us how we can come to know Him, in this way: ***"And why do you call Me, 'Master, Master,' and do not do what I say? There we have it; if we truly know Yahshua our Master and Savior, we will do what He said (or taught).***

Once we have been fully trained, it is incumbent upon each one of us to use the talents given us, to immerse new believers and teach them to observe all that Yahshua commanded us, as recorded in Matthew 28: 19 & 20, as follows: ***'And Yahshua came up and spoke to them saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. (19) Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, immersing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Set-apart Spirit, (20) teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age."***

However, at this time very few are prepared to follow the discipleship program that Yahshua our Messiah adhered to, and commissioned His disciples (students) to pursue. Knowing this and talking about Elohim's elect, Yahshua said in Luke 18: 8, ***"I tell you that he will bring about justice for them speedily. However, when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on the earth?"*** Yes, it is through Messiah's discipleship program that the way of Elohim is perpetuated, and not by groups having discussions concerning things they do not fully understand. Let us therefore make sure that we follow the methodology used by Messiah, and proclaim the gospel that He proclaimed; namely, the coming Kingdom of Elohim, thus ensuring that there will be faith on the earth, when our Master and Savior returns. Think about it!

Chapter 16: The handwriting on the wall.

The Scriptures speak of a world-wide problem soon to occur that will affect every one of us on earth. This is the warning that remains written on the walls of prophecy. King Belshazzar, the son of Nebuchadnezzar who took over the reign of Babylon after his father, held a great feast for a thousand of his nobles, and was drinking wine in their presence.

After tasting the wine he gave orders to bring out the gold and silver vessels which his father had taken out of the house of Elohim (the temple) in Jerusalem, in order that he and the nobles and their wives might drink from them. We read from Daniel 5: 4, ***'They drank the wine and praised their gods of gold and silver, of bronze, iron, wood and stone.'*** The footnote against this verse in 'The MacArthur Study Bible' reads: *'The celebration was designed to boost morale and break the feeling of doom, because at this very time, armies of Medo-Persia (Cf. v.30) had Babylon helplessly under siege.'* Picture this drunken orgy in your mind's eye for a moment; people shouting, laughing and at times even cursing whilst Belshazzar continued to make jokes about the Jews and their G-d.

The Babylonians were fully aware of the Medo-Persian threat outside their impressive and impregnable city. They were confident that no army in the world could penetrate their walls. According to Herodotus (484 – 424 BCE) a great Greek historian, the ancient city of Babylon measured 120 stadia square (about 14 square miles) and boasted a wall 50 royal cubits (about 90 feet) wide and 200 royal cubits (about 300 feet) high. The Babylonian army shouted insults at Cyrus and his men – boasting about their superior fortifications.

However, the night was not over yet. Cyrus being a clever military strategist, had a plan that would change the course of history, and fulfilling Elohim's prophecy and plan to let Judah return to the promised Land 70 years after their captivity by Nebuchadnezzar. Apparently Cyrus' general diverted the Euphrates River which ran through the gates of Babylon right into the heart of the city, thereby reducing the water level well below the river gates, and giving his army access into the city. The water was lowered to thigh high, and the Persian attackers splashed under the giant gates and climbed up the riverbank walls, well before the Babylonians could know what had happened. However, before this happened, Elohim warned Belshazzar of his demise.

As Belshazzar began to drink another goblet of the finest wine, he noticed something unusual in his peripheral vision. It looked like a man's hand, but it was not attached to an arm and body of a human being. We read accordingly from verses 5 & 6 of Daniel 5, ***'Suddenly the fingers of a man's hand emerged and began writing opposite the lampstand on the plaster of the wall of the king's palace, and the king saw the back of the hand that did the writing. (6) Then the king's face grew pale, and his thoughts alarmed him; and his hip joints went slack, and his knees began knocking together.'*** The revelry immediately stopped. The musicians dropped their instruments and the dancing girls stopped in their tracks. The scene was set for Almighty YHWH the Elohim of Israel to intervene directly in the affairs of puny mankind, and specifically in Belshazzar's life and the downfall of the mighty Babylonian kingdom depicted by the head of gold of the image described in King Nebuchadnezzar's dream.

King Belshazzar could not interpret the words on the wall and he called aloud to bring in the conjurers, the Chaldeans and the diviners. The king told the wise men of Babylon to decipher the meaning of the words on the wall, even promising in verse 7, saying: ***'Any man who can read this inscription and explain its interpretation to me will be clothed with purple, and have a necklace of gold around his neck, and have authority as a third ruler in the kingdom.'*** The king was frightened, as the wise men of Babylon could not read the writing and they could not tell him what it meant. As a result the king grew even paler and became terrified – he was totally clueless as to what he should do.

But the queen's mother, aware of the sudden commotion, entered the dining hall to address the king and said to him as recorded in verses 10 – 12 of Daniel 5, ***"O king, live forever! Do not let your thoughts alarm you or your face to be pale. (11) There is a man in your kingdom in whom is a spirit of the holy gods; and in the days of your father, illumination, insight, and wisdom like the wisdom of the gods were found in him. And King Nebuchadnezzar, your father, your father the king, appointed him chief of the magicians, conjurers, Chaldeans and diviners. (12) This was because an extraordinary spirit, knowledge and insight, interpretation of dreams, explanation of enigmas, and solving of difficult problems were found in this Daniel, whom the king named Belteshazzar. Let Daniel now be summoned and he will declare the interpretation."***

Daniel was immediately brought before the king. At this time Daniel was about 80 years of age and was already in retirement, as he was not present with the other so-called wise men, and the king had forgotten about him and his accomplishments since his father's reign. Daniel stood before the king and after listening to the king's request. Even though the same promises were made to Daniel that had been made to the other wise men or anyone who could interpret the handwriting on the wall, Daniel was not impressed, saying in verses 17 of Daniel 5, ***"Keep your gifts for yourself, or give your rewards to someone else; however, I will read the inscription to the king and make the interpretation known to him."*** But the news on the wall was definitely not good news for the king. So Daniel diplomatically rebuked the king and pronounced the prophetic and disastrous warning on the wall, as follows: ***'Mene, Mene, Tekel, Upharsin,'*** which is interpreted in this way: *'Mene: Elohim has numbered your kingdom and finished it; Tekel: You have been weighed in the balances, and found wanting; Peres (the singular form of Upharsin): Your kingdom has been divided, and given to the Medes and Persians.'*

Amazingly, immediately after Daniel told the king the meaning of the writing on the wall, King Belshazzar kept his promise that he made to Daniel and made him third in command in his kingdom. Elohim in this way continued to honor His servant Daniel. Daniel's elevation to this powerful position did not end with Belshazzar's demise. King Cyrus (also known as King Darius) placed Daniel as the president over the princes of his Persian kingdom once he controlled all of Babylon as per Daniel 6: 1 – 3, in this way: ***'It seemed good to Darius to appoint 120 satraps over the kingdom, that they should be in charge of the whole kingdom, (2) and over them three commissioners (of whom Daniel was one), that these satraps might be accountable to them, and that the king might not suffer loss. (3) Then this Daniel began distinguishing himself among the commissioners and satraps because he possessed an extraordinary spirit, and the king planned to appoint him over the entire kingdom.'***

Daniel outspokenly reminded King Belshazzar of the things he remembered and told him how Elohim humbled his father Nebuchadnezzar by making him eat grass in the royal pasture for seven years, as we read from verses 18 – 21 of Daniel 5, in this way: ***"O king, the Most High Elohim granted sovereignty, grandeur, glory, and majesty to Nebuchadnezzar your father. (19) And because of the grandeur which He bestowed on him, all the peoples, nations, and men of every language feared and trembled before him; whomever he wished he killed, and whomever he wished he spared alive; and whomever he wished he elevated, and whomever he wished he humbled. (20) But when his heart was lifted up as his spirit became so proud that he behaved arrogantly, he was deposed from his royal throne, and his glory was taken away from him. (21) He was also driven away from mankind, and his heart was made like that of beasts, and his dwelling place was with the wild donkeys. He was given grass to eat like cattle, and his body was drenched with the dew of heaven, until he recognized that the Most High Elohim is ruler over the realm of mankind, and that He sets over it whoever He wishes."***

Continuing in verse 22 & 23 Daniel said to king Darius: ***"Yet you, his son, Belshazzar, have not humbled your heart, even though you knew all this, (23) but you have exalted yourself against the***

Master of heaven; and they have brought the vessels of His house before you, and you and your nobles, your wives and your concubines have been drinking wine from them; and you have praised the gods of silver and gold, of bronze, iron, wood and stone, which do not see, hear or understand. But the Elohim in whose hand are your life-breath and your ways, you have not glorified.” King Belshazzar actually experienced the irony of having his obituary read by a slave.

Belshazzar had not learned the lesson his father was forced to learn: that Elohim is in charge and whatever He wills will be done. He had not learned that Elohim requires that mankind honors Him in humility and obedience. Daniel knew that King Darius could not have been totally unaware of his father’s seven-year downfall. This incident had great historic importance. Yet, it has far greater prophetic implications for us today. In fact the handwriting is still on the wall today. Yahshua Messiah in the book of Revelation interprets Daniel’s account for us. Three constituent parts make-up the fulfillment of that ancient type: namely; (1) a king; (2) an end-time Babylon; and (3) Elohim.

Because Elohim is omnipresent, the third part needs no explanation. But what about the end-time Babylon, if there is such a thing? Although described in Revelation 18 as *‘the great city’*, the end-time Babylon is not a city-state as ancient Babylon was. However, Elohim reveals that Babylon is characterized by its religious and political power in Revelation 17. In fact its economic power is so enormous that rulers and merchants will mourn at its demise, as we read from Revelation 18: 9 – 19, as follows: ***“And the kings of the earth, who committed acts of immorality and lived sensuously with her, will weep and lament over her when they see the smoke of her burning, (10) standing at a distance because of the fear of her torment, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, Babylon, the strong city! For in one hour judgment has come.’ (11) And the merchants of the earth weep and mourn over her, because no one buys their cargoes any more; (12) cargoes of gold and silver and precious stones and pearls and fine linen and purple and silk and scarlet, and every kind of citron wood and every article of ivory and every article made from very costly wood and bronze and iron and marble, (13) and cinnamon and spice and incense and perfume and frankincense and wine and olive oil and fine flour and wheat and cattle and sheep, and cargoes of horses and chariots and slaves and human lives. (14) And the fruit you long for has gone from you, and all things that were luxurious and splendid have passed away from you and men will no longer find them. (15) The merchants of these things, who became rich from her, will stand at a distance because of the fear of her torment, weeping and mourning, (16) saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, she who was clothed in fine linen and purple and scarlet, and adorned with gold and precious stones and pearls; (17) for in one hour such great wealth has been laid waste! And every shipmaster and every passenger and sailor, and as many as make their living by the sea, stood at a distance, (18) and were crying out as they saw the smoke of her burning saying, ‘What city is like the great city?’ (19) And they threw dust on their heads and were crying out, weeping and mourning, saying, ‘Woe, woe, the great city, in which all who had ships at sea became rich by her wealth, for in one hour she has been laid waste!’”***

This great Babylon is a way of life and system so far reaching that it involves all of the nations and peoples of the earth, as witnessed in verse 3 of Revelation 18, in this way: ***“For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts on immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.”*** In addition it has a sinister foundation, as it traffics in *‘human lives’* (verse 13). A king will also ascend who will ally himself with other rulers and the end-time Babylonian system and rule it as if he were a god. This is the ‘beast’ prophesied in Revelation 13, and it is significant that this powerful end-time king is identified as the beast, recalling that the first king of Babylon was also reduced to a mere beast (as recorded in Daniel 4: 32 & 33). The book of Revelation describes all the components on the prophetic fulfillment of Daniel’s physical forerunner. The bestial king mentioned in Revelation will follow the same foolish pride and arrogance of Belshazzar, in his final act to defy and fight against Yahshua Messiah at his return described in Revelation 19: 19 & 20, as follows: ***‘And***

I saw the beast and the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse and against His army. (20) And the beast was seized, and with him the false prophet who performed the signs in his presence, by which he deceived those who had received the mark of the beast and those who worshiped his image; these two were thrown alive into the lake of fire which burns with brimstone. We know that Belshazzar failed the test, and so will the end-time beast.

But what about us - will we heed the writing on the wall? We need to be aware that we can understand the writing on the wall. Daniel identified how this is done; saying in Daniel 2: 28: ***"(However), there is an Elohim in heaven who reveals mysteries."*** However, to simply confess this is not the whole answer. To be able to understand Elohim's plan of salvation, humility is a top priority. Rav Shaul explains this, telling us that the wisdom of Elohim is a mystery hidden from the world, but understood only by those whom Elohim chooses to reveal it as may be read from 1st Corinthians 2; 7 – 10, as follows: ***'But we speak Elohim's wisdom in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which Elohim predestined before the ages of glory; (8) the wisdom which none of the rulers of this age had understood; for if they had understood it, they would not have crucified the Master of glory; (9) but just as it is written, "THINGS WHICH EYE HAS NOT SEEN AND EAR HAS NOT HEARD, AND WHICH HAVE NOT ENTERED THE HEART OF MAN, ALL THAT ELOHIM HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM." (10) For to us Elohim revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of Elohim.'*** Yahshua our Messiah said the same thing in Matthew 13: 11 – 13, in this way: ***'And He answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. (12) For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. (13) Therefore I speak to them in parables; because while seeing they do not see, and while hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand.'***

The point is: the message that Daniel gave Belshazzar still applies today, namely that humility allows Elohim to show us His great plan of salvation for us. We are at this stage in the calm before the storm. Different governments and religions will combine in the near future and will make pronouncements of peace and safety throughout the world. To the average citizen of the world, a millennium of peace will seem a possibility. However, that is only a hoax – since peace will disappear in a heartbeat when the beast and false prophet begin to exercise their military power, as witnessed in 1st Thessalonians 5: 1 – 3, as follows: ***'Now as to the times and the epochs, brethren, you have no need of anything to be written to you. (2) For you yourselves know full well that the day of YHWH will come just like a thief in the night. (3) While they are saying, "Peace and safety!" then destruction will come upon them suddenly like birth pangs upon a woman with child; and they shall not escape.'***

Many will perish (as per Messiah's words in Matthew 24: 21 & 22), but the person who truly knows Elohim and understands His handwriting on the prophetic wall, will be protected and saved, as witnessed in Revelation 3: 8 – 10, in this way: ***"I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. (9) Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews and are not but lie (this is talking about replacement theology; especially those who usurp the role of Jews as the custodians of the 'Oracles of Elohim', because they assert that Elohim has taken it from the Jews because of their unfaithfulness and given it to them – but this is according to Romans 3: 3 & 4 untrue.)—behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, and to know that I have loved you. (10) Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth."***

What Elohim has promised He will perform, He does not lie. At the time of the end, when Elohim pours out His seventh plague, mighty Babylon will come to its end, as prophesied in Revelation 16: 19, as follows: ***'And the great city was split into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And Babylon the great was remembered before Elohim, to give her the cup of the wine of His fierce wrath.'*** Elohim uses the same language that characterized ancient Babylon's destruction. Belshazzar drank wine from Elohim's set-apart vessels that were dedicated for service to Elohim alone. That was what caused his end. In the end the beast, the false prophet and modern Babylon will *'drink of the wine of Elohim's fierce wrath.'* What perfect justice.

Elohim gives us a choice. We can either, follow King Belshazzar and avoid humbling ourselves before Elohim and remain blinded to the handwriting on the wall, or we can be like Daniel, who possessed an *'excellent spirit'*. Elohim has promised and given that same excellent Spirit to Yahshua Messiah's disciples who obey Him as we read from Acts 5: 32, in this way: ***'And we are witnesses of these things; and so is the Set-apart Spirit, whom Elohim has given to those who obey Him.'*** The Set-apart Spirit is that *'excellent Spirit'*, which not only reveals to us the esteem and honor due to Yahshua Messiah, but also leads us into Elohim's complete truth as recorded in John 16: 13, which includes understanding and teaching of prophecy.

But, whatever route we choose, one thing is sure: The handwriting is still on the wall! Think about it!

Chapter 17: The importance of Yahshua Messiah's resurrection.

The resurrection of Yahshua Messiah is central to the lives and objectives of His followers, and ultimately also the whole human race. Unless there is a resurrection of the dead, there is no such thing as eternal life. The Scriptures tell us in Hebrews 9: 27, ***'it is appointed for men to die once.'*** But it also shows (in 1st Corinthians 15: 22), just as all die, ***'so also in Messiah all shall be made alive.'*** We are all to be resurrected to life, but each in his own order (as per verses 23 & 24 of 1st Corinthians 15). However, it all begins with Yahshua Messiah.

At this point in time the only resurrection to eternal life has been that of our Savior, Yahshua Messiah. The first Scriptural record of Yahshua's death and resurrection was written 6,000 years ago, about 4,000 years before Messiah's birth. In Genesis 3: 15 Elohim pronounced judgment against Satan, who had subtly enticed Adam and Eve to disobey YHVH their Creator, saying: ***"And I will put enmity between you and the woman, and between your seed and her seed"*** (meaning Messiah, since a woman does not have seed); ***He shall bruise you on the head, and you shall bruise him on the heel."*** The 'Seed' of the woman would bruise Satan's head – putting a permanent end to his influence over mankind, and Satan would 'bruise him on the heel': i.e. bring about Messiah's crucifixion. But, ironically enough, Yahshua's crucifixion and resurrection, makes eternal life possible for us.

Messiah's death on the stake makes possible the forgiveness of our sins and our reconciliation with Elohim. But that is only the first step in Elohim's plan to save humanity. Through Messiah's resurrection to eternal life about 2,000 years ago, we, through our own resurrection, can also receive eternal life. Just as Elohim commanded that the harvest in ancient Israel could not begin until He accepted the wave-sheaf offering, so the harvesting of mankind could not begin until Yahshua Messiah was accepted by the Father. Yahshua was represented by the male lamb without blemish in Leviticus 23: 12, which was symbolic of Messiah's sinless state. He was also represented of the fine flour mixed with oil in Leviticus 23: 13, symbolic of the beating and scourging through which He was perfected. The accompanying hin of wine also mentioned in Leviticus 23: 13, was symbolic of Messiah's blood to pay the penalty for our sins, as confirmed in 1 John 1: 7, as follows: ***'But if we walk in the light as He Himself is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Yahshua His Son cleanses us from all sin.'***

According to Jewish Encyclopedia.com the wave sheaf mentioned in Leviticus 23: 10 & 11 was cut off prior to the 16th of Aviv and therefore had to be on the 14th of Aviv, the day before the first annual Sabbath (or First Day of Unleavened Bread) on the 15th of Aviv, to be waived by the Priest in the evening of the Second Day of Unleavened Bread on the 16th of Aviv. In similar way was the first Passover kept in Egypt in the evening of the 14th Aviv, thus saving the first-born of Israel from the angel of death that same night, as all the first-born in Egypt died. The Israelites left Egypt in the light of the full moon in the evening of 15th Aviv and forty seven days from the next evening (erev 16 Aviv) the Israelites arrived at Mount Sinai in the 3rd Month on the same day, meaning the 3rd Day (as per Exodus 19: 1). Moses instructed the people to consecrate themselves for the next two days; to wash their clothes and refrain from marital relations during the next two days and be ready on the third day, the 6th day of Sivan, when Elohim gave Moses the Commandments, ordinances and judgments on Mount Sinai. This was exactly fifty days after the second day of unleavened bread, and is even today the day on which the Feast of Weeks or Shavuot is celebrated according to the Hebrew calendar.

Yahshua was killed as the Passover Lamb on the 14th Aviv, when He was impaled at about 9 o'clock in the morning. At about 12 o'clock until 3 o'clock in the afternoon darkness fell over the whole land, as testified in Luke 23: 44 & 45, as follows: ***'And it was now about the sixth hour, and darkness fell over the whole land until the ninth hour, (45) the sun being obscured; and the veil of the temple***

was torn in two. This is when Yahshua died (or was cut off) as prophesied in Daniel 9: 26 & 27, in this way: ***“Then after sixty-two weeks the Messiah will be cut off and have nothing, and the people of the prince who is to come will destroy the city and the sanctuary. And its end will come with a flood; even to the end there will be war; desolation are determined. (27) And he will make a firm covenant with many for one week, but in the middle of the week he will put a stop to sacrifice and grain offering.”*** Yahshua died as the Passover Lamb, but was also offered as the wave sheaf (or grain) offering on the impalement stake before YHVH, as witnessed in verse 46 of Luke 23, crying out in a loud voice He said: ***“Father, INTO THY HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT.” And having said this, He breathed His last.*** When the veil of the Temple was torn in two, Yahshua’s death atoned for the sins of whoever believes in Him and He was accepted as the first of the first-fruits; to be resurrected three days and three nights later at the end of the weekly Sabbath as the first-born from the dead. We read accordingly from Romans 5: 6, ***‘For while we were still helpless at the right time Messiah died for the ungodly’***, so that they could be given salvation in Elohim’s Kingdom and the harvest of humanity for eternal life could begin. If we as first-fruits offered at Shavuot as two leavened loaves of bread are accepted, we will be born again at Messiah’s return, when we will be resurrected (or changed) as per 1st Corinthians 15: 51 & 52.

According to Romans 8: 11, Messiah’s resurrection provides us with hope that Elohim’s Set-apart Spirit, given us at immersion will also give life to our mortal bodies through His Spirit who indwells us. The Scriptures clearly reveal that certain of the personalities in the Tanach had this same hope. The patriarch Job knew Elohim’s plan for man after death. He lived and died knowing that he would eventually be resurrected, as witnessed in Job 14: 10 – 14, in this way: ***“But man dies and lies prostrate. Man expires and where is he? (11) As water evaporates from the sea. And a river becomes parched and dried up. (12) So man lies down and does not rise. Until the heavens be no more, he will not awake nor be aroused out of his sleep. (13) Oh that Thou wouldst hide me in Sheol, that Thou wouldst conceal me until Thy wrath returns to Thee, that Thou wouldst set a limit for me and remember me! (14) If a man dies, will he live again? All the days of my struggle I will wait, until my change comes.’*** Job knew he would be resurrected, but until then he would wait in his grave until his ‘change comes’ – from physical to spiritual, from mortal to immortal, as explained in 1st Corinthians 15: 53 & 54.

We read further about his understanding in Job 19: 26 & 27, where he wrote: ***“Even after my skin is destroyed, yet from my flesh I shall see Elohim: (27) Whom I myself shall behold, and Whom my eyes shall see and not another. My heart faints within me.”*** This was Job’s hope as it is also ours – eternal life which Elohim, who cannot lie, promised before time began, as recorded in Titus 1: 2. Rav Shaul told the Roman officials who questioned him about his beliefs in Acts 24: 14 & 15, saying: ***“But this I admit to you, that according to the Way which they call a sect I do serve the Elohim of our fathers, believing everything that is in accordance with the Law, and that is written in the prophets; (15) having a hope in Elohim, which these men cherish themselves, and that there shall certainly be a resurrection of both the righteous and the wicked.”*** If Yahshua had not been resurrected, we would have no hope of living forever. But we have the assurance that Elohim, through Messiah, will resurrect all who have ever died.

But as Rav Shaul testified in Acts 24, there will be more than one resurrection. Rav Yochanan wrote of a vision he received from Yahshua Messiah in Revelation 20: 4, stating: ***‘And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given to them. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Yahshua and because of the word of Elohim, and those who had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Messiah for a thousand years.’*** Here we see a group of those who have been faithful to Messiah given thrones, authority and rulership with Yahshua for 1,000 years. These are the ones described in 1 Thessalonians 4: 16, as follows: ***‘For the***

Master Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of Elohim; and the dead in Messiah shall rise first.'

Continuing in Yochanan's description of events accompanying Messiah's return, he writes in Revelation 20: 6, stating; ***'Blessed and holy is the one who has part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of Elohim and of Messiah and will reign with Him for a thousand years.'*** Notice that Rav Yochanan calls this the first resurrection. If there is the first resurrection, then obviously there is more than one resurrection. Indeed Yochanan goes on to tell us in verse 5, saying: ***'The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.'*** This is the second resurrection, a bringing back to physical life that will take place at the conclusion of the Millennium rule of Messiah.

According to Romans 8: 29, Yahshua was the first-born of many brethren. We, who have truly repented and have accepted His sacrifice to atone for our sins, are now His Spirit-begotten brethren, and if we qualify, will when He returns become Spirit-born into His Kingdom. First fruits are that part of a crop that is harvested around the Feast of First Fruits in the land of Israel. The idea of us becoming first fruits, imply that there will also be second fruits. The second fruits are usually harvested after the Feast of Sukkoth. It is obvious that not everyone is now being called. Billions of people have been born, lived and died, without ever hearing the name of Yahshua the Messiah once, let alone obeying Him. Not even all those who heard the Savior speak were being called at that time. In fact YHVH does not want to save all at this time as witnessed in Matthew 13: 11, 12 & 19, as follows: ***'And He (Yahshua) answered and said to them, "To you it has been granted to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been granted. (12) For whoever has, to him shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has shall be taken away from him. (19) When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road.'*** This is specific language that is hard to be misunderstood. Either their time had not yet come or Yahshua was a respecter of persons, which we know is contrary to what is recorded in Acts 10: 34. Do you think the Savior would have spoken in a way that they could not understand Him, if He knew that it would have doomed them to be lost forever?

We read further from John 12: 37 – 40: ***'But though he had performed so many signs before them, yet they were not believing in Him; (38) that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "YHVH, who has believed our report? and to whom has the arm of YHVH been revealed?" (39) For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, (40) "He has blinded their eyes, and hardened their heart; lest they see with their eyes, and perceive with their heart, and be converted, and I heal them."*** This is a hard saying to some, especially in light of what we read in 2 Peter 3: 9: ***'YHVH is not slow about His promise, as some count slowness, but is patient toward you, not wishing for any to perish but for all to come to repentance.'*** In addition we are told in Acts 4: 11 & 12 that Yahshua is the only name by which we may be saved, as follows: ***'He (Yahshua) is the stone which was rejected by you, the builders, but which became the very cornerstone. (12) And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men, by which we must be saved.'***

This seems like a contradiction at first -- how could Elohim purposely blind some, and at the same time not be willing that any should perish? We must also not forget that most of the ones spoken about here are already dead and buried. Romans 11 is about Jews who are presently blinded to the identity of Yahshua mentioned earlier in John 12: 37 – 40. We know that they will be grafted in when Messiah returns one day, as recorded in Zechariah 12: 7 – 10, as follows: ***'YHVH also will save the tents of Judah first in order that the glory of the house of David and the glory of the inhabitants of Jerusalem may not be magnified above Judah. (8) In that day YHVH will defend the inhabitants of***

Jerusalem, and the one who is feeble among them in that day will be like David, and the house of David will be like Elohim, like the angel of YHVH before them. (9) And it will come about in that day that I will set about to destroy all the nations that come against Jerusalem. (10) And I will pour out on the house of David and on the inhabitants of Jerusalem, the Spirit of grace and of supplication, so that they will look on Me whom they have pierced; and they will mourn for Him, as one mourns for an only son, and they will weep bitterly over Him, like the bitter weeping over a first-born.'

We read accordingly in Romans 11: 25 - 28, *'For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery, lest you be wise in your own estimation; that a partial hardening has happened to Israel, until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; (26) and thus all Israel will be saved (even those who now think they are Gentiles); just as it is written, "The Deliverer will come from Zion, He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. (27) And this is my covenant with them, when I take away their sins. (28) From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of Elohim's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers."'* We read about our Father's mercy in verses 32 & 33, as follows: *'For Elohim has shut up all in disobedience that He might show mercy to all. (33) Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of Elohim! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways!'* The reason for blinding the Jews to Yahshua's identity is as Yahshua said in Matthew 15: 24 *"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*

But, what about the rest of Mankind? Yahshua described a time during which people from all generations will be judged at the same time in Matthew 11: 20 – 24, as follows: *'Then He began to reproach the cities in which most of His miracles were done, because they did not repent. (21) "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles had occurred in Tyre and Sidon which occurred in you, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. (22) Nevertheless I say to you, it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon in the Day of Judgment, than for you. (23) And you, Capernaum, will not be exalted to heaven, will you? You shall descend to Hades; for if the miracles had occurred in Sodom, which occurred in you, it would have remained to this day. (24) Nevertheless I say to you that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, than for you."'* These people from ancient times will only respond once they have had a real opportunity to understand the Scriptures. Note that even the perverts of Sodom will find it more tolerable in the Day of Judgment, compared to those in Capernaum who personally knew and rejected Yahshua. The reason is that they had no knowledge of the true Elohim and His Torah. Messiah only appeared a number of years after them and they did not know Him or His Saving Name. These people, who have been dead for thousands of years, are going to be resurrected in the second resurrection and be judged at that time.

We read about those who will be in the second resurrection from Isaiah 25: 7 – 8, in this way: *'And on this mountain He will swallow up the covering which is over all peoples, even the veil which is stretched over all nations. (8) He will swallow up death for all time, And YHVH Elohim will wipe tears away from all faces, And He will remove the reproach of His people from all the earth; For YHVH has spoken.'* When will the veil which is over all nations be destroyed? When will death be swallowed up? Obviously only after the Day of Judgment. The Day of Judgment for all the billions who lived over the past centuries will only come after the Millennial rule of Yahshua Messiah. We see that these people who were blinded in the past will have the veil, which is stretched over them, removed. If these innumerable formerly blinded people are simply judged by their works, many of them who were thieves, prostitutes, dictators and false prophets will perish in the lake of fire. They did not ever repent and were not immersed as we are instructed in Acts 2: 38. They did not study the Scriptures as we read from 2 Peter 3: 18, as follows: *'But grow in the grace and knowledge of*

our Master and Savior Yahshua Messiah. To Him be the glory, both now and to the day of eternity. Amen.'

This is truly the time of Elohim's Last Great Day. This is the time spoken about by Rav Shaul in Philippians 2: 9 - 11, in this way: ***'Therefore also Elohim highly exalted Him, and bestowed on Him the name which is above every name, (10) that at the name of Yahshua EVERY KNEE SHOULD BOW, of those who are in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth, (11) and that every tongue should confess that Yahshua Messiah is Master, to the glory of Elohim the Father.'*** We see from John 7: 37, that Yahshua stood up and cried out to His people on the last day, the great day of the feast, saying: ***"If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink."*** This indicates that all the unsaved dead are to be raised and given a final opportunity to kneel before Messiah. This provision to accept Yahshua as Master and Savior is what the Last Great Day of the Feast described in Leviticus 23: 36 is about.

The prophet Daniel foretold the saint's death and resurrection in Daniel 12: 2, as follows: ***"And many of those who sleep in the dust of the ground will awake, these to everlasting life, but the others to disgrace and everlasting contempt."*** Yahshua Himself compared death with sleep. Before the resurrection of a young girl in Luke 8: 52, He comforted those who were grieving by saying, ***"Stop weeping, for she has not died, but is asleep."*** He similarly compared the death of Lazarus to sleep before Lazarus was brought to life in John 11: 11 – 13. Elohim's plan for human life and our goal is for us eventually to be changed into spirit, shining as the stars forever, as witnessed in Daniel 12: 3, as follows: ***"And those who have insight will shine brightly like the brightness of the expanse of heaven, and those who lead the many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever."*** We are destined to be part of Elohim's family, to be spirit, as He is spirit, as we read from 1st John 3: 2 & 3, in this way: ***'Beloved, now we are children of Elohim, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. (3) And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.'***

In Elohim's plan, the resurrection to eternal life of all those who desire this gift can come only through a resurrected Yahshua Messiah. Otherwise the remainder would never experience everlasting life. Rav Shaul explains this in detail in 1st Corinthians 15: 12 – 22, as follows: ***'Now if Messiah is preached, that He has been raised from the dead, how do some among you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? (13) But if there is no resurrection of the dead, not even Messiah has been raised; (14) and if Messiah has not been raised, then our preaching is vain, your faith is vain. (15) Moreover we are even found to be false witnesses of Elohim, because we witnessed against Elohim that He raised Messiah, whom He did not raise, if in fact the dead are not raised. (16) For if the dead are not raised not even Messiah has been raised; (17) and if Messiah has not been raised, your faith is worthless; you are still in your sins. (18) Then those also who have fallen asleep in Messiah have perished. (19) If we have hoped in Messiah in this life only, we are of all men most to be pitied. (20) But now Messiah has been raised from the dead, the first fruit(s) of those who are asleep. (21) For since by man came death, by a man also came the resurrection of the dead. (22) For as in Adam all die, so also in Messiah all shall be made alive.'***

Our resurrection to eternal life is firmly based on a resurrected Messiah. As He lives (even after His death), so we will live, as we read from Hebrews 6: 17 – 20, in this way: ***"In the same way Elohim, desiring even more to show to the heirs of the promise the unchangeableness of His purpose, interposed with an oath, (18) in order that by two unchangeable things, in which it is impossible for Elohim to lie, we may have strong encouragement, we who have fled for refuge in laying hold of the hope set before us. (19) This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, a hope both sure and steadfast and one which enters within the veil, (20) where Yahshua has entered as a forerunner for us, having become a high priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek."***

But what about the irredeemable wicked? Scriptures show that the wicked will also wake up during the second resurrection. All human beings will ultimately either receive life forever or be destroyed forever. Those who stubbornly refuse to repent will be consumed by fire. Their resurrection is for a negative reason, but for the believer with spiritual understanding, it also serves as a sobering warning: The fate of the irredeemable wicked is a reminder that we have entered into a serious covenant with Elohim through Yahshua Messiah. Once we set our hearts and minds on Elohim, we must never turn back to the wicked ways of this evil world.

Finally we need to remember that Elohim does not take pleasure in the death of the wicked as witnessed in Ezekiel 18: 23, as follows: ***“Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares YHVH Elohim, ‘rather than that he should turn from his ways and live?’***

Chapter 18: Sabbath rest.

The first chapter of the Scriptures records the creation of the material universe. Starting in verse 2 of the second chapter we read about the beginning of Elohim's spiritual creation. After creating the heavens and the earth, Elohim created the Sabbath by resting from His work of physical creation. The Scriptures do not say anything about the Sabbath for quite some time. There is silence on the subject throughout the entire age of the patriarchs.

Abraham was a pivotal figure, being the last of the patriarchs and also the ancestor of the nation of Israel. The book of Genesis condenses the 2,000 year patriarchal age into the first 11 chapters. At that point the story slows down and goes into great detail starting with the life of Abraham, emphasizing the importance of him and his descendants. Genesis 26: 5 contains the landmark statement about Abraham and his faith, as follows: ***"Because Abraham obeyed me and kept My charge, My commandments, My statutes and My laws."*** What laws did he keep? The Scriptures do not say. However, isn't it remarkable that this is precisely the way in which obedience to the covenant made at Mount Sinai is expressed in Deuteronomy 11: 1¹²? The question is how Abraham got to know Elohim's Law.

A close comparisons of Genesis 26: 5 and Deuteronomy 11: 1 reveals the important difference in wording, namely that ***'Abraham obeyed Me*** (the commentary in the NASB against the word obeyed reads: *'hearkened to My voice'...*) This tells us that Elohim orally taught Abraham His commandments. Could the Sabbath have been one of the commandments that Elohim taught Abraham? Rav Yaa'cov shows in James 2: 23 that Abraham ***'was called the friend of Elohim.'*** In John 15: 14 Yahshua defines those who obey His commandments as His friends. In verse 15 of John 15, Yahshua said that He keeps His friends informed of what He is doing. Similarly in Genesis 18: 17 Elohim asks: ***"Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do?"*** Even though this statement is specifically about Elohim's intentions regarding Sodom and Gomorrah, it shows the same kind of relationship. Similar to the way in which a man confides in his friend, so does Elohim. It is therefore only logical that Elohim also revealed the Sabbath to His friend Abraham, as He did many years later to Abraham's descendants the Israelites. If Abraham as a friend of Elohim knew about the Sabbath, he would also have kept it set-apart.

Soon after Israel's departure from Egypt Elohim started providing them with manna as their daily bread. Elohim used the manna to emphasize the weekly Sabbath as a test commandment, to determine if Israel would obey Him or not. Elohim told them in Exodus 16: 15 – 26 to gather bread from heaven on a daily basis. He Commanded them to gather twice as much on the sixth day, as none would be provided on the seventh day Sabbath. We see from verse 27 of Exodus 16, ***'And it came about on the seventh day that some of the people went out to gather, but they found none.'*** Elohim then stressed in verse 29, saying: ***"See, YHVH has given you the Sabbath; therefore He gives you bread for two days on the sixth day. Remain every man in his place; let no man go out of his place on the seventh day."*** The prohibition against collecting manna outside your abode means the same for us today: we should not go out of our homes to procure food needed for the Sabbath. Such provisions should be purchased on Friday the preparation day for the Sabbath. Even though some interpret verse 29 above to say that we should remain in our homes on the Sabbath day: the prohibition is only about acquiring food and provisions, and not to do any work - otherwise, how could one attend a *'holy convocation'* including the weekly Sabbath as also commanded in Leviticus 23: 2 & 3, without leaving *'his place'*?

Next we arrive at the foot of Mount Sinai, where the command to rest on the seventh day was formalized as one of the Ten Commandments, written by the finger of Elohim on two tablets of

¹² Deuteronomy 11: 1, ***"You shall therefore love YHVH your Elohim, and always keep His charge, His statutes, His ordinances, and His commandments."***

stone as recorded in Genesis 20; 8 – 11. Note that the Sabbath command was enjoined upon the entire household, including visitors, servants and animals. The Sabbath directed the people to Elohim as Creator and reminded them of His deliverance from bondage in Egypt. The Ten Commandments are given in both Exodus 20 and Deuteronomy 5. By comparing the texts in both passages, we notice that it is different. Was all the information from both these accounts written on the two tablets of stone? If so, either the tablets were huge, or the writing was very small, but, it is more likely that Elohim wrote only the core commandments and spoke the rest of the information. Why is this important? Simply because today in this age, Elohim is calling individuals, not whole families, whereas at the time of ancient Israel, the covenant was directed at the whole nation. If we conclude that the actual commandment was only the basic command to keep the Sabbath holy (set-apart) by refraining from work, we can classify the extension of the command to the entire household as a temporal administrative ruling that does not apply in the same manner to the ecclesia of called out (individual) believers, since salvation is an individual matter based on Elohim's calling, as per John 6: 44. As such, the core commandment applies only to the called out individuals and not the whole household. Therefore, believers should never force the Sabbath on his/her adult family members.

The Sabbath is essentially a sign between Elohim and His people. In Exodus 31, the Sabbath command is recorded in the midst of Elohim's instructions for building the tabernacle. Even though the construction of the Tabernacle was of the highest importance, it was not permitted to supersede the Sabbath ordained by Elohim. Note in Exodus 31: 13 that the Sabbath(s) is described as a 'sign' between Elohim and His people. Elohim emphasized the same two lessons as in the two accounts of the Decalogue: to remind them of YHVH who sanctified them (verse 13) and to point back to Elohim as Creator of the heavens and the earth (verse 17). The Sabbath was more than a day of rest; its observance by Israel was a constantly recurring acknowledgment of Elohim as the Creator of the universe. It would be an open denial of Elohim for an Israelite to desecrate the Sabbath, even in the construction of the Tabernacle. In regard to the Sabbath as *'a perpetual covenant'*, the weekly hallowing (or setting-apart) of the Sabbath by the nation of Israel, was a proclamation of belief in Elohim and obedience to His law, affecting an ongoing relationship with Elohim.

At this point it is essential that we put the weekly Sabbath aside for a moment and consider another 'rest' introduced to Israel in Deuteronomy 3: 20, in this way: ***'Until YHVH gives rest to your fellow countrymen as to you, and they also possess the land which YHVH your Elohim will give them beyond the Jordan. Then you may return every man to his possession which I have given you.'*** Deuteronomy 12: 9 & 10 identifies this as rest from the Israelites' enemies in the Promised Land across the Jordan. The same promise is repeated in Deuteronomy 25: 17 – 19, where the rest is understood as relief from the weariness and fatigue of Israel's battles against their enemies. All those in the first generation that left Egypt were denied access to the Promised Land except Caleb and Joshua. But the next generation crossed the Jordan River and entered the Promised Land under Joshua's leadership. In Joshua 1: 13 – 15, Joshua reminds the Israelites about the rest that Moses had promised them. Near the end of the book of Joshua, we read a summary of the fulfillment of that promise in Joshua 21: 43 – 45, as follows: ***'So YHVH gave Israel all the land which He had sworn to give to their forefathers and they possessed it and lived in it. (44) And YHVH gave them rest on every side, according to all that He had sworn to their fathers, and no one of all their enemies stood before them; YHVH gave all their enemies into their hand. (45) Not one of the good promises which YHVH had made to the house of Israel failed; all come to pass.'***

We continue to the time of David and read from Psalm 94: 12 & 13 where David promises rest (relief from adversity) to those who receive instruction from Elohim's Torah. The context anticipates a time when the wicked are dealt with and justice prevails. Psalm 95, recognized as the Sabbath psalm, explains that the Israelites of the first generation out of Egypt failed to enter Elohim's rest because of the hardness of their hearts in verses 6 – 11. These verses are illustrated in the Renewed

Covenant book of Hebrews. The Prophet Isaiah also speaks of the millennial period of universal rest as including freedom from sorrow, fear and bondage in Isaiah 11: 10 and 14: 3 & 7, as follows: (11: 10) ***'Then it will come about in that day that the nations will resort to the root of Jesse, Who will stand as a signal for the peoples; and His resting place will be glorious.*** (14: 3) ***'And it will be in that day when YHWH gives you rest from your pain and turmoil and harsh service in which you have been enslaved. (7) The whole earth is at rest and is quiet; they break forth into shouts of joy.'***

Finally we come to the Renewed Covenant, where Yahshua Messiah makes a powerful statement about rest in Matthew 11: 28, saying: ***"Come to Me, all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest."*** His words would have fallen on eager ears thanks to the religious burdens imposed by the religious leaders of His day. The deeper meaning of His promise is release from bondage of sin in John 8: 31 – 36, in this way: ***'Yahshua therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; (32) and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free."*** (33) ***They answered Him, "We are Abraham's offspring, and have never been enslaved to anyone; how is it that You say, 'You shall become free'?"*** (34) ***Yahshua answered them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who commits sin is the slave of sin. (35) And the slave does not remain in the house forever; the son does remain forever. (36) If therefore the Son shall make you free, you shall be free indeed."*** A second witness comes from Hebrews 2: 14 – 16, as follows: ***'Since then the children share in flesh and blood, He Himself likewise also partook of the same, that through death He might render powerless him who had the power of death, that is, the devil; (15) and might deliver those who through fear of death were subject to slavery all their lives. (16) For assuredly He does not give help to angels, but He gives help to the descendants of Abraham.'***

Even so, we are still not completely free from sin, as witnessed in 1st John 1: 8, in this way: ***'If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us.'*** Therefore the chronicle of rest must of necessity continue. This brings us to the book of Hebrews, where all the basic points of the chronicle of rest are tied together. The faithfulness of Moses and Messiah is spoken about in the first six verses of Hebrews 3. Starting in verse 7, Psalm 95 is quoted to record the failure of the first generation of Israel as a lesson to Elohim's people today. Unbelief was the main cause of ancient Israel's failure to enter the rest promised to them in verse 19 (of Hebrews 3).

Hebrews 4 opens with an admonition to faith and obedience as a prerequisite to the rest that is still available to Elohim's people. No one has yet entered that rest, not because Elohim did not have it ready; in fact, it was finished from the foundation of the world (verse 3). That Elohim rested on the seventh day from all His works is shown in verse 4. David (in Psalm 95) spoke of a promise of rest long after Joshua had led the second generation of Israelites into the Promised Land. This shows that the rest fulfilled at the time of Joshua was only a type of a greater rest to come (verses 6 – 8). This gets us to the controversial statement in verse 9, namely: ***'There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of Elohim.'*** The Greek word translated 'rest' in every other passage throughout Hebrews 3 & 4 is '*katapausis*'. The word 'rest' in Hebrews 4: 9 is '*sabbatismos*'. In fact this is the one and only Renewed Covenant occurrence of the word '*sabbatismos*'. Its meaning is fundamental to understanding this pivotal verse, which is the conclusion of everything previously said about 'rest' beginning in Hebrews 3: 7.

Because '*sabbatismos*' is found nowhere else in the Scriptures, some authorities think the author made up the word. However, the author of Hebrews affirms in Hebrews 4: 3 – 11 through the joining of quotations from Genesis 2: 2 and Psalm 95: 7 that the promised 'Sabbath rest' still anticipates a complete realization ***'for the people of Elohim'*** in the end time which had been inaugurated with the appearance of Messiah (Hebrews 1: 1 – 3). The experience of 'Sabbath rest' points to a present 'rest' (*katapausis*) reality in which those ***'who have believed are entering'*** (Hebrews 4: 3) and it points to the future 'rest' reality (Hebrews 4: 11). Physical Sabbath-keeping on the part of the Renewed

Covenant believer as affirmed by 'Sabbath rest' symbolizes a cessation from 'works' (Hebrews 4: 10) in commemoration of Elohim's rest at creation and manifests faith in the salvation provided by Yahshua. Hebrews 4: 3 – 11 affirms that physical 'Sabbath rest' (*'sabbatismos'*) is the weekly outward manifestation of the inner experience of spiritual rest (*'katapausis'*) in which the final rest is experienced already today (Hebrews 4: 7). Thus 'Sabbath rest' combines in itself creation-commemoration, salvation-experience, and end-time-anticipation as the community of called out believers moves toward the final consummation of total restoration and rest. The word *'Sabbatismos'* therefore means keeping the seventh day Sabbath, and based on that conclusion, Hebrews 4: 9 stresses the necessity of continuing to keep the Sabbath in Renewed Covenant times, even though the day also embodies all that is meant in the Tanach.

This is a credible explanation, given that the book of Hebrews is addressed to (Nazarene) Jews who also believed in the salvation of YHVH, namely Yahshua. The Sabbath and circumcision have long been considered two of the cardinal tenets of Judaism, identifying the Jews as the people of Elohim. The Sabbath, which even in the Tanach was to be a delight (Isaiah 58: 13 & 14), had become a burden. What could be more appropriate to the book of Hebrews than the elevation of the Sabbath to its full meaning and intent in the plan of Elohim? So the Sabbath retains its original meaning, identifying Elohim's sanctified people and pointing back to Elohim as Creator. Added to that is the Renewed Covenant meaning of the rest through Messiah, fulfilled in type by the rest given Israel during Joshua's time (Hebrews 4: 8). This spiritual rest begins now in this lifetime and reaches its completion in the resurrection to eternal life at Messiah's return (Revelation 20: 6). In addition His return also signals the beginning of the millennial rest prophesied in the Tanach.

The book of Hebrews weaves the three themes of rest together: the rest from enemies promised Israel, the weekly Sabbath rest and the spiritual rest through Messiah. The conclusion is that Sabbath keeping is still necessary for the people of Elohim as the Renewed Covenant ecclesia of called out believers. We must all labor to enter the spiritual rest and continue to keep the weekly Sabbath because of what it pictures in Elohim's master plan, as affirmed in Hebrews 4: 10. The Inescapable conclusion is that observance of the weekly Sabbath remains a vital part of the Renewed Covenant worship of Elohim. This is totally in agreement with what Yahshua said in Matthew 5: 18, namely that not one jot or tittle of the law would pass away until all is fulfilled (or has completely filled its purpose). We know that at this time animal sacrifices in respect of sin have been fulfilled in Messiah becoming the sacrifice for sin.

If the Sabbath were not in effect today, we would logically expect to find numerous Renewed Covenant scriptures clearly stating that. As we have seen from this discussion, and confirmed in Hebrews 4: 9, ***"There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of Elohim."*** Observance of the seventh day Sabbath as a command of Elohim is therefore a fundamental teaching of both the Tanach and the Renewed Covenant.

Chapter 19: The Master Potter's work.

YHVH our Elohim inspired Isaiah the prophet to liken Him unto a Potter and us as the clay which He forms into flawless pottery, in Isaiah 64: 8, as follows: 'But now, O YHVH, Thou art our father, we are the clay, and Thou our potter; and all of us are the work of Thy hand.' Pottery is one of the oldest crafts known to mankind and Archaeologists often use fragments of pottery to date and identify ancient civilizations and their cultures. The point is, that over the past six-thousand years mankind learned to make a great variety of vessels from clay.

The potter's way of gathering clay and shaping it reminds us of the ways in which YHVH our Elohim works with each one of us. As a clay vessel is the handiwork of a potter, so are we Elohim's handiwork. Observe Elohim's words when He created mankind in Genesis 1: 26, saying: "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness." We learn further from Genesis 2: 7, 'Then YHVH Elohim formed man of the dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.' Elihu, Job's friend understood where mankind originated from and told Job in Job 33: 6, "Behold, I belong to Elohim like you; I too have been formed out of clay."

In the same way that YHVH inspired Isaiah to talk about Him as a potter, so did Jeremiah record Elohim's words, telling him to visit a potter's house, to see how the potter goes to work. When the potter identifies a flaw in the vessel on which he is working, he simply reshapes the malleable clay into a new vessel, better suited to his liking and purpose. YHVH compared the potter's decision to reshape the defective vessel to His work with the house of Israel (meaning us as opposed to the house of Judah), as we read from Jeremiah 18: 6, saying: "Can I not, O house of Israel, deal with you as this potter does?" declares YHVH. "Behold, like the clay in the potter's hand, so are you in My hand, O house of Israel."

Rav Shaul also used the analogy when he wrote to the Romans in chapter 9: 20 & 21, saying: 'On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to Elohim? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? (21) Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use, and another for common use?' What is a vessel of honor? To answer this question we need to visit a pottery in order to buy a vessel. The potter will enquire of you, 'Do you want to carry it to the fountain? Then it is necessary to carry a vessel of honor, since a vessel of honor will give out pure water to quench the thirst of a stranger and weary traveler.' The vessel of honor is beautifully shaped, holds about five gallons of water and has two handles to make carrying and handling easier. But what is a vessel of dishonor? Even though a vessel of dishonor might look much like a vessel of honor, it is not of the same nature. You will not be able to tell the difference, but the potter will be able to explain the difference between a vessel of honor and one of dishonor. The vessel of dishonor will remain at home and all the stale water in the vessel of honor will be emptied in it. In fact it receives much and gives out little. We read about such vessels of honor and dishonor in 2 Timothy 2: 20 & 21, in this way: 'Now in a large house there are not only gold and silver vessels, but also vessels of wood and earthenware, and some to honor and some to dishonor. (21) Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from these things, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified, useful to the Master, prepared for every good work.' As a potter works with clay, Elohim works with the house of Israel and more specifically with the remnant from these lost ten tribes, as well as a number of Gentiles for His specific purpose. Ultimately the potter is the one who determines the use of the clay that he collected. We read further about a clean vessel in Isaiah 66: 20, as follows: "Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain (or wave sheaf) offering to YHVH, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules, and on camels to My holy mountain Jerusalem," says YHVH, "Just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of YHVH." Tell a potter that you are returning to your own country and desire to take home a vessel to show your friends. Ask him to choose a vessel for you, and you can be sure that he will choose a vessel for which he will never be ashamed, and as his

chosen vessel it will be one showing his skillful workmanship. We read about such a vessel in Acts 9: 15, in this way: 'But YHWH said to him, "Go for he is a chosen instrument (the footnote in the NASB reads: Or, vessel) of Mine, to bear My name before the Gentiles and kings and the sons of Israel.'"

What are the lessons that we can learn from this frequently used Scriptural analogy? Pottery the craft of a potter, takes enormous patience because of its many time consuming steps. Let's therefore consider each of these steps in the making of pottery:

- To start with the potter selects the type of clay to use.
- Then he removes the impurities from the clay after which he allows it to age, weather and ferment until it is ready to use.
- When the clay is ready to be worked with, the potter kneads and pummels the clay to remove lumps and air bubbles to make it pliable.
- Next he places the clay in the center of the wheel so the resulting vessel is not unshaped unevenly.
- Then he forms the clay with the aid of water, into a vessel.
- After which he fires the vessel to a permanently set and hardened form.
- If, at this point he deems it necessary, he fires it again if it is not yet usable.
- Then he judges the vessel's final readiness.

Now let's go over these steps again, comparing how Elohim as the Master Potter forms us in the same way a potter works with clay: Elohim has a master plan in mind, when He selects whom He calls as Yahshua said in John 6: 44, as follows: "No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." If those whom YHWH calls, answer the call, He can make them into useful vessels. The potter's first step is to choose the clay that he wants to use. When he digs up his clay, he needs to first get rid of any accumulated dirt. Similar with the potter's clay, we have debris from our past that needs to be removed before we can become useful to Elohim. Because of our past contamination, we need a great deal of preparation. It is as David wrote in Psalm 51: 2, saying: 'Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin.' That is exactly why Messiah's sacrifice is so important - we must fully understand that we need cleansing by His blood.

However that is only the beginning. When the clay is first taken from the clay pit, it is too fresh and not ready for use. The clay crystals locked in the bundles make the clay inflexible and weathering it, by exposing it to rain and frost through a winter, breaks up the clay and improves it. Similarly the manipulation of the clay improves its usefulness and pliability. In exactly the same way, our spiritual journey begins with major imperfections when Elohim calls us out of the world, some weathering have to occur as we begin to understand Elohim's Word and His ways and start applying the knowledge that He reveals to us. As soon as the potter determines the clay to be ready, he starts working by wedging (kneading and pummeling) the clay to make it even more pliable and useful. Wedging ensures the absence of lumps and air cavities. The air cavities in the clay are like vanity in people. Such vanity has to be removed to ensure a useful vessel. The secret is that properly wedged clay responds well and dependably to the potter's finger contact. According to Proverbs 14: 12, 'There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.' Elohim, the Master Potter humbles us to make us ready for His purpose.

Next come the centering of the clay; this is the process that ensures that the clay is rotating in the center of the potter's wheel, which is vital to guarantee a good end result. Unevenly centered clay

causes poor and uneven thickness, weak spots and unstable shapes. The closer we are to the center of Elohim's way of life, the more useful we will become to our Creator.

After wedging and centering, the potter adds water to lubricate the clay as he begins to shape it with his hands. The Set-apart Spirit is likened in the Scriptures to water, as we read from John 7: 37 – 39, in this way: 'Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Yahshua stood and cried out, saying, "If any man is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. (38) He who believes in Me, as the Scriptures said, 'From his innermost being shall flow rivers of living water.'" (39) But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet given, because Yahshua was not yet glorified.' As witnessed in Romans 8: 14, Elohim shapes us through His Spirit, molding His character in us, as follows: 'For all who are being led by the Spirit of Elohim, these are sons of Elohim.' A great deal of preparation and labor goes into a vessel, before the potter judges the shape of the vessel and even at that point, he is not finished yet.

At this point in time the vessel is ready to face the test of fire. However, at the firing process, the potter needs to know the clay and how much fire it can take. By firing the raw vessel, the potter ensures that the carbon present in the clay is burnt and glazing is facilitated. Without the cleaning burn, impurities would remain trapped in the vessel. We know that fire in the Scriptures picture trials, as we read fittingly from 1st Peter 1: 6 & 7, in this way: "In this you greatly rejoice, even though now for a little while, if necessary, you have been disqualified by various trials, (7) that the proof of your faith, being more precious than gold which is perishable, even though tested by fire, may be found to result in praise and glory and honor at the revelation of Yahshua Messiah.'

The potter does not leave the fire while the vessels are in the kiln, as he must ensure that he uses just the right temperature to bake the pottery. Similarly we are assured that Elohim will not leave us or forsake us, as we read from Hebrews 13: 5 & 6, as follows: 'Let your character be free from the love of money, being content with what you have; for He Himself has said, "I WILL NEVER DESERT YOU, NOR WILL I EVER FORSAKE YOU," (6) so that we confidently say, "YHVH IS MY HELPER, I WILL NOT BE AFRAID. WHAT SHALL MAN DO TO ME?" We are also assured that YHVH will not let our trials overwhelm us as we read from 1st Corinthians 10: 13, in this way: 'No temptation has overtaken you but such as is common to man; and Elohim is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will provide the way of escape also, that you may be able to endure it.'

A potter considers a vessel as an investment, having worked hard to get it to the way he wants it. We know for certain that Elohim similarly cares for us, His spiritual vessels in the making, as we read from 1st Peter 5: 6 & 7, as follows: 'Humble yourselves, therefore, under the mighty hand of Elohim, that He may exalt you at the proper time, (7) casting all your anxiety upon Him, because He cares for you.'

In order to make a vessel, envisioned in the mind's eye, the potter needs to have a complete understanding of the material and what will happen to such material during the firing process. Even though believers make mistakes through weakness, we should learn from such mistakes and overcome them in the future. Rav Yochanan tells us that our trials are part and parcel of our perfecting process, in James 1: 2 – 4, in this way: 'Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, (3) knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (4) And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing.' The point is that we need considerable patience to ensure the very best results.

After the potter fires his pottery several times, he is ready to judge the end result. Did the vessel turn out the way he wanted it to be? Is it even, or does it sag in places? Did it develop cracks or holes in the process? Does the vessel reflect the skills and attributes of the potter? As a potter knows each vessel, Elohim knows His workmanship, as is confirmed in 2nd Timothy 2: 19, as follows:

‘Nevertheless, the firm foundation of Elohim stands, having this seal, “YHVH knows those who are His,” and “Let everyone who names the name of YHVH abstain from wickedness.” The Nazarene Believer is Elohim’s vessel, designed for service, reflecting the attributes of the Master Potter, as we read from 2nd Corinthians 4: 6 & 7, in this way: ‘For Elohim, who said, “Light shall shine out of darkness,” is the One who has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of Elohim in the face of Messiah. (7) But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the surpassing greatness of the power may be of Elohim and not from ourselves.’

The potter works carefully and long to produce his vessels and his vessels represent him; they bear his name. In the same way, Elohim continues to work with us, His human vessels. He is not ashamed of us; He knows how many firings we have gone through to come this far. How many more firings will we have to go through before our physical life ends or Messiah returns? The Master Potter knows and does not want to lose any of His vessels, as witnessed in Matthew 18: 14, as follows: “Thus it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones perish.” We read further from Ephesians 2: 10, ‘For we are His workmanship, created in Messiah Yahshua for good works, which Elohim prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.’

Scriptures speak of those who will be with Messiah, at His return, as witnessed in Revelation 17: 14, in this way: “These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome them, because He is Master of masters and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.’ They have passed through the firings successfully; they have proven themselves and will be vessels of honor in Elohim’s eternal Kingdom.

Chapter 20: Our Hope of Glory.

Even though there are a lot of negative things to be said about the Olympic Games, I want to focus our attention on the positive things concerning such events. The Olympic Games represent a striving for excellence in athletic achievement, and Rav Shaul used these very events to illustrate another great contest, which each and every one of us called out of the world, are involved in.

We need to have the same spirit of determination and perseverance shown by most of the athletes who took part in the recent Olympic Games held in London England this year. Although the Games are past and the details grow dim in our memories, individuals and their stories will illuminate our minds. As a city hosting the Olympics, London appeared a vibrant city bursting with excitement and life. The symbols of its majestic history, such as Big Ben, Westminster Abby and Buckingham Palace all appeared graceful against a 21st century background of impressive wealth and trendiness. However, like in most modern cities, the appearance of refinement and class is a façade. If you look beyond the fancy Olympic lights, by taking a ten-minute trip to one of London's more ethnic regions, or taking a walk in the city streets late at night, it soon becomes obvious that the city is not what it seems. Yes, London is a symbol; but a symbol of a dying empire, soon to be replaced by Elohim's everlasting empire!

However, the fantastic achievements in individual and team events during the Olympics inspire us to strive for excellence in all that we do. It is not only those of us who watched some of the Olympic events who find such inspiration in the Games. Rav Shaul used the challenges faced by Olympic athletes of his day, as a model for spiritual endeavors. In 55 CE Rav Shaul wrote to the ecclesia (of called out believers) at Corinth, 100 miles east of Olympia, comparing the struggle we as believers in Messiah experience, to that of a well-trained athlete competing for a prize, saying in 1st Corinthians 9: 24 & 25: 'Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives a prize? Run in such a way that you may win. (25) And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable.'

The ancient Olympians raced for the glory of Zeus to win a perishable crown made from olive branches, but we as believers in Messiah run a race to the esteem and glory of Elohim for an imperishable crown, the gift of eternal life! Rav Shaul was not telling the Corinthian believers that they could earn salvation, but that they should run the race of life with all their heart, and with all their might for the glory of Elohim, just as the Olympic athletes of that day gave their all to win for the glory of Zeus. Once we are called out of the world by YHVH our Elohim, and we accept the call by being immersed into Yahshua's saving name, there is no turning back. We need to only look ahead, pressing toward the goal, living according to the high calling of a Nazarene believer in Messiah.

Rav Shaul extended a challenge to his fellow believers in Messiah by calling their attention to the Olympic spirit of dedication to excel and the determination to endure despite adversity. He spoke to these believers at Corinth in the terminology of the Greek classical Games, hoping they would understand just as believers today should understand: When it comes to following the Nazarene believers' way of life, it must be through Messiah, and it comes only with great dedication. Unlike the Olympics of today, the Games during Rav Shaul's time were an integral part of the religion of many of the Corinthian Greeks to whom he preached the gospel of the Kingdom of Elohim. Rav Shaul fully understood the athletes' religious dedication to honor the gods as well as the people's fervent dedication to the pagan religious meaning of the Games. His reason for using athletic terms in His message becomes clearer when we understand the extent to which the Greek world was socially and religiously trapped in the observance of these competitions.

In Rav Shaul's day, athletes were eager to compete in the classical games – not only in the Olympics, but the Pythian, Isthmian and Nemean games. Even though formal games took place in both Greece and Rome, by the mid-sixth century BCE these four games had become the most famous. Fiercely

competitive athletes entered as many games on the circuit as possible to increase their chances of winning and bringing honor to the gods they worshipped. The Isthmian Games took place on the narrow passage of land connecting Corinth to the rest of Greece (the Isthmus), in the first and third years of each Olympiad (a period of four years from one Olympic Game to another) from 523 BCE. These events honored Poseidon, the Greek god of the sea, and offered a wreath made from pine branches. The Pythian Games occurred every other year beginning in the same year at Delphi in honor of Apollo, the Greek god of medicine, music, prophecy and poetry, offering winners wreaths of laurel branches. This award gave rise to the English saying: 'to rest on one's laurels.' The Nemean Games were held at Argolis, beginning in 516 BCE in honor of Nemean Zeus, offering the victor a wreath made from wild celery.

With all these games in which to participate, ancient athletes trained throughout the year to remain in top condition, hoping to qualify for all the competitions during the four year period. They expended much effort to excel in their specialties; running, boxing, wrestling, discus throwing and the many other sports featured at the Olympics. Interestingly enough the English word agony comes from the Greek word used for an athletic contest, namely: 'agon'. Athletes participating in the games agonized in their efforts to win the winner's award.

Rav Shaul wrote his first epistle to the Corinthians during the Spring of 55 CE, around the time the Isthmian Games occurred. His reference to athletes in these games echoed well with the people of Corinth; in fact they were inspired as we are by the examples of excellent Olympic performers. The believers to whom Rav Shaul preached knew exactly what he meant when he wrote the words in 1st Corinthians 9: 26 & 27, saying: 'Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; (27) but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.' Rav Shaul understood the tremendous discipline and training required of a strong athlete who was able to qualify in his event and go on to win the championship.

As mentioned before, Rav Shaul was definitely not telling people that they can earn salvation, but he told them they can be disqualified and miss-out on salvation, if they do not put in every effort. In fact Rav Shaul himself was concerned that he might become disqualified due to a lack of diligence in his service to Elohim. The point is: No one can earn salvation, but the Word of Elohim tells us what is expected of those who desire to be in the Kingdom of Elohim. Rav Shaul instructed his fellow teacher, Timothy in 2nd Timothy 2: 5, saying: 'And also if anyone competes as an athlete, he does not win the prize unless he competes according to the rules.'

Olympic athletes swore before Zeus that they would follow the rules of the Games. As believers we are told by Yahshua in Matthew 4: 4, "It is written, 'MAN SHALL NOT LIVE ON BREAD ALONE, BUT ON EVERY WORD THAT PROCEEDS OUT OF THE MOUTH OF ELOHIM.'" In other words we are to live by the rules established for us by Elohim, our Creator. In fact Messiah had strong words regarding what He expects from believers in Him. Addressing the ecclesia at Laodicea in Revelation 3: 15 & 16, He said: 'I know your deeds, that you are neither cold or hot; I would that you were cold or hot. (16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth.' Yahshua essentially warned the no victor's award will be given to lukewarm believers! Instead the gift of eternal life will go to the overcomer, as He promised in Revelation 2: 26, saying: 'And he who overcomes, and he who keeps my deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS.' Yes, the one who prevails and is victorious, through the strength of Messiah, will receive a priceless reward, as He said in Revelation 21: 7, in this way: "He who overcomes shall inherit these things, and I will be his Elohim and he will be My son."

Our race as believers in Messiah has its own course of obstacles, that presents daily challenges of Olympian magnitude. What constitutes the believers obstacle course? Our race is a contest of the mind involving many tests of faith. We need to be selfless and must persevere above all else. In

addition to providing for the physical, mental and emotional needs of our families, we need also provide for the spiritual needs of both our families and those of the ecclesia of Elohim. Especially when after we have studied for a number of years under a teacher who has gone through the discipleship program followed by Messiah; and we qualify to start teaching disciples of our own. This is in fact what Yahshua told His disciples in Matthew 24: 44 – 46, saying: “For this reason you be ready too; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour when you do not think He will. (45) Who then is the faithful and sensible slave whom his master put in charge of his household to give them their food at the proper time (talking about teaching Elohim’s household every Sabbath and at the times of Elohim’s annual Feast Days)? (46) Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes.”

Sometimes a believer in Messiah is confronted with a seemingly insurmountable problem. This could be the most difficult time a believer will face in his or her spiritual race. Many of us have seen circumstances arise in the lives of others that threatened to destroy them and their families. It seems we all must face our own personal trials and tests. Such an event happened many years ago at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, Germany when the Games were tragically interrupted by the horrible spectacle of terrorists who killed eleven Israeli athletes. This appalling act of violence almost ended the games that year, but it was finally decided that it should go on.

It was during that same year that one of the most amazing sagas in modern Olympics history occurred. The Olympic record-winner of the 5,000 meter race was a 23-year old athlete from Finland. He was their best hope against a strong field of contenders in the 10,000 meter race. However, whilst running that particular race, on the 12th lap of the race a horrified gasp went up from the crowd of onlookers. The Finn became entangled in a group of runners and had fallen flat on his back inside the track. At that point his cause to win the race became utterly hopeless. However, this young athlete decided that his race was not over. He lifted his tall frame from the ground and started running again. Instead of panicking he slowly worked his way back to the front runners, and lap after lap, he gained both ground and energy.

The announcer made remarks about this athlete’s courage and effort, but the determined athlete had something more in mind than mere effort. He came to that specific Olympics to win, and he determined to do so whatever happens. As he slowly narrowed the gap between himself and the other front runners, the announcer again gave him credit for his gallant effort. Near the end of the race, to the surprise of most, this athlete caught up with the pack. Suddenly the announcer began to take note of the Finn’s chances in the race. Then, to the astonishment of all, he took full command of the race, shaking off the other runners to finally win the race by as much as eight yards. In the end this athlete did not only win the race but set a new world record!

The most inspirational aspect of how this athlete from Finland won the race is that he did not give up in the sudden crises which arose. He did not panic when it seemed all was lost, but kept his mind on the goal and ran with all his might. In fact this was such a momentous occasion that it was included in a Movie about the events that took place at that most unforgettable Olympics of 1972. That same strategy was what Rav Shaul was trying to convey to the Corinthians.

Since all of us called out of the world are human beings, most of us have fallen down again and again, only to rise again with the strength to overcome failure. It is as we read from Proverbs 24: 16, ‘For a righteous man falls seven times and rises again, but the wicked stumble in time of calamity.’ How can a true believer go on in spite of seemingly hopeless odds? We need to remember that true believers can finish the race set before us, only through Yahshua Messiah. The point is that we should learn to rely fully on the strength of our Savior during times of crises, as Rav Shaul tells us in Philippians 4: 13, as follows: “I can do all things through Him (Yahshua) who strengthens me.”

A believer's race is an exciting challenge, and it does bring its reward. Notice Rav Yaa'cov's hopeful words in James 1: 12, saying: "Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Master has promised to those who love Him." The reward of the Believer's race is a crown of life! Rav Yochanan makes clear the kind of life believers have been promised in 1st John 2: 25, as follows: 'And this is the promise which He Himself made to us: eternal life.' Yes, everlasting life is the crown promised to the believer who finally makes it. It is not a perishable crown of olive or pine branches or laurel or wild celery; it is the imperishable crown of eternal life, a crown that does not wither or die. Rav Kepha describes this reward in 1st Peter 5: 4, in this way: 'And when the Chief Sheppard appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory.'

The fervent desire to bring glory to Zeus, Apollo and Poseidon drove the ancient athletes to win crowns and wreaths. But the Living Messiah empowers the Believer to run the race to win, as witnessed by Rav Shaul in Colossians 1: 29, as follows: 'And for this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me.' The Greek word translated as 'striving' in this verse, means agonizing, competing and struggling.

An awe-inspiring transformation is promised to the called out Believer who runs the race well. We know that the time of this transformation will happen at Messiah's return, as Rav Shaul explained in 1st Corinthians 15: 51 – 54, in this way: 'Behold, I tell you a mystery: we shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, (52) in a moment in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet; for the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised imperishable, and we shall be changed. (53) For this perishable must put on the imperishable, and this mortal must put on immortality. (54) But when this perishable will have put on the imperishable, and this mortal will have put on immortality, then will come about the saying that is written, "DEATH IS SWALLOWED UP in victory."'

To the true Believer will go the ultimate victory and the glorious reward as described in Romans 2: 7, as follows: 'To those who by perseverance in doing good seek the glory and honor and immortality, eternal life.' Even though the true believers race is very difficult, the reward is great. The most important race in a disciple's training is to learn to put Elohim first in our lives, knowing He is in charge and will ensure our success, as Rav Shaul assures us in Philippians 1: 6, in this way: 'For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Messiah Yahshua.' Baruch HaShem YHVH.

Chapter 21: How to overcome Depression?

When sometimes we return to our normal environment after a period of rest and revitalization, such as the Feast of Tabernacles, we get a little depressed when we have to go back to work in society. Depression is a fairly widespread condition, and knows no territorial or national boundaries. Doctors have encountered it so often in recent years that it has been labeled the common cold of psychological (or more correctly emotional) illness. In fact it is so prevalent throughout the western world, that it is estimated that twelve and a half percent of the people in the USA have been treated with Prozac – a popular anti-depressant.

Depression is a very complex affliction and even the professionals do not fully understand it. For some people, depression is caused by psychological and social factors, including genetic transmission; personality characteristics, early life experiences such as childhood loss, or stressful life events. For others depression is caused by chemical imbalances and should be treated with medication. Life's major changes may cause episodes of depression: the transition from teenage to adulthood, the approach of menopause, retirement, divorce, death of a parent, spouse or child. The loss of something of great importance is a major reason for depression and most professional counselors will agree that depression is our response to the painful circumstances in life. Anger may be either the cause or a symptom of depression. Aggression and resentment are psychological threats to those who are gloomy and resentful. Holding a grudge is exceptionally harmful. Left over anger may adversely affect the chemical balance of the brain, causing impaired emotional functioning.

The Scriptures help sufferers from depression brought on by anger, one example being the prophet Jonah; when he grew angry at his circumstances, as we read from Jonah 4: 1, ***'But it greatly displeased Jonah, and he became angry.'*** Later we see that he was even more depressed and wanted to die, saying in verse 8 of Jonah 4, ***"Death is better to me than life."*** Nevertheless, the Scriptures advise us to put away anger, in Ephesians 4: 26 & 27, as follows: ***'Be angry, and yet DO NOT SIN; do not let the sun go down on anger, (27) and do not give the devil an opportunity.'*** This is telling us not to allow anger to continue from one day to another, but to conquer it. This is the same advice YHWH gave Cain in Genesis 4: 5 - 7, when he got very angry when YHWH showed regard for Abel's offering of first fruits, but had no regard for his offering, in this way: ***'So Cain became very angry and his countenance fell. (6) Then YHWH said to Cain, "Why are you angry? And why has your countenance fallen? (7) If you do well, will not your countenance be lifted up? And if you do not do well, sin is crouching at the door; and its desire is for you, but you must master it."***

The Scriptures also gives us examples of people of Elohim trusting in Him to recover from depression, one being David where he said to YHWH in 2 Samuel 22: 29, ***"For Thou art my lamp, O YHWH; and YHWH illumines my darkness."*** David knew Elohim would be his help in darkness. Yahshua our Messiah promised us help when we are depressed in Matthew 11: 28, saying: ***"Come to me, all who are weary and heavy laden, and I will give you rest."*** The stresses of this world cause a lot of anxiety. Yahshua gave advice for the anxious in Matthew 6: 24, saying: ***"Therefore do not be anxious for tomorrow; for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own."*** We need not add to our stress by worrying about complications, we might have to face tomorrow and beyond – we should learn to live one day at a time.

Some have wrongly assumed that depression is always the result of sin, or a moral weakness or failing. Even though sin causes depression, it is not true that sin is behind all bouts of depression. The Scriptures describe the struggles of several people who suffered with depression, including David, Elijah and Job, despite the fact that they were faithful servants of Elohim. These men did not suffer predominantly because they were sinners. They suffered because they were human and were like us open to severe pressures and conditions to which most of us can relate.

Job became depressed after suffering many personal losses; firstly he lost his possessions, then he lost his children, after which he broke out in painful boils. Elijah grew depressed when he was rebuked while he was expecting a moment of victory; his hopes were crushed and he became sick at heart. David's depression, as related in some of the Psalms, stems from several causes, including the fact that Absalom his sons wanted to kill him to take over his reign. However, we see that all three these men recovered and went on with their lives, serving Elohim. No one should take a condemning approach towards someone because he/she is depressed. The sufferer often already feels disgusted with him/herself. He blames himself for whatever happened and perhaps thinks that he/she sinned. Passing judgment on someone who is already depressed will only add to his/her sorrow. When Elijah became fearful and depressed, he fled from the responsibilities given him by Elohim. Yet Elohim did not rebuke him, but spoke to him in a still small voice, encouraging him in 1st Kings 19.

Even so, like with these three men of Elohim, the events and circumstances happening in the world around us can influence us negatively, but we need not be controlled by them. We need to be ever mindful of Yahshua's words in the second part of John 16: 33, as follows: ***"In the world you have tribulation, but take courage; I have overcome the world."*** Yes, with faith in the salvation of YHVH, we can overcome the negative influences, that depress us in this world. The Scriptures show that depression can be induced by the spirit world. It shows Satan and his demons as having major unseen influences on human beings in Ephesians 6: 12, in this way: ***'For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the powers, against the world forces of darkness, against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places.'*** We see further from Ephesians 2: 1 & 2, how Satan goes about influencing our walk in life, as follows: ***'And you were dead in your trespasses and sins, (2) in which you formerly walked, according to the course of the world, according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience.'*** Satan as the prince of the power of the air continually transmits negative and destructive thoughts into the minds of people, which adds to the negative spiritual influences we have to resist. Rav Kepha warns us about this in 1st Peter 5: 8 – 9, saying: ***'Be of sober spirit, be on the alert. Your adversary, the devil, prowls about like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour. (9) But resist him, firm in your faith, knowing that the same experiences of suffering are being accomplished by your brethren who are in the world.'***

It is very difficult for us to understand why we have to go through various trials in our lives. But if we are familiar with the Scriptures, we will be mindful of what Rav Yaa'cov wrote in James 1: 2- 6, saying: ***'Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials. (3) Knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. (4) And let endurance have its perfect result, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. (5) But if any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of Elohim, who gives to all men generously and without reproach, and it will be given to him. (6) But let him ask in faith without any doubting, for the one who doubts is like the surf of the sea driven and tossed by the wind.'*** Yes, the trials that we experience in life are to help us to become perfect, so that we may actually be conformed to the image of Elohim – Yahshua our Messiah. However, even for believers it is difficult during times when we experience severe health problems or the loss of something or somebody dear to us to be joyful and upbeat about the situation at hand. I for one suffered from a severe skin condition known as psoriasis since February of this year. This also resulted in the swelling of my hands to about one and a half times their normal size. My hands were fairly painful and my entire body itched for months during which time I slept only a few hours per night, despite using various creams and pills prescribed by a Doctor, as well as praying fervently for help from Elohim. My condition was apparently caused by chemicals that we used when painting our bedroom recently. My skin must have absorbed the chemicals, which caused toxic effects which accumulated over years of using such chemicals and pesticides in and around the house.

People, who know me, are aware that I do not often get ill, despite living with diabetes from about 19 years of age. I am usually very upbeat about life and are used to be careful what I eat, without making too much of a fuss about being a diabetic, like some of the people who only contract it in later years. However, this latest bout of whatever I had, caused me to become a little depressed at times. This was exacerbated because my sister was diagnosed at about the same time with a form of bone cancer and my brother has been in and out of hospitals for many years. Forgetting examples in the Scriptures like Job, I even remarked to my wife, that I am beginning to think my siblings and I are on our way out. Yes, the suffering over the past six months started getting me down to the point where I became depressed. A depressed person's perspective changes, causing him/her to view life through a distorted lens; such a person often believes that his situation will never improve. But, I am glad to say that because I have been busy writing at least two sermons or Scripture Study Lessons per week for the past few months, my attitude improved. Because of dealing with among other, the subject of us having to conform to the image of Elohim, I realized the purpose of my recent experience and our quest to become more like our Master Yahshua; to overcome bad habits and character traits developed since childhood. (By the way my sister is also reported to be on the mend.)

This also reminded me again of a young lady named Alison who was raped here in Port Elizabeth a few years ago. Alison's car broke down in a remote area near a lonely road that runs between a game reserve and the sea in our city. She must have thumbed a lift to get back to the beachfront and was picked up by two men. They raped her then slashed her throat and left her for dead in the bushes next to the road. Somehow she got back to the road and eventually managed to flag down a motorist who picked her up and took her to hospital. After months she recuperated and in due course was able to identify her attackers, who are currently serving time in prison. Alison has since then fully recovered from her physical and physiological injuries, and started giving talks throughout South Africa, to encourage other people who suffered similar traumatic ordeals, helping them to cope. I remember her saying that even though she would not like to go through a similar experience again, this trial made her a much better person, and she can actually see Elohim's hand (she called Him G-d) in what happened to her. She has forgiven her attackers in her heart, but would not like to meet up with them again.

It is similar with a woman in childbirth; the pain and suffering our ladies go through during childbirth is unreal and not something easy for us men to understand. However, after giving birth and when they see their babies, they soon forget what they went through. We can all learn a lot from that; no wonder we read from 1st Timothy 2: 15, ***'But women shall be preserved through the bearing of children if they continue in faith and love and sanctity with self-restraint.'*** This is perhaps why our Jewish Brothers do not require their wives to go through the same amount of Torah study as they have to.

But, we need to realize that there is a major difference between being clinically depressed and feeling blue or sad. It involves severe symptoms and bio-chemical changes. Many minor episodes of depression are the result of disappointment. Hope fail to materialize and frustration results. When hope is dashed, discouragement can develop. When this occurs, it helps to think the situation through to determine the cause – this can restore a positive outlook. Some people's marginally depressed feelings become a way of life. Unfortunately such people are unable to sustain an optimistic perspective of life. The origins of such feelings may run deep – such a person may be modeling behavior he saw as a child in someone else. We as parents need to be aware that habitual harshness by us can drive our children to on-going gloominess. It is for this reason that Rav Shaul wrote in Colossians 3: 21, saying: ***'Fathers, do not exasperate your children, that they may not lose heart.'***

The good news despite this dreary picture is that the majority of people who suffer from depression can recover. Routine, but nevertheless important steps by anyone to avoid depression is to maintain an active productive lifestyle. But, more importantly we should seek help from YHVH our Elohim – the most powerful means for combatting depression. We see from Proverbs 18: 14 that depression can be debilitating, as follows: ***‘The spirit of a man can endure his sickness, but a broken spirit who can bear?’*** The Scriptures can be exceptionally helpful when sin and the resulting guilt lie at the root of depression – it show how recovery begins with repentance and forgiveness. We read suitably from David’s experience in Psalm 32: 1 – 5, in this way: ***“How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered! (2) How blessed is the man to whom YHVH does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit! (3) When I kept silent about my sin, my body wasted away through my groaning all day long. (4) For day and night Thy hand was heavy upon me; my vitality was drained away as with the fever heat of summer. Selah. (5) I acknowledged my sin to Thee, and my iniquity I did not hide; I said, ‘I will confess my transgressions to YHVH’; and Thou didst forgive the guilt of my sin. Selah.”***

Cultivating relationships is essential to a person’s well-being. We all need people, be it a spouse or friend, to confide in and have to overcome the habit of keeping things to ourselves. The Scriptures put it as follows in Ecclesiastes 4: 9 & 10, ***‘Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. (10) For if either of them fails, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up.’*** Strong bonds are vital for happiness. The passing of time is also an important ally and the personal reserves and new experiences that come up in life, seems to cure the vast majority of depressions.

When severely depressed, the resources we normally use to tackle our everyday problems may not be enough when we deal with depression and in such cases professional help might be required. Counselors know how to deal with ailments such as depression and know how to help the sufferer to make the problem manageable. Therapeutic practice uses three primary tools in treating depression: medication, counseling and electroconvulsive therapy (ECT). But prospective patients should be aware that both medication and ECT have side effects. Medications generally focus on a specific brain chemical. Many of the current antidepressants affect the level of serotonin, one of the neurotransmitters of the brain. However, besides serotonin, many more chemical messengers have been identified. Therefore belief that depression can always be cured by only using one chemical is unrealistic.

Because of the financial condition of our world depression is on the upswing. Added to this, the lack of specific goals, direction and purpose brought about by financial problems are contributing factors. Prior to the scientific age, people derived a sense of purpose from their spiritual belief systems. However, as scientific knowledge increased, scriptural knowledge has been increasingly rejected, resulting in a widespread lack of understanding of why we exist. Lacking knowledge of a clear purpose for life, results in a type of existential anxiety with reduced inspiration toward life. Anxiety brings about mood swings that eventually cause a state of depression. It is very difficult to be positive in a dying universe void of purpose. It is even harder to be upbeat, knowing that science has made it possible for the human race to destroy itself.

Even so, there is hope. Yahshua our Messiah tells us in John 10: 10, saying: ***“The thief comes only to steal, and kill, and destroy; I came that they might have life, and might have it abundantly.”*** To have hope we need to learn Elohim’s purpose for human life. The Scriptures teach us about Elohim’s purpose for mankind and His design which includes a plan that offers eternal life to everyone. In fact Rav Yochanan wrote about it in John 3: 36, stating: ***“He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the son shall not see life, but the wrath of Elohim abides on him.”*** This tells us that it takes more than just saying we believe in Messiah – it also takes doing what He said.

Everlasting life includes peace, joy and happiness, but definitely no gloom or depression, as we read from Revelation 21: 4, as follows: ***'And He (Elohim) shall wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there shall no longer be any death; there shall no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away.'*** Promises like these assures us that Elohim's way, if properly understood and obeyed, produces joy, peace, self-control and the things that so many people lack. These are the things that act as a powerful spiritual antidote to emotional pain which is one of the main causes of depression. I hope that helps those of us who get the blues after attending the Feast of Tabernacles.

Chapter 22: Our Perfect Example, Messiah.

Yahshua came to reconcile us, the remnant of the lost ten tribes, back to the Father. This is what He told the Canaanite woman who begged Him to help her demon-possessed daughter, saying in Matthew 15: 24, ***"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*** This is also what He told His disciples regarding their mission in Matthew 5: 5 & 6, saying: ***"Do not go the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; (6) but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*** It is therefore clear, that we should not be concerned with teaching the non-Israelite nations of the world regarding the way of Elohim, unless they out of their own come to believe in the way of Elohim, and needs our guidance, according to the example shown us by Philip in Acts 9: 34 - 38. This is exactly how a believer in Africa came to me, saying that he believes that Judaism is correct and that he had himself circumcised as a result, but that he also knew that we can only come into Messiah's sheepfold through the door Yahshua. As the remnant of the lost ten tribes of Israel being called out of the world, we are required to follow Yahshua our perfect example, as attested by Rav Shaul in 1 Corinthians 11: 1 & 2, in this way: ***'Be imitators of me, just as I also am of Messiah. (2) Now I praise you because you remember me in everything, and hold firmly to the traditions, just as I delivered them to you.'***

However, most simply ignore what Yahshua taught, especially if they do not agree with it. Even so, Yahshua warned those who wish to be His disciples in Matthew 7: 13 & 14, that His is a narrow lonely road, as follows: ***'Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. (14) For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads to life, and few are those who find it.'*** Even if one becomes a true disciple of Messiah, the danger is that he (she) could be deceived by Satan and his many agents to go right back to where he (she) comes from, or to follow another counterfeit religion, as Rav Shaul warned about in 2 Corinthians 11: 3 & 4, saying: ***'But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be lead astray from the simplicity and purity of devotion to Messiah. (4) For if one comes and preaches another Yahshua whom we have not preached, or you received a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted, you bear it beautifully.'***

Rav Shaul was surprised how easily believers cast aside the way of Elohim, to embrace a counterfeit gospel together with a counterfeit Messiah. Satan the master counterfeiter has managed to deceive the majority of mankind to accept falsehood. This happens over and over; as believers are called out of the counterfeit of our Nazarene Jewish faith, namely Christianity, they are deceived to follow just another counterfeit, where people decide for themselves how and when to worship Elohim. Even though it is difficult to deceive those called out of this world, Satan and his agents are persuasive teachers peddling a counterfeit of righteousness, which is very close to the true faith once delivered to the saints. Rav Shaul writes about such teachers in 2 Corinthians 11: 13 – 15, saying: ***'For such men are false apostles, deceitful workers, disguising themselves as apostles of Messiah. (14) And no wonder, for even Satan disguises himself as an angel of light. (15) Therefore it is not surprising if his servants also disguise themselves as servants of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their deeds.'*** No wonder so many varieties of what some call truth and righteousness are being taught in the name of Yahshua.

We need to be careful of those who come to us in the true name of our Savior. When Yahshua addressed His disciples privately in Matthew 24, He said in verses 4 & 5: ***"See to it that no one misleads you. (5) For many will come in My name* (we need to understand that Yahshua knew His true name and title, and did not refer to Himself as 'Christ'), ***saying, 'I am the Messiah,' and will mislead many."*** Like His false name, Yahshua's true name serves as a façade or disguise for religious ideas that did not originate with Messiah, as He said in Matthew 7: 22 & 23, as follows: ***"Many will say to Me on that day, 'Master, Master, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out*****

demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ (23) And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’” If we practice lawlessness, which is the opposite of truth or Torah, we negate all other good deeds. Lawlessness is the main component in the counterfeit righteousness taught by false teachers.

Under Satan’s influence mankind has been blinded to the true gospel of Messiah; the problem as identified by Rav Shaul in Romans 8: 7 - 9, is as follows: ***‘Because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward Elohim; for it does not subject itself to the law of Elohim, for it is not even able to do so; (8) and those who are in the flesh cannot please Elohim. (9) However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of Elohim dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Messiah, he does not belong to Him.’*** It is clear; alternatives to the true message of Yahshua have been contrived to accommodate mankind’s natural unwillingness to obey Elohim.

The sad thing about this is that most who accept these false lawless ideas are totally sincere, as Rav Shaul wrote in 2 Thessalonians 2: 7 - 12, saying: ***‘For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only he who now restrains will do so until he is taken out of the way. (8) And then that lawless one will be revealed whom the Master will slay with the breath of His mouth and bring to an end by the appearance of His coming; (9) that is, the one whose coming is in accord with the activity of Satan, with all power and signs and false wonders, (10) and with all the deception of wickedness for those who perish, because they did not receive the love of the truth so as to be saved. (11) And for this reason Elohim will send upon them a deluding influence so that they might believe what is false, (12) in order that they all may be judged who did not believe the truth, but took pleasure in wickedness.’***

What is the difference between true and false disciples of Messiah? Yahshua gave us a hint in the parable in Matthew 22: 14, saying in conclusion of His Message, ***“For many are called, but few are chosen.”*** Even though both the ideas of being called and chosen are Scriptural, they are seldom understood and often misapplied. But what did Yahshua mean, when He used these two phrases? We need to understand that Elohim’s purpose is to eventually give eternal life to all mankind, as Yahshua explained in John 3: 17, saying: ***“For Elohim did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him.”*** Even so, all of mankind are not being saved during this age, as may be understood from Ephesians 1: 7 – 12, as follows: ***‘In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace, (8) which He lavished upon us. In all wisdom and insight (9) He made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His kind intention which He purposed in Him (10) with a view to an administration suitable to the fullness of the times, that is, the summing up of all things in Messiah, things in the heavens and things upon the earth. In Him (11) also we have obtained an inheritance, having been predestined according to His purpose who works all things after the counsel of His will, (12) to the end that we who were the first to hope in Messiah should be to the praise of His glory.’*** It is only once we both learn and obey the truth, that Elohim chooses a person to receive eternal life.

To understand the difference between the phrases ‘called’ and ‘chosen’, we need consult the Scriptures for the answer. We read suitably from 2nd Thessalonians 2: 13 & 14, where Rav Shaul explained: ***‘But we should always give thanks to Elohim for you, brethren beloved by the Master, because Elohim has chosen you from the beginning for salvation through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth. (14) And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may gain the glory of our Master Yahshua Messiah.’*** So we see that YHVH calls believers by the preaching of the gospel (the good news about the coming Kingdom of Elohim); they are given knowledge of the truth (the Scriptures) and are required to repent of their lawlessness. Those believers, who respond by believing the word of truth, are then chosen for salvation. They respond by accepting Yahshua as their Passover Lamb and are immersed into His saving name; after which they are given a portion of the Set-apart Spirit as a pledge of their salvation, as confirmed in Ephesians 1: 13 & 14, as follows: ***‘In Him, you also, after listening to the message of truth, the gospel of your salvation—having also believed,***

you were sealed in Him with the Set-apart Spirit of promise, (14) who is given as a pledge of our inheritance, with a view to the redemption of Elohim's own possession, to the praise of His glory.'

It all begins when Elohim calls us to come out of darkness into His marvelous light, as Yahshua explained in John 6: 44, saying: ***'No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day.'*** Yahshua repeated this after explaining the need to partake of the annual Passover to His disciples, saying in verse 65 of John 6, ***"For this reason I have said to you, that no one can come to Me, unless it has been granted him from the Father."*** Elohim grants us an earnest desire to learn more about Him and His ways, after which He wants us to submit to His Torah way of life, as Rav Shaul explained in Philippians 2: 12 - 15, saying: ***'So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; (13) for it is Elohim who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure. (14) Do all things without grumbling or disputing; (15) that you may prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of Elohim above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world.'*** Yahshua used the parable of the sower in Matthew 13 to show people's different responses to hearing the true gospel; in the parable, all who hear the gospel of the Kingdom of Elohim preached, respond differently. Only those who are called by Elohim understand the truth. Yahshua explained that those not called will not understand what they hear (in verse 19), saying: ***"When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road."***

Yahshua continued explaining the three different responses from the people who understand. Even though Elohim has opened their minds to understanding, each one responds differently. Yahshua continued in Matthew 13: 20 & 21, saying: ***"And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; (21) yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction and persecution arises (from family, friends and foes) because of the word, immediately he falls away."*** Such people are usually more concerned about what their families and friends think about them and cannot accept their rejection. They are afraid to make waves and cause an argument; and reject the words of Elohim soon after hearing it. Continuing in verse 22, we read: ***"And the one on whom the seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."*** Such believers are not only concerned about the opinions of their peers, but are very busy with all sorts of interests in life, and consequently have little time to spend praying and studying the Scriptures. Material things finally get the better of them and they also eventually reject the truth.

Finally we read from verse 23, ***"And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty."*** These people immediately understand Elohim's word and change their ways of life to conform to the way of Elohim, as they learn more about Him. They are chosen for salvation, since they put Elohim first in their lives. So we see, that even though many are called to follow Elohim's way, only a few are chosen, because they choose to serve Him above all else. The choice to serve Elohim whole heartedly remains yours, and like repentance is an ongoing decision until our dying day, or when Yahshua returns one day. We, who are alive at this time, are very close to the end of this age. This is the time during which a great beast will arise, resulting from an economic and political union between 10 kings or rulers, who will resist Yahshua at His return. These kings will be very powerful and will believe their union to be powerful enough to engage into battle with Messiah when He returns, as witnessed in Revelation 17: 12 - 14, as follows: ***"And the ten horns which you saw are ten kings, who have not yet received a kingdom, but they receive authority as kings with the beast for one hour. (13) These have one purpose and they give their power and authority to the beast. (14) These will wage war against the Lamb, and the Lamb will overcome"***

them, because He is Master of masters and King of kings, and those who are with Him are the called and chosen and faithful.” That is correct; we see that those who are with Messiah at His return, will not only be called and chosen, but they will also remained faithful to the end.

Yahshua used parables to teach his disciples. He used the same methods of teachings that the Jewish Rabbi’s before him did, but even though His method of teaching was similar, it differed from them, in that:

- He taught in His own name, and not like the other Rabbis of His day in the names of their teachers;
- His message was primarily focused on the coming kingdom of Elohim; and
- His teachings were usually accompanied by miracles which validated his claim to be one with the Father.

Yahshua taught the parable of the sower and several others and as recorded in Mark 4, when He was alone with His disciples (and followers) they questioned Him as to why He used this method of teaching. Yahshua explained to them in Mark 4: 11 & 12 saying: ***“To you has been given the mystery of the kingdom of Elohim; but those who are outside get everything in parables, in order that while seeing, they may see and not perceive; and while hearing, they may hear and not understand lest they return and be forgiven.”*** From this we understand that YHVH is not calling everyone alive during this age. He is only calling out first fruits, who if they finally make it into the kingdom of Elohim, will rule as kings and priests under Yahshua, during His millennium rule and on into eternity. One example in the Scriptures where YHVH promises rulership to those who overcome and endure to the end of their lives or when Messiah returns, is found in Revelation 3: 21, as follows: ***“He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.”*** A second witness may be read in Revelation 5: 10.

Yahshua explained about a time during which people from all generations will be judged at the same time, during the great white throne judgment in Matthew 12: 41, saying: ***‘The men of Nineveh shall stand up with this generation at the judgment and shall condemn it because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.’*** These people from ancient times will be resurrected after the millennium rule of Yahshua and will respond once they have had a genuine opportunity to understand the Scriptures. We read Yahshua’s own words about the Queen of the South in Mathew 12: 42, as follows: ***“The Queen of the South shall rise up with this generation at the judgment and shall condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and behold, something greater than Solomon is here.”*** The Queen of the South will be in the second resurrection, after the millennium. She will be part of the second harvest of souls into the Kingdom of Elohim. She will repent and accept Yahshua our Messiah as her personal Savior. She will also accept and live by what is written in the books (i.e. The Scriptures) and her name will be entered into the book of life as per Revelation 20: 12. Those who are not called during this age will have their chance in the second resurrection. The majority of people who have ever lived fall in this category and will have their first chance only then.

Yahshua gave more parables to the crowd gathered on the sea shore. Each of these parables reveal an important lesson about the kingdom of Elohim. We will now discuss each of these parables in turn:

1. In the parable of the wheat and the tares found in Matthew 13: 24 – 30: ***‘He (Yahshua) presented another parable to them, saying, “The kingdom of heaven may be compared to a man who sowed good seed in his field. (25) But while men were sleeping, his enemy came and sowed tares also among the wheat, and went away. (26) But when the wheat sprang up and bore grain, then the tares became evident also. (27) And the slaves of the landowner came and said to him, ‘Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares? (28) And he said to them, ‘An enemy has done this!’ And the slave said to Him, ‘Do you want us,***

then, to go and gather them up?’ (29) But he said, ‘No; lest while you are gathering up tares, you may root up the wheat with them. (30) Allow both to grow together until the harvest; and in the time of the harvest I will say to the reapers, “First gather up the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them up; but gather the wheat into my barn.” Yahshua later explained the meaning of this parable to His disciples in Matthew 13: 37 to 43, saying: *‘And He answered and said, “The one who sows the good seed is the Son of Man, (38) and the field is the world; and as for the good seed, these are the sons of the kingdom; and the tares are the sons of the evil one; (39) and the enemy who sowed them is the devil, and the harvest is the end of the age; and the reapers are angels. (40) Therefore just as the tares are gathered up and burned with fire, so shall it be at the end of the age. (41) The Son of Man will send forth His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all stumbling blocks, and those who commit lawlessness, (42) and will cast them into the furnace of fire; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. (43) Then THE RIGHTEOUS WILL SHINE FORTH AS THE SUN in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears let him hear.’* Yahshua was saying that true believers would live in this world along with others who will after being called, be deceived to follow the unrighteous, until He returns at the end of this age. The wicked will eventually be burned up in the lake of fire (after the second resurrection), Faithful believers will be glorified when He returns, receiving immortal bodies when they are born into the kingdom of Elohim.

2. Both the parable of the mustard seed and the parable of the leaven in Matthew 13: 31 – 33, show that the Kingdom of Elohim has the smallest of beginnings. Only a small number of first fruits are being called now, but will eventually expand to include the whole earth and most of its people.
3. In the parable of the lamp under the bushel in Mark 4: 21 - 23, Yahshua was showing that the true Gospel, which was a mystery to the world and hidden from man’s understanding, would be preached to all the world according to Matthew 24: 14. We must continue teaching the truth, without fear. In Matthew 10: 26 – 27 Yahshua assured His disciples: ***“Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. (27) What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops.”***
4. In the parable of seed growing by itself in Mark 4: 26 – 29 Yahshua explains that once the seed is sown, YHVH gives the increase. We proclaim the gospel of the kingdom of Elohim, but it is YHVH who calls people to ultimately be in the Kingdom.

After Yahshua presented these parables, He sent the crowd away and privately explained the meaning of the parables to His disciples. He also presented four additional parables to His disciples, as follows:

1. In the parable of the hidden treasure in Matthew 13: 44 Yahshua said: ***“The Kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hidden in the field, which a man found and hid; and from joy over it he goes and sells all that he has, and buys that field.”*** Also in the parable of the pearl of great price, in Matthew 13: 45 – 46, He said: ***“Again the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant seeking fine pearls, (46) and upon finding one pearl of great value, he went and sold all that he had, and bought it.”*** In both of these parables Yahshua encouraged His disciples to put their whole life and being into seeking first the kingdom of Elohim. We who are called during this age should be willing to give up everything to attain it. Even though YHVH does not expect us to give up everything we possess, He expects us to be willing to. After all any physical thing that we might have to give up is small compared to being born again into the kingdom of Elohim.

2. In the parable of the dragnet in Matthew 13: 47 – 50 Yahshua was warning His disciples, who were to become ‘fishers of men’, that not every person that they ‘caught’ would be truly called of Elohim. The good news of the coming kingdom of Elohim attracts all kinds of people, but not all are truly converted. In the end, all those not truly converted will be separated from those who are.
3. In the parable of the household, Yahshua said in Matthew 13: 52, ***“Therefore every scribe who has become a disciple of the kingdom of heaven is like a head of a household, who brings forth out of his treasure things new and old.”*** This parable shows that a true disciple will not only preach from the Tanach, but also from the Renewed Covenant, teaching new truths about the kingdom of Elohim.

We conclude the parables with two further parables that Yahshua taught his disciples. The first has to do with the two houses of Israel and the second with understanding the two resurrections explained in Revelation 20, as follows:

1. In the parable of the prodigal son found in Luke 15: 11 – 32, Yahshua told about a man who had two sons. The younger son demands his part of the inheritance and leaves his father’s house. He spends his inheritance on riotous living and is soon reduced to poverty. During a famine in the land where he was living, his only way to make a living, was to feed pigs. He eventually becomes so hungry that he is forced to eat the pig’s food. This is when the young man realizes how foolish he has been. He decides to return to his father’s farm, saying to his father in verse 21: ***‘Father, I have sinned against heaven and in your sight; I am no longer worthy to be called your son.’*** His father was so glad to see him, that he welcomed him with a celebratory homecoming. However, we see that his elder brother, who has faithfully served the father, cannot see why his brother should receive such a welcome. This parable is essentially about the two houses of Israel. Whilst our elder brother Judah remained with the Father, we the younger brother, Israel left our Father and forget that we are Israel. We are now being called back to our Father and His Torah. We see that our return, by keeping the Sabbath, the Feast Days of YHVH, eating Kosher and obeying Torah, makes our elder brother Judah jealous. This is actually in fulfillment of the second part of Deuteronomy 32: 21, as follows: ***“So I will make them jealous with those who are not a people (we have lost our identity as Israel); I will provoke them to anger with a foolish nation.”***
2. In the parable of Lazarus and the rich man found in Luke 16, Lazarus is described as being in Abraham’s bosom; i.e. in close fellowship with Abraham. Many believe this to mean that Lazarus went to heaven. However, other Scriptures show that this is referring to the first resurrection, when the ‘first fruits’ will be resurrected into the kingdom of Elohim. This will be at the return of Messiah Yahshua when He comes to rule us from Jerusalem. We also see the rich man is pictured as being in a state of torment. Many people understand this to mean that the rich man is being tormented in an eternally burning hell fire. However, this cannot be true, since the Scriptures plainly show that there is no eternally burning hell fire. The word hell according to Luke 16: 23 comes from the word Hades, which simply means the grave. The wicked rich man is eventually resurrected to physical life, not to be in the kingdom with Lazarus, but to be burned in the lake of fire. In this particular resurrection, this occurs after the millennium, those who refuse to obey YHVH, with full knowledge, will be cast into the lake of fire. The rich man is like the ecclesia in Laodicea, which said in Revelation 3: 17: ***“I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.”*** Because he did not repent, he will be cast into the lake of fire. His torment is the realization that he is about to be cast into the lake of fire for refusing to repent of his sins. The parable shows a great gulf fixed between those who will be resurrected to immortality, like Lazarus, and those who will be resurrected to be cast into the lake of fire. The

gulf represent a period of a thousand years and cannot be crossed. The rich man who is mortal will be burned up and die the second death. Finally, when he realizes that he was doomed and that this gulf cannot be crossed, the rich man begs Abraham to send Lazarus to warn his brothers to repent. However, Abraham told him that they would not repent, even if Lazarus was raised from the dead to warn them, since they had the writings of Moses and the Prophets, and did not repent. Yahshua taught by this parable that those Scribes and Pharisees who lived during His day, knowing Him and seeing the miracles that He performed, will die in the second death, because they refused to obey the Scriptures. Similarly if we should continue to practice sin after coming to the knowledge of the kingdom of Elohim, we will die a second death in the lake of fire.

As believers our goal is to conform to the image of Elohim, as witnessed in Romans 8: 28 & 29, in this way: ***'And we know that Elohim causes all things to work together for good to those who love Elohim, to those who are called according to His purpose. (29) For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the first-born among many brethren.'*** We need to get to know Yahshua personally; how He thinks, what He likes and dislikes and what He did and taught whilst He was on earth. How can we get to know Him? The same way a husband gets to know his wife? He talked to her telling her about himself and she in turn told him about herself. That is also how we get to know Elohim. We talk to Him through prayer, and He talks to us through His written word. It is for this reason that Yahshua, prior to giving His disciples an outline for their prayers, taught them two distinct concepts about prayer, in Matthew 6: 5 - 8, saying: ***'And when you pray, you are not to be as hypocrites; for they love to stand and pray in the synagogues and on street corners, in order to be seen by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (6) But you, when you pray, go into your inner room, and when you have shut your door, pray to your Father who is in secret, and your Father who sees in secret will repay you. (7) And when you are praying, do not use meaningless repetition, as the Gentiles do, for they suppose that they will be heard for their many words. (8) Therefore do not be like them; for your Father knows what you need, before you ask Him.'*** We should not pray just to be heard by others, so that they become impressed by our 'righteousness', but should pray because we really want to talk to Elohim, and it should be done in private. Yahshua also taught that we should not use vain repetition in our prayers, repeating phrases or His Name over and over again. Elohim is more interested in the quality of our prayers than in the quantity of our words. He wants us to pray from the heart.

Yahshua continued to teach a pattern for our prayers in the so-called 'Lord's Prayer' in Matthew 6: 9 – 13, saying: ***"Pray then in this way: 'Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy Name. (10) Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. (11) Give us this day our daily bread. (12) And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. (13) And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. For Thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the esteem, forever. Amen.'"*** Yahshua was showing us important concepts to incorporate into our daily prayers, saying that we should commence our prayers, acknowledging that YHWH is our heavenly Father. In so doing, we acknowledge that we are His children and have the potential to ultimately become His spiritual family, ruling as kings and priests under Yahshua. We should also thank Elohim for giving us the knowledge of our awesome potential to become immortal spiritual beings. We should ask Him to help us achieve that awesome potential, to one day become perfect in character, like He has always been. We should hallow (Set-apart) His Name by obeying the Third Commandment and not use His Name by cursing, swearing or using it in a repetitious manner. We should ask ourselves the question: Am I using His Name or am I honoring it, by being obedient to His word? Attaching His Name to Feast Days that are not His, are definitely not honoring His Name. Yes, we cannot attach (YHWH)'s name to pagan feast days such as X-mas and Easter, but, if we are keeping our feasts at different times to those that Elohim ordained through Moses (or whoever is sitting in his seat) as in Leviticus 23, we are also not honoring His Name, as may be read in Malachi 2: 1 – 8. Our prayer should always be that YHWH will help us not to bring reproach upon His Set-apart Name by setting wrong examples.

We should pray daily; ‘Thy **Kingdom come**’, asking Elohim to let Yahshua return to establish the kingdom of Elohim on earth. Only by Elohim’s direct intervention in our affairs, can peace and prosperity be established. However, prior to that happening, Yahshua said in Matthew 24: 14 **“And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all the nations, and then the end shall come.”** Note that this is not saying we should convert people, but only to witness to them about Elohim’s coming Kingdom. Whilst YHVH does not want the main emphasis of our prayers to be on physical things, He expects us to ask Him to provide in our physical needs. He wants us to ask Him for our daily needs, such as food, clothing and shelter. We all sin, even if we try not to. It is therefore very important that we confess our sins in prayer and ask Him to forgive us of those sins, as recorded in 1 John 1: 8 & 9, as follows: **‘If we say that we have no sin, we are deceiving ourselves, and the truth is not in us. (9) If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.’** As we ask our Father for forgiveness, recall which of Elohim’s commandments you might have broken knowingly or unknowingly during the day and ask Him to forgive you those sins.

We should ask our Father not to lead us into temptation but to deliver us from the evil one. This includes asking to resist peer pressures and to avoid things that could be harmful to us, like drugs and unclean foods, etc. We should conclude our prayers, acknowledging that all power and esteem belong to YHVH our Elohim. To close, we need to remember what Yahshua taught His disciples in John 14: 13 & 14, saying: **“And whatever you ask in My name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. (14) If you ask Me anything in My name I will do it.”** Yahshua also taught some more important lessons in the verses following His sample prayer saying in Matthew 6: 14 to 18, **“For if you forgive men for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. (15) But if you do not forgive men, your Father will not forgive your transgressions. (16) And whenever you fast, do not put on a gloomy face as the hypocrites do, for they neglect their appearance in order to be seen fasting by men. Truly I say to you, they have their reward in full. (17) But you when you fast anoint your head and wash your face, (18) so that you may not be seen fasting by men, but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will repay you.”** These are important lessons to remember and are easy to follow. We need to be mindful of this if we want to be forgiven our sins. In addition it tells us that we may wash our faces and anoint our heads with oil on the Day of Atonement, or any other day when we fast, so that we do not appear distressed simply for people to see that we are fasting.

Next Yahshua told His disciples that many things would compete for their time on a daily basis: Such things as making a living, buying food and clothing, desire for entertainment, pleasure and recreation, as well as prayer, Scripture studies, helping and serving others. Yahshua emphasized that spiritual matters should get first priority, because these are the things that help us develop lasting character, as He confirmed Matthew 6: 19 – 21, saying: **“Do not lay up for yourselves treasures upon earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. (20) But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys, and where thieves do not break in or steal; (21) for where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.”** Food is consumed; clothing lasts a little longer, but could easily be ruined by moths, sunlight or sharp objects. Cars, lawnmowers and bicycles wear out and are affected by rust. TV sets, CD Players and computers break and may be stolen. But, this is not to say that we should not do what we can to provide food, clothing and shelter for our own families. But Yahshua was saying that we should not put all our effort into getting these physical things. Yahshua promised that if we put spiritual matters first in our lives, all these physical things shall be added unto us. Yahshua also warned His disciples in Matthew 6: 24 that they cannot serve both YHVH and mammon. That is to say that they cannot devote all their time and energy acquiring material things and serving Him. Serving one automatically abolishes the other. Yahshua urged His disciples and by implication us, to put spiritual things first. By so doing we will develop character that will endure beyond the grave.

As part of Yahshua's team, we have to work together and support each other in order to succeed. His next instruction to His disciples dealt with condemnation of others. We read this in Matthew 7: 1- 5, as follows: ***"Do not judge lest you be judged. (2) For in the way you judge, you will be judged; and by your standard of measure, it will be measured to you. (3) And why do you look at the speck that is in your brother's eye, but do not notice the log that is in your own eye? (4) Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' and behold, the log is in your own eye? (5) You hypocrite, first take the log out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to take the speck out of your brother's eye."*** The word judge here implies harsh negative criticism of another's character and motives of which is condemning. It doesn't mean that you cannot determine (judge or say) whether an action was or was not wrong or a mistake. So long as we don't say that it was a stupid mistake, or adding other derogatory remarks to it. As team players we need to support and encourage one another, nevertheless, positive uplifting criticism is necessary at times.

Many will try to make the team, but will not succeed. Only those willing to be disciplined, will grow in spiritual knowledge and skills, and stick to the team until the end. Yahshua completed His instructions to His disciples with the analogy found in Matthew 7: 24 – 27, as follows: ***"Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock (Messiah Himself). (25) And the rain descended, and the floods came, and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and yet it did not fall, for it had been founded upon the rock. (26) And everyone who hears these words of Mine, and does not act upon them, will be like a foolish man, who built his house upon the sand. (27) And the rain descended, and the floods came and the winds blew, and burst against that house; and it fell, and great was its fall."*** In these verses Yahshua was saying that if the disciples obeyed and practiced what He taught they will be able to endure the storms of life, similar to the house that was built on the rock.

Yahshua taught many other truths in what He said and did, but because of the size of this sermon and our limited attention span, I will only discuss these briefly below:

1. The true gospel is the gospel of the coming Kingdom of Elohim preached by Yahshua in amongst other Mark 1: 14 & 15; Mark 4: 11 & 12; Matthew 4: 17; Matthew 9: 35 and Luke 4: 43.
2. To be born again, we have to be immersed in water and as a result receive the Set-apart Spirit (John 3: 5 supported by Acts 2: 38). Only when we are resurrected as spirit beings at Messiah's return will we be born again, like He was, when He was resurrected as the first-born of many brethren (John 3: 6 – 8 supported by Romans 8: 11, 28 & 29 and 1 Corinthians 15: 50 – 52). No one has gone to heaven (John 3: 13 supported by Acts 2: 29 – 34 and Hebrews 11: 8 – 9, 39 & 40), but He who came from heaven, namely Yahshua.
3. Yahshua did not abolish Torah, but made it more binding as witnessed in Matthew 5: 17 – 20. Yahshua said in verse 20, that unless our righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and the Pharisees, we will not enter the kingdom of Elohim. Linked to this are the next two topics, namely:
4. That the Rabbinical Jews of today are responsible for the timing of (YHVH)'s annual Feast Days, since they have seated themselves in Moses' seat. (Matthew 23: 1 – 3 supported by John 4: 21 & 22; Romans 3: 1 – 4; Romans 9: 4; Psalm 147: 19 & 20; Nahum 1: 15; Malachi 2: 1 – 8; Zechariah 8: 23; Zechariah 12: 7 – 14 and Jeremiah 31: 31 – 34).
5. Unless we believe in Moses' writings, i.e. Torah, we cannot believe the teachings or words of Yahshua. (John 5: 45 -47 supported by Exodus 19: 9). Contrary to what many believe, Yahshua's way of interpreting Torah (His Halacha) was stricter than that of the Pharisees; the only way that we could keep Torah better than the Pharisees do, is to walk according to Yahshua's stricter (gate) lonely narrow road. He our perfect example is the standard that we use to measure ourselves against.
6. Even though it is of great value to go to Jerusalem for Elohim's Set-apart Days, we need not only keep these Set-apart Days there, as Yahshua confirmed, when He said to the woman at the well

in John 4: 21 – 24: ***“Woman, believe Me, an hour is coming when neither in this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, shall you worship the Father. (22) You worship that which you do not know, we worship that which we know, for salvation is from the Jews. (23) But an hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and truth; for such people the Father seeks to be His worshippers. (24) Elohim is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”***

7. Those who will be resurrected one day will be like angels who neither marry, nor are given in marriage (i.e. they like angels will not have marital relations). (Matthew 22; 30; Mark 12: 25 and Luke 20: 34 – 36).
8. Yahshua identified Himself as the stumbling stone; the rock of offense discussed in both the Tanach and the Renewed Covenant. (Matthew 11: 6; Matthew 21: 42 & 43 supported by Matthew 7: 24 & 25; Matthew 16: 18; Acts 4: 11 & 12 and 1 Peter 2: 4 – 10). Yes, Yahshua is the rock (foundation) upon which His ecclesia is built; and we like Rav Kepha (Peter) are living stones being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to Elohim through our Messiah.
9. Yahshua is the right hand (power or strength transliterated as ‘*gevurah*’ in Hebrew) of Elohim according to John 12: 37 – 40 (Supported by Isaiah 53: 1; Jeremiah 32: 17, 21; Exodus 6: 6 and 1st Corinthians 1: 24), to whose identity the Jews and others are at this time blinded, as also explained in Romans 11.
10. People who are cremated will also be resurrected one day – as confirmed by Yahshua’s statement regarding the great white throne judgment in Matthew 11: 23 & 24. This gives hope to all those who lost family in the Holocaust, where millions were cremated during the Second World War.
11. When Yahshua partook of the last Passover before His impalement and death, He specifically stated that He will not partake of it again, until He comes in His kingdom. (Luke 22: 15 & 16 and Mark 14: 25) So those who insist that He came to have the Passover (which some refer to as communion) with them during this age (or time) are either imagining it, or are simply deceived by Satan.
12. Yahshua was showing His disciples during the two occasions during which He fed the five thousand and the four thousand using five loaves and two fish in Mark 6: 36 – 44 and seven loaves and a few small fish in Mark 8: 4 – 8; that when we preach the five books of Torah to the remnant, we will gather individuals from all 12 tribes, but when we preach only the seven Noahite laws we will only gather individuals from 7 tribes.
13. Yahshua was also teaching in Mark 8: 22 – 25, when He healed the blind man, that Israel is likened in the Scriptures to a blind man (Isaiah 42: 19). Israel is also likened to an olive tree in Jeremiah 11: 16. After spitting on the blind man’s eyes and laying His hand upon him the first time, the man said that he saw men walking like trees. After laying His hand on the blind man’s eyes a second time, the blind man saw everything clearly. This is essentially a picture of Israel; when Yahshua came the first time most only saw in part, but at His second coming we will all see everything clearly.

Chapter 23: The seven ecclesia of Revelation.

The purpose of prophecy is as we've seen in lesson 10 of the Scripture Study Course that we recently studied, to encourage people to repent of their evil ways so they can escape punishment and for those who don't repent at first, so that when their punishment comes, they will acknowledge their sins and repent toward Elohim who will deliver and rescue them, as He promised in Deuteronomy 4: 25 – 31, as follows: ***"When you become the father of children and children's children and have remained long in the land, and act corruptly, and make an idol in the form of anything, and do that which is evil in the sight of YHVH your Elohim so as to provoke Him to anger, (26) I call heaven and earth to witness against you today, that you shall surely perish quickly from the land where you are going over the Jordan to possess it. You shall not live long on it, but shall be utterly destroyed. (27) And YHVH will scatter you among the peoples, and you shall be left few in number among the nations, where YHVH shall drive you. (28) And there you will serve gods, the work of man's hands, wood and stone, which neither see nor hear nor eat nor smell. (29) But from there you will seek YHVH your Elohim, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul. (30) When you are in distress and all these things have come upon you, in the latter days, you will return to YHVH your Elohim and listen to His voice. (31) For YHVH your Elohim is a compassionate Elohim; He will not fail you nor destroy you nor forget the covenant with your fathers which He swore to them."*** The covenant spoken about here includes circumcision for men – if we want to return to the land of Israel one day.

The message to the seven ecclesia in Revelation is therefore a call to repentance. But we need to understand that the seven ecclesia during the time of the apostles, are also representative of the ecclesia called out of the world, from the time when Messiah commissioned the original 12 apostles until our time today. Even so, the seven ecclesia and their characteristics are also present in every generation, since Messiah's ascension to heaven and the very same characteristics could also be present in individual members in the ecclesia of today and every generation. In Revelation 2 and 3 Yahshua Messiah sends a different message to each of the seven churches in the Roman province of Asia Minor, part of modern day Turkey. The number seven shows completeness, similar to the seven days that make up a complete week. The seven messages of Revelation 2 and 3 give us a complete picture of trends that had already started and continued throughout the history of the ecclesia, since Messiah's original commission to the apostles in Matthew 28: 18 – 20.

The seven messages give us several good reasons why the deep divisions among believers developed and why this divisiveness continued to plague subsequent generations. The seven ecclesia are represented as seven candlesticks in Revelation 1 and together they represent the ecclesia and its mission to be a light to the world, as Yahshua taught in Matthew 5: 14. Messiah stands in the middle of the seven congregations as the source of their light and as such He is always present and accessible (almost like the *'ner tamid'*, the ever burning light spoken about in Exodus 27: 20¹³). Yes, Yahshua will remain true to His promise to His ecclesia in Matthew 28: 20, to be always with us, until the end of the age. However, as is obvious from the messages to the seven ecclesia, not everyone who comes into the ecclesia will remain faithful to Him. Each of the seven ecclesia receives a warning message; but the message to each ecclesia is also a warning to the other six ecclesia, since the same or similar conditions could develop amongst them. In each message Messiah cites examples of good points as well as the bad points in each group, showing whom He will bless and whom He will reject. This is similar to the way He expects each one of His ministers (or teachers) to take care of members in the ecclesia, He lavishes compliments where approval is due, but also criticizes those with faults that threaten their relationship with Him.

¹³ Exodus 27: 20, ***"And you shall charge the sons of Israel, that they bring you clear oil of beaten olives for the light, to make a lamp burn continually."***

At the time when these messages were written the ecclesia was under severe persecution and imprisonment. This is why Messiah encouraged the seven ecclesia not to lose heart, not to give up, not to compromise their beliefs and if necessary to die for His sake. He reminds them to focus ahead on the Kingdom of Elohim to come, when they will rule the world under His leadership. Messiah complimented the devoted members in each group for their service, labor, perseverance and faith. But, His criticisms and compliments are revealing. They show that the threat from within the ecclesia was, and always will be a cause for concern.

To fully understand the seven messages to the ecclesia of called out believers, we turn to Revelation 2, where we commence reading Yahshua's message to the angel of the ecclesia in Ephesus, in verse 1 to 7, in this way: ***"The One who holds the seven stars in His right hand, the One who walks among the seven golden lampstands (Yahshua), says this: (2) 'I know your deeds and your toil and perseverance, and that you cannot endure evil men, and you put to the test those who call themselves apostles, and they are not, and you found them to be false; (3) and you have perseverance and have endured for My name's sake, and have not grown weary. (4) But I have this against you, that you have left your first love. (5) Remember therefore from where you have fallen, and repent and do the deeds that you did at first; or else I am coming to you, and will remove your lampstand out of its place – unless you repent. (6) Yet this you do not have, that you hate the deeds of the Nicolaitians, which I also hate. (7) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the ecclesia. To him who overcomes, I will grant to eat of the tree of life, which is in the paradise of Elohim.'*** When most of us were first called out of the world into the Nazarene Israelite faith, we were like young people in love. We studied as if there was not enough time in the day. We wanted to know everything there is to know about our newly found faith, as soon as possible. However, with time the excitement wore off and we became less zealous. We started studying less and had more time to do other things again. It is almost like a young man when he meets a new girlfriend. Initially he spends many hours trying to please her, but with time he gets used to her and spends less time with her. This is what happened to the ecclesia in Ephesus, but can also happen to each one of us individually. Yahshua warns that unless we repent and return to YHVH and serve Him again the way we used to do when we were first called, He will remove our lampstand. Even if we have the ability to test apostles to see if they are false, at this time, we need to repent and return to YHVH like a young man in love with his bride – zealous to find out more about YHVH and His plan of salvation for us and all mankind. My fellow believers the time is short and we need to spend much more time studying and praying, if we want to retain our position as first fruits unto YHVH. We will deal with the compliment about the Nicolaitians later.

If we stay committed to Elohim to the end, we will be saved, as per the example of Daniels three friends, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego in Daniel 3. These three men were thrown into a fiery furnace because of their refusal to fall down and worship a false image. They were deeply committed to YHVH and were not prepared to compromise in any way. YHVH came first in their lives and His Torah was their foundation. They knew that the Word of YHVH forbids us to bow down to idols in Exodus 20: 4 & 5. In addition to their commitment to YHVH they had faith that He could save them from any situation, if He chooses to do so. Notice that YHVH did not save them from the fire; He saved them in the fire. They knew that even if they died in the fire, they will one day be resurrected, just as we do (as per 1 Corinthians 15: 12 -19). Besides the growing problem of spiritually weak members and teachers, false prophets were infiltrating the congregations and slowly but surely, many doctrinal errors were developing. We continue reading from Revelation 2: 8 – 11, as follows: ***"And to the angel of the ecclesia in Smyrna write: The First and the last, who was dead and has come to life, says this: (9) I know your tribulation and your poverty (but you are rich), and the blasphemy by those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan. (10) Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life. (11) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the ecclesia.***

He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.” It appears that this group had to, and will again in the future have to go through a period of tribulation, during which time some of their members will be killed for their faith in the true Messiah. However, they are promised eternal life in the first resurrection, and as we read from Revelation 20: 6¹⁴, the second death will not have power over them. The reference to those who say that they are Jews and are not, mentioned here has to do with those who usurp the authority that YHWH gave to the tribe of Levi amongst the Jews, regarding their responsibility to proclaim the annual Feast Days of Elohim, as witnessed in Romans 9: 4 and discussed in Malachi 2: 1 – 8. Essentially these are people who usurp the Authority given to the Jews, by deciding for themselves when to keep Elohim’s annual Feast Days. Those who believe that they have been given the oracles, because the Jews were unfaithful are usually also against any custom or tradition found in Judaism, such as for example, the lighting of Sabbath candles; and even the observance of Chanukah and Purim which are all Scripturally based.

We find the message to the third ecclesia in Revelation 2: 12 – 17, in this way: ***“And to the angel of the ecclesia in Pergamum write: The One who has the sharp two edged sword says this: (13) I know where you dwell, where Satan’s throne is; and you hold fast My name, and did not deny My faith, even in the days of Antipas, My witness, My faithful one, who was killed among you, where Satan dwells. (14) But I have a few things against you, because you have there some who hold the teaching of Balaam, who kept teaching Balak to put a stumbling block before the sons of Israel, to eat things sacrificed to idols, and to commit acts of immorality. (15) Thus you also have some who in the same way hold the teaching of the Nicolaitians. (16) Repent therefore; or else I am coming to you quickly, and I will make war against them with the sword of My mouth. (17) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the ecclesia. To him who overcomes, to him I will give some of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and a new name written on the stone which no one knows but he who receives it.”*** YHWH calls people from all walks of life, but more specifically the weak of the world, as may be read from 1 Corinthians 1: 26 – 31. We should not get into a habit of slating other groups, but as watchmen we should warn Elohim’s people about their transgressions, as may be read from Isaiah 58: 1¹⁵. Yes, as watchmen, we should not ever curse other groups, but continue to write sermons, which we publish on webpages, as warnings to consider and correct their mistakes. We see that in addition to cursing other groups in the way Balak wanted to curse ancient Israel, this group also has some members who hold to the teachings of the Nicolaitians.

Yahshua said that He hated the deeds and doctrines of the Nicolaitians, and indicated that there were believers of such teachings in both the groups in Ephesus and Pergamum. We’ve heard about the Nicolaitians for a long time, but have never really understood the meaning of their condemnation, because we have never really known who, or what they were. Many students of the Scriptures have tried to identify the Nicolaitians, without success. Some suggested that they were followers of a certain ‘*saint Nicholas*’. Then there is the group who supports the teachings of the Schofield Reference Bible, who identify the Nicolaitians, as follows: ‘*From Nakao, to conquer, and Laos, the people or laity. There is however, no ancient authority for a sect of Nicolaitians. If the word is symbolic, it refers to the earliest form of the notion of a priestly order, or clergy, which later divided an equal brotherhood into priests and laity. What in Ephesus were deeds (Rev. 2: 6) had become in Pergamum a doctrine (Rev. 2: 15).*’ This is the best explanation that Christian clergy can give, since they are blinded and cannot see the forest for the trees. Note that they admit that there is no ancient authority to proof their explanation. The truth is that the more orthodox they are, the closer

¹⁴ Revelation 20: 6, ‘***Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but they will be priests of Elohim and His Messiah and will reign with Him for a thousand years.***’

¹⁵ Isaiah 58: 1, “***Cry loudly, do not hold back; Raise your voice like a trumpet, and declare to My people their transgression, and to the house of Jacob their sins.***”

they are in identifying themselves. The Hellenization of the Christian Church displaced the Jewish Messiah with a Greek deity with festivals such as Xmas, Easter and Sunday, replacing the seventh day Sabbath and Feast Days of Elohim.

The Nicolaitians were evangelists who conquered or overcame the Jewish congregations. The word Nicolaitians is a combination of the Greek words 'Nike' and 'Laos'. Nike is the name of the Greek goddess of victory and the Greek word Laos is Greek for the English word laity, or worshipers. The King James Version of the Scriptures identifies the Nicolaitians, as the Nike-laity, or Nike Laos of the original manuscript of Yochanan the Revelator. Most of us know this old fellow as Saint Nike-Laos or Santa Claus, who appears once a year in December to keep the birthdays of Nimrod, Baal, Bacchus and others on the 25th of the month. Yes, even though we are told to come out of keeping Xmas, some are even now involved in such paganism when they buy presents for children and grandchildren at that time of the year, so as not to upset anybody. In addition, we need to be mindful of the fact that worshipping the Creator-Redeemer by the names of pagan deities is not honoring Him, but giving the honor to pagan deities, which belong to Him. It is perhaps for this reason that YHVH says in Isaiah 42: 8, ***"I am YHVH that is My name; I will not give My glory to another, nor My praise to graven images."*** A second witness comes from Jeremiah 16: 20 & 21, as follows: ***"Can man make gods for himself? Yet they are no gods! (21) Therefore behold, I am going to make them know—This time I will make them know My power and My might; and they shall know that My name is YHVH."***

We read the message to the ecclesia in Thyatira from Revelation 2: 18 – 28, in this way: ***"And to the angel of the ecclesia in Thyatira write: The Son of Elohim, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet are like burnished bronze, says this: (19) I know your deeds, and your love and faith and service and perseverance, and that your deeds of late are greater than at first. (20) But I have this against you, that you tolerate the woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, and she teaches and leads My bond-servants astray, so that they commit acts of immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. (21) And I gave her time to repent; and she does not want to repent of her immorality. (22) Behold, I will cast her upon a bed of sickness, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of her deeds. (23) And I will kill her children with pestilence; and all the ecclesia will know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts; and I will give to each one of you according to your deeds. (24) But I say to you, the rest who are in Thyatira, who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan, as they call them—I place no other burden on you. (25) Nevertheless what you have, hold fast until I come. (26) And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO HIM I WILL GIVE AUTHORITY OVER THE NATIONS; (27) AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES, as I also have received authority from My Father; (28) and I will give him the morning star. (29) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the ecclesia."***

This is talking about a woman in the ecclesia who believes she is a prophetess, and teaches members of the ecclesia doctrines contrary to the teachings of Yahshua and the Torah, such as minimalizing the requirement to keep the Sabbath and eat only kosher foods. This type of teaching is seen by Elohim as idolatry, and should not be taught by true believers of Elohim. We see from verse 24 above that dissent developed from within the ecclesia, which became a real threat to the ecclesia. Attending with members of the above two congregations were two types of people. The faithful members *'who do not hold this teaching, who have not known the deep things of Satan.'* But the implication is clear that others could and did hold this teaching. We find a picture of the ecclesia near the end of the age: Satan had successfully infiltrated groups of believers called out of the world by Elohim. He lures people away from believing what Yahshua taught, using false prophets to introduce teachings which will get people to observe Feast Days at different times; or finding ways to contradict what Yahshua taught, such as that angels as well as demons (fallen angels) who cannot

have marital relations (in Matthew 22: 30), had such relations with people resulting in the so-called Nephilim (or giants) mentioned in Genesis 6: 4; or get people to abhor Torah commanded obligations, such as putting Mezuzahs on the doorpost of our homes and the lighting of candles 20 minutes before the commencement of weekly and annual Sabbaths.

The message to the ecclesia in Sardis is recorded in Revelation 3: 1 – 6, as follows: ***“And to the angel of the ecclesia in Sardis write: He who has the seven Spirits of Elohim, and the seven stars, says this: ‘I know your deeds, that you have a name that you are alive, but you are dead. (2) wake up, and strengthen the things that remain, which were about to die; for I have not found your deeds completed in the sight of My Elohim. (3) Remember therefore what you have received and heard; and keep it, and repent. If therefore you will not wake up, I will come like a thief, and you will not know at what hour I will come upon you. (4) But you have a few people in Sardis who have not soiled their garments; and they will walk with Me in white; for they are worthy. (5) He who overcomes shall thus be clothed in white garments; and I will not erase his name from the book of life, and I will confess his name before the Father, and before His angels. (6) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the ecclesia.”*** This group has been going for a long time and its members have become weary of doing the things they learned. They keep the Sabbaths, but only to a fashion and are beginning to lose their interest in the things they once knew. Yahshua calls them to repentance, to return to the things they learned and to be ready for His imminent return.

Next we read about the ecclesia in Philadelphia from verses 7 – 13 of Revelation 3, in this way: ***“And to the angel in Philadelphia write: He who is holy, who is true, who has the key of David, who opens and no one will shut, and who shuts and no one opens, says this: (8) ‘I know your deeds. Behold, I have put before you an open door which no one can shut, because you have a little power, and have kept My word, and have not denied My name. (9) Behold, I will cause those of the synagogue of Satan, who say that they are Jews, and are not, but lie – behold, I will make them to come and bow down at your feet, to know that I have loved you. (10) Because you have kept the word of My perseverance, I also will keep you from the hour of testing, that hour which is about to come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell upon the earth. (11) I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown. (12) He who overcomes, I will make him a pillar in the temple of My Elohim, and he will not go out from it anymore; and I will write upon him the name of My Elohim, and the name of the city of My Elohim, the new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from My Elohim, and My new name. (13) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the ecclesia.”*** The members of this group are fully Torah observant, and are as a result aware of the two house teachings in the Scriptures, knowing that the house of Judah and the house of Israel will one day get together when Messiah returns (as recorded in Ezekiel 37: 15 - 28). They also know Elohim’s plan of salvation for all mankind and honor the Set-apart Names of YHVH and His salvation Yahshua. They keep the Feast Days of Elohim, ordained by Moses, and as prophesied by Yahshua, those who say they are Jews, i.e. those who try to usurp the function of the Jews in determining the Feast Days of Elohim, will at His return come and bow down at their feet. They are also promised protection during the great tribulation.

The message for the ecclesia at Laodicea is recorded in Revelation 3; 14 – 22, as follows: ***“And to the angel of the ecclesia in Laodicea write: The Amein, the faithful and true Witness, the Beginning of the creation of Elohim, says this: (15) I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. (16) So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of My mouth. (17) Because you say, ‘I am rich and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing.’ And you do not know that you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked, (18) I advise you to buy from Me gold refined by fire, that you may become rich, and white garments, that you may clothe yourself, and that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and eye salve to anoint your eyes, that you may see. (19) Those whom I love, I reprove and discipline; be zealous therefore and repent. (20) Behold, I stand at the door and knock; if***

anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will dine with him, and he with Me. (21) He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcome and sat down with My Father on His throne. (22) He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the ecclesia.” This is talking about a group who has lost their zeal for the work of Elohim. Because of their lukewarm attitude they are not prepared to do the work of watchmen; to warn fellow believers of things that they might be doing wrong. They attend services, but only to warm seats and are accordingly warned to become either hot or cold, or to finally be rejected by Yahshua . They are admonished to get back to studying the Scriptures and to clean up their lives accordingly.

We see from Messiah’s messages to His ecclesia that two distinct classifications of believers emerged from the ecclesia over the centuries. One group was faithful, the other consisted of people who for many reasons, were moving further and further away from the true way of Elohim. Many were unfaithful and eventually departed from the truth. They are the ones spoken about by Yochanan in 1 John 2: 19, in this way: ***‘They went out from us, but they were not really of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it might be shown that they all are not of us.’*** The problem with these trends in the ecclesia of Elohim is that if it goes unchecked it could result in demise of those who hold to the faith once delivered to the saints. This is why Yahshua posed the question in the second part of verse 8 of Luke 18, saying: ***“However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find faith on the earth?”*** Think about it!

Chapter 24: Mysticism.

There are those in the Messianic faith who deny the existence of the two houses of Israel today, and as a result are totally blinded to the fact that the events playing out in the major nations of the world have been prophesied in the Scriptures are about the latter day people of the house of Israel and the house of Judah. The events taking place in especially the English speaking nations of the world have been prophesied to happen in the Scriptures by Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, as well as the minor prophets, many years before the birth of Messiah. But, without knowing who the two houses of Israel are this vital key necessary to unlock the doors of Scriptural prophecy has been lost to society in general. Similarly are there those who insist that the word *'mysticism'*, especially when used together with the word *'Jewish'* to be totally unacceptable and by definition absolutely evil. Even so, the Scriptures are filled with both these subjects from Genesis to Revelation and cannot be denied by those who truly study the Scriptures with the understanding given us by Elohim, through His Set-apart Spirit that indwells us.

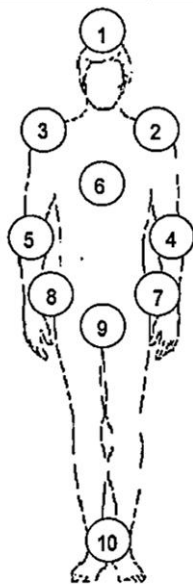
The subject that I am talking about today, namely mysticism or more specifically Jewish Mysticism otherwise known as Kabbalah is a very controversial subject. Most Jewish Rabbis tell their congregants not to study Kabbalah, unless they have studied Torah for at least 40 years. The word *'Kabbalah'* is a transliterated Hebrew word meaning *'received'*. The reason why some believe Jewish Mysticism is evil is because it came to be abused during the middle ages by the proponents of witchcraft. As a result many people falsely assume Kabbalah to be witchcraft. However Jewish Kabbalah is the Kabbalah studied by Orthodox Jews and these Jews are by NO MEANS involved in witchcraft. Claims that Jewish Kabbalah is witchcraft are much like the claims in the middle ages that Jews killed unbaptized babies to use their blood in the Passover Seder - this whilst the consumption of any blood is absolutely forbidden in Torah. The whole idea is rooted in anti-Semitism. In Rabbinic Judaism today Kabbalah has its foundation in three books, namely: *'The Sefer Yetzirah'*, *'The Bahir'*, and *'The Zohar'*. However Jewish Mysticism existed long before these books were written and in fact Jewish Mysticism is reflected in certain documents of the Dead Sea Scrolls as well as the writings of the first century Jewish historian named Philo.

Even though I have studied some very basic concepts of Kabbalah, I am in no ways an expert in the field and will therefore not attempt to enlighten you regarding the subject. However, my purpose today is to show you that the concepts mentioned in Kabbalah are also mentioned throughout the Scriptures. The very first time where these concepts are beginning to be discussed, is right at the beginning of the Scriptures, where we read from Genesis 1: 26 & 27, ***'Then Elohim said, "Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness; and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing, that creeps on the earth."*** (27) ***And Elohim created man in His own image, in the image of Elohim He created him; male and female He created them.'*** Without going to Kabbalah to determine who or what the image of Elohim is, we need to let the Scriptures interpret the Scriptures. But first let's get a dictionary meaning of the words *'image'* and *'likeness'*. According to the Webster's Dictionary, the word image is defined as an image, likeness, apparition – a representation of any person or thing, sculptured, painted or otherwise made visible; a statue, picture or stamped representation; an effigy, an idol; what forms a counterpart or likeness of something else. We are made in the image and likeness of Elohim. In other words we look like the image of Elohim. However, the Scriptures tell us that YHVH has no form according to Deuteronomy 4: 12 ***"Then YHVH spoke to you from the midst of the fire; you heard the sound of words, but you saw no form – only a voice."*** In addition we see that YHVH is infinite according to 1 Kings 8: 27 ***"But will Elohim indeed dwell on the earth? Behold, heaven and the highest heaven cannot contain Thee, how much less this house which I have built!"*** This is also confirmed in the Renewed Covenant in first Timothy 1: 17, as follows: ***'Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only Elohim, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.'*** We read further about YHVH from first Timothy 6: 16, ***'who alone possesses immortality and dwells in an***

unapproachable light: whom no man has seen or can see. To Him be honor and eternal dominion. Amen.'

The question is, if Elohim is invisible and we look like His image, what or who do we really look like? We turn to the Renewed Covenant for the answer in a number of places; the first being in Colossians 1: 15, where we read: **"And He (meaning Yahshua) is the image of the invisible Elohim, the first born-born of all creation."** Now, the words first-born here does not mean that He was born before Adam was created, it means that Yahshua was the first being who was born again as a spirit begotten child of Elohim, as witnessed in Romans 8: 29 & 30, in this way: **'For whom He (Elohim) foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His son, that He (Yahshua) might be the first-born among many brethren; (30) and whom He predestined, these He also called; and whom He called, these He also justified (at immersion); and who He justified, these He also glorified (one day at His return, when we are born-again as spiritual children of Elohim).'** From this it is clear that Yahshua is the visible image of the invisible Elohim. In other words, we were created to look like Yahshua the word of Elohim who became flesh (John 1: 14). In Kabbalah the image of Elohim is referred to as the 'Adam Kadmon'. Gershom Scholem wrote in his book entitled: 'On the Mystical Shape of the Godhead; Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah', 'In His active manifestations, the godhead appears as the dynamic unity of the Sefiroth, portrayed as the "tree of the Sefiroth," or the mystical human form ('Adam Kadmon'), who is none other than the concealed shape of Godhead itself.' Scholem writes further on page 43 of the same book, 'However, the Sefiroth do not appear only in the shape of the tree. They also appear in the form of Primal Man (Adam Kadmon), which corresponds to that of earthly man.'

The Sefirot are layed out as Adam Kadmon with Keter as the head, Chokhmah and Binah represent the right and left lobes of the brain. Gevurah (power or strength) and Chesed (mercy) represent the right and left arms, Tiferet the heart. Yesod represents the reproductive organs. Hod and Netzach represents the hands and Malchut the feet as shown in the picture.



Adam Kadmon, however, was not just the image of Elohim. He was actually Elohim himself, as Scholem writes in his book, entitled: 'Kabbalah' saying on page 116 '... *God entered into the form of Adam Kadmon...*' The theology of Elohim is easily understood: there is one Elohim and Yahshua is the visible image of the invisible Elohim. We worship the Father in and through Yahshua. When you are immersed in the name of Yahshua Messiah (Acts 2:38) you are immersed in the name of Elohim, since Yahshua is the righteousness of YHVH, or the one in which we are righteous before Elohim, as witnessed in Jeremiah 23: 5 & 6, as follows: **"Behold, the days are coming," declares YHVH, "When I shall raise up for David a righteous Branch; and He will reign as king and act wisely and do justice and righteousness in the land. (6) In His days Judah will be saved, and Israel will dwell securely; and this is His**

name by which He will be called 'YHVH our righteousness.'"

To align all this with the Scriptures we read from Deuteronomy 33: 27, **"The eternal Elohim is a dwelling place, and underneath are the everlasting arms; and He drove out the enemy from before you, and said 'Destroy!'"** We read further from Isaiah 51: 5, **"My righteousness is near, My salvation has gone forth, and My arms will judge the peoples; the coastlands will wait for Me, and for My arm they will wait expectantly."** As believers in Yahshua, we are all aware that Yahshua is

referred to in various verses in the Scriptures, as the right hand of YHVH, and more specifically in Isaiah 53: 1, as follows: ***'Who has believed our message? And to whom has the arm of YHVH been revealed?'*** From the words recorded in John 12: 37 – 40, we know that even though we know the identity of the right hand of Elohim, His identity has been hidden from our Jewish Brothers by YHVH Himself, in this way: ***"But though He had performed so many signs before them (the Jews of His day), yet they were not believing in Him; (38) that the word of Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled, which he spoke, "YHVH, WHO HAS BELIEVED OUR REPORT? AND TO WHOM HAS THE ARM OF YHVH BEEN REVEALED?" (39) For this cause they could not believe, for Isaiah said again, (40) "HE HAS BLINDED THEIR EYES AND HE HARDENED THEIR HEART; LEST THEY SEE WITH THEIR EYES, AND PERCEIVE WITH THEIR HEART, AND BE CONVERTED, AND I HEAL THEM."*** These very facts are explained in detail by Rav Shaul in Romans 11 and more specifically in verses 25 – 28, as follows: ***'For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery (wow, here we see the word mystery used by Rav Shaul in the Renewed Covenant), lest you be wise in your own estimation, that a partial hardening has happened to Israel (meaning the Jews) until the fullness of the Gentiles (those Israelites from the lost ten tribes, who lost their identity and now believe that they are Gentiles, as well as some real Gentiles) has come in; (26) and thus all Israel (both houses) will be saved; just as it is written, "THE DELIVERER WILL COME FROM ZION, HE WILL REMOVE UNGODLINESS FROM JACOB. (27) AND THIS IS MY COVENANT WITH THEM, WHEN I TAKE AWAY THEIR SINS."*** (28) ***From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of Elohim's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers.'***

In validation to the picture of a man or more correctly the image of Elohim, pictured before, we read from Isaiah 11: 1, ***'Then a shoot will spring from the stem of Jesse, and a branch from his roots will bear fruit. And the Spirit of YHVH will rest on Him, The spirit of wisdom and understanding, The spirit of counsel and strength (or power), The spirit of knowledge and the fear of YHVH.'*** These very facts are also confirmed by Rav Shaul in first Corinthians 1: 24, as follows: ***"But to those who are the called (meaning us), both Jews and Greeks, Messiah the power of Elohim and the wisdom of Elohim."*** In fact the prophet Jeremiah tells us in Jeremiah 32: 17, ***'Ah YHVH Elohim! Behold, Thou hast made the heavens and the earth by Thy great power and by Thine outstretched arm! Nothing is too difficult for Thee.'*** The concept of (YHVH)'s outstretched arm is first mentioned in Exodus 6: 6, and is continued throughout the Tanach and especially in the Psalms where David wrote in Psalm 98: 1 & 2, in this way: ***'O sing to YHVH a new song, for He has done wonderful things, His right hand and His holy arm have gained the victory for Him. (2) YHVH has made known His salvation; He has revealed His righteousness in the sight of the nations.'***

It is also for this very reason that Rav Shaul wrote in Romans 1: 18 – 20, ***'For the wrath of Elohim is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, (19) because that which is known about Elohim is evident within them; for Elohim made it evident to them'¹⁶. (20) For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes¹⁷, His eternal power (Yahshua) and divine nature (the Set-apart Spirit), have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse.'*** Yes, brethren as we are made-up of body, soul and spirit, so is our Elohim composed of body (Yahshua), soul and spirit (the Set-apart Spirit).

Because YHVH is described as eternal, immortal, invisible, it is difficult for man's mind to understand Him. This is also why YHVH is referred to in Kabbalah as the 'Eyn Sof'. Eyn Sof is the very essence of Elohim, as in Hebrew Eyn means 'there is nothing' and Sof means 'end', 'termination', 'border' or

¹⁶ First Thessalonians 5: 23, ***'Now may the Elohim of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Master Yahshua Messiah.'***

¹⁷ First Timothy 1: 17, ***'Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only Elohim, be honor and glory forever and ever. Amen.'***

'definition'. Together, Eyn Sof implies without definition or borders. To tell the truth, Eyn Sof cannot be defined and we cannot even understand the term.

Consider for a moment another person, a table, or even your computer. These things are all composed of "matter" that cannot be defined unless they are bordered. They are molecules that cannot be seen or defined, unless they are bound together. When we as believers die, or lives or souls come to an end and our bodies are buried and returns to the dust from which it was made. Our human spirit that combined with Elohim's Spirit given us at immersion, returns to the Father as is confirmed in Ecclesiastes 12: 7. Even though the believer's borders have been removed, yet such a believer exists, even if he/she is not conscious of this fact. In support of this, Yahshua said to Martha in John 11: 25 & 26, ***"I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me shall live even if he dies, (26) and everyone who lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?"*** This is talking about the spirits of true believers, that go back to YHVH when we die, and are perfected in heaven according to Hebrews 12: 23, as follows: ***'to the general assembly and ecclesia of the first-born, who are enrolled in heaven, and to Elohim, the Judge of all, and to the spirits of righteous men made perfect.'*** Eyn Sof is boundless; there is nothing outside of it. It transcends and conceals itself, it is the essence of everything hidden and revealed. Eyn Sof cannot be expressed, though it is intimated in everything that exists, as there is nothing outside of it. No letter, no name, no writing, nothing can define or confine it, yet the Scriptures do assign attributes to YHVH our Elohim.

These attributes can clearly be seen in the following passages in the Tanach:

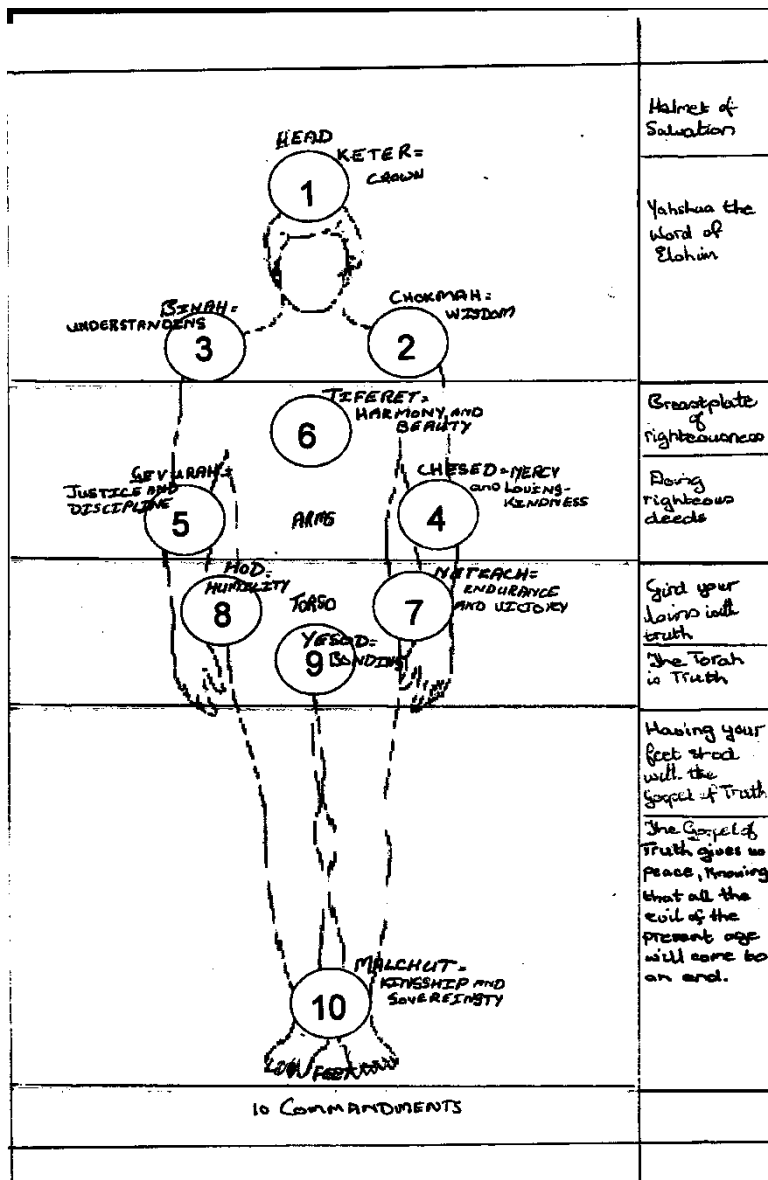
Isaiah 11: 2, "And the Spirit of YHVH (Keter) will rest on Him, the spirit of wisdom (Chochmah) and understanding (Binah), the spirit of counsel (Atzah) and strength (Gevurah), the spirit of knowledge (Da'at) and of the fear (yirah) of YHVH."; First Chronicles 29:11, "Thine, O YHVH, is the greatness (Chesed), and the power (Gevurah), and the glory (Tiferet), and the victory (Netzach), and the majesty (Hod), indeed everything that is in the heavens and in the earth; Thine is the dominion (Malkut), O YHVH, and Thou dost exalt Thyself as head over all."; Isaiah 28: 16, "Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a tested stone, a costly cornerstone for the foundation (Yesod) firmly placed. He who believes in it will not be disturbed."; Second Chronicles 20: 21, "Give thanks to YHVH, for His lovingkindness (mercy - Chesed) is everlasting."

These attributes list out as follows:

1. The Spirit of YHVH (called Crown [Keter]).
2. Wisdom (Chockmah).
3. Understanding (Binah).
4. Mercy, LOVE (Chesed)
5. Severity, power (Gevurah).
6. Harmony/Beauty (Tiferet).
7. Victory (Netzach).
8. Splendor (Hod).
9. Foundation (Yesod).
10. Kingdom/Kingship (Malchut).

These ten attributes are also known in Kabbalah as the emanation of the ten Sefirot which makes up three lights known as tzachtzachot (splendors).

This also takes us back to a recent sermon entitled; The Image of Elohim in which we discussed another concept taken from Kabbalah, namely the full armor of Elohim. I include a picture of the image of Elohim again, as well as a discussion explaining the full armor of Elohim, as follows:



The first three attributes; namely the Crown, Wisdom and Understanding relate to the Helmet of Salvation. The second three attributes; namely Harmony (or beauty), Mercy and Severity (or power) relate to the heart or Breastplate of Righteousness. The third three attributes; namely Victory, Splendor and Foundation relate to the groin or The Belt of Truth. And the last attribute; namely Kingdom relates to the feet or Shoes of Peace or Nobility (Kingship). We are admonished by Rav Shaul in Ephesians 6: 11 – 19, to put these, also known as the full armor of Elohim, on, to protect us from principalities (rulers), powers, the world forces of darkness and against the spiritual forces of wickedness in heavenly places. This is talking about four classes of demons.

Comparing these four types of demons, we see that

they relate to the body segments of the image of Elohim. This full armor is therefore for our protection from head to toe. The Helmet of Salvation protects us from the evil spirits under heaven, known as principalities. The Breastplate of Righteousness protects us from powers, the Belt of Truth protects us from the rulers of darkness of this world, and the Shoes of Peace protect us from the forces of wickedness in heavenly places. Obviously there are four classes of demons parallel to the four body segments of the image of Elohim. The four pieces of armor, is put in place to protect us from the four strategies that Satan uses to deceive mankind. Each of the four items of the full armor of Elohim contrasts each of the basic tactics of Satan as expressed in the Tanach:

Helmet of Salvation <> Accusation (Zechariah 3: 1-5)

*The Helmet of Salvation protects us from Satan's tactics of accusation. In 1 Thessalonians 5: 8 it is referred to as the Helmet of Hope of Salvation. Accusation is the primary tactic of Satan. He accuses us day and night according to Revelation 12: 10. The Renewed Covenant refers to Yahshua as the head of the body. Therefore Yahshua is the Helmet of our Hope of Salvation. We read from James 1: 12, "**Blessed is the Man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which YHVH has promised to those who love Him.**" Rav Shaul wrote in 2 Timothy 4: 8, "**in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which YHVH, the righteous***

Judge, will award to me on that day, and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.” The apostle John wrote in the last part of Revelation 2: 10, “Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.” We also read from Revelation 3: 11, “I am coming quickly; hold fast what you have, that no one take your crown.”

The Helmet of Salvation is not only the crown, but also knowledge and as we read from Hosea 4: 6, “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge.” Satan is the accuser of the brethren, but in Zechariah 3: 1 - 5 we see that Satan also accused Yahshua, for wearing filthy garments. But, because Yahshua is the Helmet of Salvation, and due to the fact that He overcame Satan’s temptation and accusations, YHVH clothed Him in clean garments and placed a clean Turban on His head. This Turban reminds us of the Helmet of the Hope of our Salvation and this knowledge defends us against the attack of accusation.

Breastplate of Righteousness <> Temptation/pride (1 Chronicles 21: 1)

Putting on the Breastplate of Righteousness protects us from the tactics of pride and temptation. Temptation is a major tactic of Satan as may be read from 1 Thessalonians 3: 5. Satan tempts us through our own pride. King David was made vulnerable to Satan’s attack as he took pride in Israel as may be read from 1 Chronicles 21: 1. We put the Breastplate of Righteousness on by doing righteous deeds.

Belt of Truth <> Lies/Deception (Genesis 3: 1 - 6)

*Putting on the belt of truth defends us from the tactic of deception. We read from John 8: 32, “**and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.**” We read further from the last part of Psalm 119: 142: “**And Thy law (Torah) is truth.**” We put the Belt of Truth on by studying (YHVH)’s Torah daily.*

Shoes of Peace <> Oppression (Job & Acts 10: 38)

*Putting on the Shoes of Peace defends us from Satan’s tactic of oppression. Shalom means more than peace, it also means to be united, to be whole or complete and to be at peace. The shoes correspond to the feet which represents Kingdom. During the 1000 year rule of Yahshua we will have complete peace. - The gospel of the coming kingdom of Elohim gives us peace, knowing that all the evil of the present age will come to an end. This sheds light on what it means to put on the full armor of Elohim. If we believe in Yahshua the Helmet of Salvation, practice righteousness, study and obey Torah, and believe in the true gospel we will have put on the full armor of Elohim to protect us from all evil. This will also help us to overcome Satan, the world and our selves, and ultimately after YHVH has perfected our spirits in Heaven (Hebrews 12: 23) and Yahshua returns to resurrect our bodies and souls we shall be like Him, as witnessed in 1 John 3: 1 & 2, “**See how great a love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called children of Elohim; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. (2) Beloved, now we are children of Elohim, and it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is.**”*

This brings us to another Kabbalah concept in the Scriptures, namely the Word of YHVH. By looking at the Targums – authoritative Aramaic paraphrases of the books of the Tanach which are read in the synagogues along with the Hebrew of the Torah and Haftarah readings; we get some idea as to how ancient Judaism understood the passages mentioned earlier. Often the Targums come to passages where YHVH is substituted by ‘The Word (Memra) of YHVH’ for YHVH. The Word of YHVH was according to Targum Jonathan, the Creator, as follows:

And the Word [Memra] of YHVH created man in his likeness, in the likeness of YHVH, YHVH created, male and female created He them. (Targum Jonathan Gen. 1: 27)

This idea is also used in the Jerusalem Targum, as follows:

And the Word [Memra] of YHVH said to Moses: "I am He who said unto the world 'Be!' and it was: and who in the future shall say to it 'Be!' and it shall be." And He said: "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel: 'I AM' has sent me to you." (Jerusalem Targum Ex. 3: 14)

Both these sections agree with what we read from Psalm 33: 6¹⁸ and John 1: 1, in this way: ***'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with Elohim, and the Word was Elohim.'*** We also read from Genesis 15: 4 – 6, as follows: ***'Then behold, the word of YHVH came to him, saying, "This man will not be your heir; but one shall come forth from your own body, he shall be your heir." (5) And He took him outside and said, "Now look toward the heavens, and count the stars, if you are able to count them." And He said to him (Abram), "So shall your descendants be." (6) Then he believed in YHVH; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.'***

We also read from Targum Jonathan in Isaiah 45: 17 that the Word of YHVH is the Savior, in this way:
But Israel shall be saved by the Word of YHVH with an everlasting salvation...

Speaking of the Memra Gershom Schlolem in *'On the Mystical shape of the Godhead: Basic Concepts in the Kabbalah'* (pages 181 -182) states:

The Memra is not merely a linguistic device for overcoming the problem of biblical anthropomorphisms; it has theological significance in its own right. The Memra is a word-permeating force, a reality in the world of matter or mind, the immanent aspect of Elohim, holding all things under its omnipresent sway.

Even though this is only touching the surface of Kabbalah, I hope it will assist those who are totally against Jewish mysticism, to understand that it has nothing to do with witchcraft, but that it simply helps us understand Elohim better.

¹⁸ Psalm 33: 6, ***'By the word of YHVH the heavens were made, and by the breath of His mouth all their host.'***

Chapter 25: Lessons to learn from the life of Sarah.

Our father Abraham married a beautiful woman named Sarah. In fact she was so beautiful that two kings of that time took her into their harems. Both these two rulers were unaware that they were dealing with Elohim's faithful servants Sarah and Abraham. However, both rulers made the mistake because Abraham distorted the truth by introducing Sarah his wife, as his sister. But Sarah was Abraham's half-sister; nonetheless she was also his wife. Even at age 65, she remained very attractive and turned the heads of rulers. Nonetheless, Sarah's inner beauty of faith in Elohim far exceeded her outward beauty.

Over a period of time, Elohim developed Sarah into a courageous, loyal and faithful support for Abraham. Sarah placed herself in Elohim's hands for Him to reshape her perspective – and He changed her doubt into faith. Sarah protected her son Isaac and defended her family life and home by forcing the banishment of her handmaiden Hagar, who had a son named Ishmael by Abraham. Sarah remained faithful to her husband no matter what. Even though Sarah's shortcomings were typical of any day, her virtues serve as an example for women and men forever.

Sarah was a suitable partner for Abraham and shines as a faithful wife and mother. In fact she is often referred to as the mother of all faithful women. We read fittingly from Isaiah 51: 1 & 2, ***“Listen to me, you who pursue righteousness, who seek YHVH: Look to the rock from which you were hewn, and to the quarry from which you were dug. (2) Look to Abraham your father, and to Sarah who gave birth to you in pain; when he was one (single) I called him, then I blessed him and multiplied him.”*** As Abraham's wife Sarah also rose above the occasional anxieties of married life. Because husbands and wives can and have different perspectives based on facts and intuition, wives can become concerned about their husbands' decisions. This is why it is so very important that there exists good communication channels between married partners, to ensure a healthy marriage. And even though Sarah and Abraham likely had good communication in their marriage, her faith in Elohim helped in this important area of emotional needs.

One of Sarah's most emotional times, must have been when she demanded that Abraham send Hagar and Ishmael away into the wilderness. It must have been a heartrendering scene, a time of great distress in the lives of Sarah, Abraham and Hagar (not forgetting young Ishmael). This was a time of decision for Sarah, but also a time to confirm a declaration of her son Isaac as sole heir to Abraham and Sarah's future blessings. Elohim had previously announced to Abraham that He would continue His covenant through Isaac, not Ishmael, as is recorded in Genesis 17: 19 – 21¹⁹, so this was in accordance with Elohim's purpose.

We read from Genesis 16: 1 – 3, that Sarah gave Hagar her maid to Abram her husband as his wife, as follows: ***‘Now Sarai, Abram's wife had borne him no children, and she had an Egyptian maid whose name was Hagar. (2) So Sarai said to Abram, “Now behold, YHVH has prevented me from bearing children. Please go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children through her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai. (4) And after Abram had lived ten years in the land of Canaan, Abram's wife Sarai took Hagar the Egyptian, her maid, and gave her to her husband Abram, as his wife.’*** We read further from verses 4 – 6, ***‘And he went in to Hagar, and she conceived; and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her sight (Hagar most probably despised Sarai, because she knew that Abram was not the reason for the couple being childless). (5) And Sarai said to Abram, “May the wrong done to me be upon you. I gave you my maid into your***

¹⁹ Genesis 17: 19 – 21, ***‘But Elohim said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac; and I will establish My covenant with him for an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. And as for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him, and will make him fruitful, and will multiply him exceedingly. He shall become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But My covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you at this season next year.”’***

arms; but when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her sight. May YHVH judge between you and me.” (6) But Abram said to Sarai, “Behold, your maid is in your power; do to her what is good in your sight.” So Sarai treated her harshly, and she fled from her presence.’

Sarah also later personally saw 16 year old Ishmael mock young Isaac, as we read from Genesis 21: 9 – 11, in this way: ***‘Now Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Abraham, mocking. (10) Therefore she said to Abraham, “Drive out this maid and her son, for the son of this maid shall not be an heir with my son Isaac.” (11) And the matter distressed Abraham greatly because of his son.’*** We know Ishmael’s age at the time from reading from Genesis 16: 16 and 21: 5 & 8; Ishmael was 13 years old when Isaac was conceived, 14 years old at Isaac’s birth, and about 16 years old when Isaac was weaned. Sarah’s jealousy for Isaac as their only heir complemented Elohim’s promise to Abraham and Sarah, as witnessed in Genesis 21: 12 (as well as in Hebrews 11: 18), as follows: ***“For in Isaac your seed shall be called.”***

Consider Sarah’s situation for a moment, and put yourself in her shoes, asking yourself, what you would have done in a similar situation. Bear in mind that Sarah was 90 years old when Elohim fulfilled His promise that she would bear a son. Hagar was Sarah’s handmaid whom she had given unwisely to Abraham in the hope of *‘helping’* Elohim in His promise to her, a barren old woman. Now the son of this handmaid was mocking Isaac, her very own flesh and blood. In her view, the only peace her family could enjoy would be from the removal of Hagar her handmaid and her son Ishmael. The point is that having Hagar and Ishmael around continually reminded Sarah of the mistake she had made in giving Hagar to Abraham as his wife. The situation must have been unbearable to Sarah.

This situation must have grieved Abraham as well. After all Ishmael was also his flesh and blood son. It must have hurt him deeply to let his son, who was now growing into a young man, go. Abraham must have spent a great deal of time with Ishmael, teaching him many basic life skills that he would need when he would be on his own. However, the soundest resolution to this distressing matter was in Elohim’s hands, as we also read from Genesis 21: 12 & 13, in this way: ***‘But Elohim said to Abraham, “Do not be distressed because of the lad and your maid; whatever Sarah tells you, listen to her, for through Isaac your descendants shall be named. (13) And of the son of the maid I will make a nation also, because he is your descendant.”*** After Elohim told Abraham this he got up early in the morning and gave Hagar and Ishmael bread and water and sent them on their way into the wilderness of Beersheba. We see that Abraham again obeyed Elohim, without any question. No wonder Abraham was called the father of the faithful in Galatians 3: 7 and Romans 4: 16. Even so, it must have been very painful for Abraham to see his son disappear into the wilderness, wondering if he will ever see him again.

Similarly Hagar probably asked herself what she had done to deserve such harsh treatment. There had been hard feelings between her and her mistress since she had conceived Ishmael, but she had been obedient to Sarah and Abraham. However, now, they were sending her and her son into the wilderness, with only bread and water. As she started out with her son across the hot and barren wilderness, she speculated what lay ahead for her and her son. But, Elohim had not forgotten Abraham’s first son and consequently there was hope for Hagar and Ishmael. At the time she could only imagine that death and suffering lay ahead of them. Hagar did not understand that Elohim would take care of her and her son Ishmael, and she was not aware of Elohim’s intention to bless Israel through Isaac, the seed of promise.

Abraham was 99 years old and Sarah was 90 when Isaac was conceived. At that time Sarah must have been well beyond menopause, so Elohim would necessarily have had to perform a miracle for conception to occur. After all, Elohim made a promise and was easily able to fulfill His promise. But, even though Elohim had given His word, both Sarah and Abraham had a lesson to learn about faith and patience. At first they tried to work out things their own way. Abraham and Sarah tried to

improve Elohim's timetable, rather than waiting for Him to perform what He promised them, though they were both beyond the age of procreation. They decided that Elohim meant for them to help Him perform the miracle that He promised them. Picture the scenario for a moment; Sarah may have thought, I have this faithful young handmaiden and maybe Elohim wanted Abraham and me to have a son through her. Next she suggested to Abraham that he should have the child that Elohim promised them, through Hagar.

This sounded reasonable to Abraham, and since it was common practice in the surrounding cultures, he agreed. However, that was not what Elohim had in mind. Yes, this was their attempt to work things out through human reasoning. Elohim also allowed their human reasoning to rule for the moment, and as a result Ishmael was born to Abraham and Hagar. By allowing this to happen Elohim provided us with an understanding of the difference between human effort and faith in Elohim. However, even if we know the will of Elohim, we sometimes try to improve on Elohim's timing by working out His promises through our own effort. What Elohim expects is that we know His will, and with continued patience and faith, we wait on Him to answer according to His promise. During such occasions we do not trust the word of YHWH, when we read Yahshua's words in John 6: 44, where Yahshua said: ***"No one can come to Me, unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day."*** No, we prefer to take matters in our own hands, and try to 'convert' people like our children and family, knowing full well that Elohim does the calling. In addition, by what Yahshua said in the above quoted section, we can be certain that those not called at this time, will be resurrected on the last day, and be given the same chance that those of us called at this time are having.

Certainly there are things that we can do for ourselves and our families. But when it comes to faith, we are dealing with spiritual matters which connect seamlessly, with patience. Elohim is not opposed to our caring for ourselves and our families; but He is opposed to our caring more for ourselves and our families, than for Him and His will, as Yahshua said in Luke 14: 26 & 27, in this way: ***"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate (or more correctly love less) his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. (27) Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple."*** This is what Sarah and her husband Abraham learned through their bitter experiences. Patience is one of the most crucial lessons that Elohim wants us and any believer in Him to learn. In fact this is exactly what Yahshua told His disciples in Luke 21: 19, as follows: ***"By your endurance you will gain your lives (meaning eternal life)."***

Saving our spiritual lives is what is most important to Elohim. This is not to say that faith and patience do not play a role in protecting our physical lives. The example of Daniel proves this to be true. Daniel patiently waited for Elohim to deliver him from the hungry lions, when he was thrown into the lion den, for praying openly to Elohim in defiance of king Darius, as we read from Daniel 6: 16 – 23, in this way: ***'Then the king gave orders and Daniel was brought in and cast into the lions' den. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Your G-d whom you constantly serve will Himself deliver you." (17) And a stone was brought and laid over the mouth of the den; and the king sealed it with his own signet ring and with the signet rings of his nobles, so that nothing might be changed in regard to Daniel. (18) Then the king went off to his palace and spent the night fasting and no entertainment was brought before him; and his sleep fled from him (Daniel was a very useful resource to king Darius and he did not want anything to happen to him.). (19) Then the king arose with the dawn, at the break of day, and went in haste to the lions' den. (20) And when he had come near the den to Daniel, he cried out with a troubled voice. The king spoke and said to Daniel, "Daniel servant of the living G-d, has your G-d, whom you constantly serve, been able to deliver you from the lions?" (21) Then Daniel spoke to the king, "O king live forever! (22) My Elohim sent His angel and shut the lions' mouths, and they have not harmed me, inasmuch as I was found innocent before Him; and also toward you, O king, I have committed no crime." (23) Then the king***

was very pleased and gave orders for Daniel to be taken up out of the den. So Daniel was taken up out of the den, and no injury whatever was found on him, because he had trusted in his Elohim. Elohim heard Daniel's prayers, observed his faith and spared his physical life. Elohim saves our spiritual lives, but often our physical lives as well.

We read from Hebrews 11: 11 & 12 that Sarah was patient and faithful, waiting on Elohim, as follows: ***'By faith even Sarah herself received ability to conceive, even beyond the proper time of life, since she considered Him faithful who had promised; (12) therefore, also, there was born of one man, and him as good as dead at that, as many descendants AS THE STARS OF HEAVEN IN NUMBER, AND INNUMERABLE AS THE SAND WHICH IS BY THE SEASHORE.'*** So we see that the entire miraculous event was based on her patiently waiting on Elohim's answer.

We should not conclude the account of Sarah without the fact that when YHVH promised her she would bear a son in her advanced age, she privately laughed about such an apparent absurdity. According to Genesis 18: 10 – 15, Elohim said to Abraham: ***"I will surely return to you at this time next year; and behold, Sarah your wife shall have a son."*** And Sarah was listening at the tent door, which was behind him. (11) ***Now Abraham and Sarah were old, advanced in age: Sarah was past childbearing.*** (12) ***And Sarah laughed to herself, saying, "After I have become old. Shall I have pleasure, my lord being old also?"*** (13) ***And YHVH said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh, saying, 'Shall I indeed bear a child, when I am so old?'*** (14) ***Is anything too difficult for YHVH? At the appointed time I will return to you, at this time next year, and Sarah shall have a son."*** (15) ***Sarah denied it however, saying, "I did not laugh"; for she was afraid. And He said, "No, but you did laugh."***

Reading this portion of the scriptures in isolation; the dialogue between Elohim and Sarah appears to be insignificant. However the discussion continues and is also mentioned in the Renewed Covenant (Romans 9: 6 - 9), where it takes on new meaning. Moses shows us how the nature of Sarah's laughter changed in Genesis 21: 1, 2 & 6, as follows: ***'Then YHVH took note of Sarah as He had, and YHVH did for Sarah as He had promised. (2) So Sarah conceived and bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the appointed time of which Elohim had spoken to him. (6) And Sarah said, "Elohim has made laughter for me; everyone who hears will laugh with me."*** Yes, originally the 90 year old Sarah laughed at the apparent absurdity of her delivering a son. Her reaction was laughing in doubt, but after she actually gave birth to Isaac, her skepticism changed to laughter of joy. At that point she enjoyed the laughter of faith. Just imagine the satisfaction she must have felt.

Sarah's example is recorded in the book of Hebrews 11, which tells of many inspiring stories of faith. Even though she is only mentioned briefly in this section, she ranks with all the faithful in the Scriptures. It is for this very reason that Rav Kepha also praised all faithful woman throughout the ages, by writing in first Peter 3: 6, ***'Thus Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord, and you have become her children if you do what is right without being frightened by any fear.'*** Like our fathers in the faith Sarah is a shining example of the practice of faith. Halleluyah!

Chapter 26: Yahshua speaks about two house restoration.

The restoration of the two houses of Israel is spoken about throughout the Scriptures, but what did Yahshua our Messiah have to say about it? To start with Yahshua clearly stated in Matthew 15: 24, ***"I was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."*** A second witness to this comes from Luke 19: 10 (and Matthew 18: 11), where Yahshua said: ***"For the Son of Man has come to seek and to save that which was lost."*** In addition Yahshua spoke to His disciples after instructing them in Matthew 10: 5, saying: ***"Do not go in the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter any city of the Samaritans; (6) but rather go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel."***

Even so, where does Yahshua talk about the fundamentals of the two house restoration in more detail? This teaching is like most other important issues to YHVH hidden in plain sight in the Scriptures. This means that if we want to get the details about what Yahshua taught, we have to search out the hidden matters, as witnessed in Proverbs 25: 2, in this way: ***'It is the glory of Elohim to conceal a matter, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter.'*** Now, you might say: *'But we are only normal everyday people, not kings, so why do we have to search for it?'* In answer to this question, we read from Revelation 1: 5 & 6: ***'And from Yahshua Messiah, the faithful witness, the first-born of the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To Him who loves us, and released us from our sins by His blood, (6) and He has made us to be a kingdom, priest to His Elohim and Father; to Him be the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.'*** As co-rulers under Yahshua in the coming kingdom of Elohim, we need to make sure that we know what Yahshua taught, if we truly want to be known by Him when He returns one day.

However to be able to discover what Yahshua had to say about two house restoration in the Scriptures, we need to go and see what the prophets had to say about the matter in the Tanach. Let's therefore turn to the book of Hosea, where YHVH through Hosea is telling us about the rebellious house of Israel and what He is planning for those of us alive during the time of the end. The name Hosea, like Joshua and Yahshua, simply means salvation in Hebrew. In Hosea 1: 2, the prophet Hosea is commanded by YHVH to marry a whore. In response to (YHVH)'s command Hosea obediently marries Gomer (Hosea 1: 3). Gomer became the whorish wife of Hosea just as the house of Israel was a whorish wife to YHVH. YHVH prophetically staged His putting away (or divorcing) the house of Israel through the naming of Hosea's three children. YHVH tells Hosea to name his first-born son 'Jezreel' (Hosea 1: 4). The name Jezreel literally means *'Elohim sows by scattering'* – YHVH is therefore saying that He will take the house of Israel out of the Promised Land and scatter them into the nations of the world, as He also told Abram in Genesis 13: 14 – 16, as follows: ***'And YHVH said to Abram, after Lot had separated from him, "Now lift up your eyes and look from the place where you are northward and southward and eastward and westward; (15) for all the land which you see, I will give it to you and your descendants forever. (16) And I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if anyone can number the dust of the earth, then your descendants can also be numbered."***

In Hosea 1: 6, YHVH tells Hosea to name the second child 'Lo-ruhamah' – meaning 'no mercy/no compassion' in Hebrew. YHVH is essentially saying to Hosea that after He has scattered the house of Israel, he will no longer have mercy on them. Next YHVH tells Hosea to name his third child with Gomer, 'Lo-ammi' – meaning 'not my people' in Hebrew. YHVH is therefore telling Hosea that the house of Israel is no longer His people. This final statement is a very strong judgment on the house of Israel and the prophet Jeremiah confirms the same in the first part of Jeremiah 3: 8, saying: ***"And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had send her away and given her a writ of divorce."*** However, when reading further in chapter 1 of Hosea we see that even though YHVH has scattered us, the lost ten tribes of the house of Israel amongst the nations of the world, in the end He will have compassion on both us and Judah, as we read in Hosea 1: 11, in this way: ***'And the sons of Judah and the sons of Israel will be gathered together, and they will appoint for themselves one***

leader (Messiah, also known as the son of David), **and they will go from the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.**' YHVH promises to save those of us from the Lost Ten Tribes, whom He calls out of the world and who answers His call to return to Him in obedience, together with the Torah observant Jews.

If we make it, we will with the faithful Torah observant Jews, become kings and priests under Yahshua. It is for this reason that YHVH is telling Brother Judah in Isaiah 66: 20 & 21, saying: ***"Then they shall bring all your brethren from all the nations as a grain offering to YHVH, on horses, in chariots, in litters, on mules, and on camels, to My set-apart mountain Jerusalem," says YHVH, "just as the sons of Israel bring their grain offering in a clean vessel to the house of YHVH. (21) I will also take some of them for priests and for Levites," says YHVH.***' The valley of Jezreel referred to in Hosea 1: 11, is approximately 10 miles from the Jordan and extends north-west toward Mount Carmel near the Mediterranean Sea. Even though YHVH has scattered us the lost ten tribes into all the nations of the world, He tells us here (in verse 11) that He will again gather us and the sons of Judah together. This is one of many Scriptural witnesses for those Assemblies of YHVH and Nazarene Israelites who are too anti-Semitic to believe that we will be joined together with Brother Judah in the end.

In Hosea 2: 1 YHVH talks to Jezreel, saying: ***'Say to your brothers, "Ammi," and to your sisters, "Ruhamah."*** Here YHVH informs Jezreel through Hosea that they will again become His people and He will again have compassion on them, essentially saying the exact opposite of His original pronouncement in Hosea 1. We read further from verse 2 to the 1st part of verse 5, ***"Contend with your mother, contend, for she is not my wife, and I am not her husband; and let her put away her harlotry from her face, and her adultery from between her breasts, (3) Lest I strip her naked and expose her as on the day when she was born. I will also make her like a wilderness, make her like desert land, and slay her with thirst. (4) Also I will have no compassion on her children, because they are children of harlotry. (5) For their mother has played the harlot; she who conceived them has acted shamefully."*** Although the accusations made here are against Gomer, it is depicted as a courtroom in which YHVH is the plaintive, bringing charges against the nation of Israel, where the physical acts of Gomer's immorality is likened to the spiritual idolatry of Israel. Continuing in the 2nd part of verse 5, we read: ***"For she said, 'I will go after my lovers. Who give me my bread and my water, my wool and my flax, my oil and my drink.'"*** The words 'I will go' indicates Israel's intense desire for the pagan idols of her neighbors, forgetting that YHVH is our provider, and showing that nothing would deter her from chasing after her lovers. This describes the frenzy with which Christians are planning for their upcoming pagan festivities.

Verses 6 – 8 of Hosea 2, informs us about the action that YHVH will take to force us (from the house of Israel) to return to Him, as follows: ***"Therefore, behold, I will hedge up her way with thorns, and I will build a wall against her so that she cannot find her paths. (7) And she will pursue her lovers, but she will not overtake them; and she will seek them, but will not find them. Then she will say, 'I will go back to my first husband, for it was better for me then than now!' (8) For she does not know that it was I who gave her the grain, the new wine, and the oil, and lavished on her silver and gold, which they used for Baal."*** The nation of Israel started worshipping Baal during the time of the judges and it became firmly established when King Ahab married Jezebel. She did everything in her power to stop Israel from worshiping YHVH. We understand from verse 8 that the offerings that Israel used in worshiping Baal, actually came from YHVH. We read from verses 9 & 10, YHVH saying through Hosea, ***"Therefore, I will take back My grain at harvest time and my new wine in its season. I will also take away My wool and My flax given to cover her nakedness. (10) And then I will uncover her lewdness in the sight of her lovers, and no one will rescue her out of My hand."*** YHVH pledges to put an end to the luxurious lifestyles the house of Israel got used to during the past few centuries and to expose her wickedness for all to see, adding that not one of her idols will be able to save her from what is coming upon her. Continuing in similar vein in verse 11, we read: ***"I***

will also put an end to all her gaiety, her feasts, her new moons, and her sabbaths, and all her festal assemblies.” Soon after Israel left Egypt they started mixing idol worship with the worship of Elohim; and continued doing so to this day, by keeping Xmas and the like, saying they do it for Him. This is confirmed about the house of Israel in 2 Kings 17: 33, as follows: ***‘They feared YHVH and served their own gods according to the custom of the nations from among whom they had been carried away into exile.’***

In fact Hosea 2: 11 talks about the house of Israel’s feasts, new moons and sabbaths, not those ordained by YHVH through Moses. This could only mean worshipping on Sundays, Xmas and Easter, but could also mean the annual feast days that some keep at different times to when Judah keeps them. YHVH is not pleased with these feast days and informs us the latter day descendants of Israel, how He will punish us to force us to return to Him, as recorded in verses 12 – 15, in this way: ***“And I will destroy her vines and fig trees, of which she said, ‘These are my wages which my lovers have given me.’ And I will make them a forest, and the beasts of the field will devour them. (This is happening right now In South Africa.) (13) And I will punish her for the days of the Baals (Xmas, Easter, valentines and Halloween) when she used to offer sacrifices to them and adorn herself with her earrings and jewelry, and follow her lovers, so that she forgot Me’ declares YHVH. (14) Therefore, behold, I will allure her, bring her into the wilderness, and speak kindly to her. (15) Then I will give her vineyards from there, and the valley of Achor (valley of trouble) as a door of hope. And she will sing there as in the days of her youth, as in the day when she came up from the land of Egypt.”*** However, we are assured here that YHVH will again speak kindly to Israel, and restore her to Himself. Praise YHVH for He tells us that our punishment will not last forever. What a merciful Elohim do we serve.

We read appropriately from verse 16, ***“And it will come about in that day,” declares YHVH, “That you will call Me Ishi (meaning my husband) and no longer call Me Baali (meaning my master).”*** Ishi denotes affection, whereas Baali denotes rulership. We are told in verse 17 that YHVH is going to remove the names of the Baals (pagan gods) from our mouths, so that we do not mention them any longer. YHVH is not pleased with the false names that the people in the lost ten tribes use in worshipping Him. Continuing in verse 18, we read: ***‘In that day I will also make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field, the birds of the sky, and the creeping things of the ground. And I will abolish the bow, the sword, and war from the land, and will make them lie down in safety.’*** This gives us a preview into the time after Messiah’s return, when He will have restored everything to what it was like in paradise, when all nations will be subject to Him.

These are very encouraging Scriptures, but we still need to find out where Yahshua spoke about two house restoration in the Scriptures? Let’s look at the first few verses in Yahshua’s Sermon on the Mount with eyes of discernment. It is here where Yahshua reveals His systematic plan for the restoration of the house of Israel. To see the two house restoration teaching in these verses, we need to focus on the promises made in each verse. Starting in verse 3 of Matthew 5, we read: ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.”*** (It is in heaven at this time, but we know that Yahshua proclaimed its coming to earth in the near future). We read further from verses 4 – 8: ***“Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted. (5) Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth. (6) Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied. (7) Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy. (8) Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see Elohim.”***

Now let’s consider each promise in turn to see how verses 3 – 5 reveal a three-step plan for reversing the alarming message that Hosea prophesied to happen; with the next three verses giving a three-step witness to the same: The words ***“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”*** inform us that we who were called *‘not my people’*, will again, one day soon,

become Elohim's people in His coming Kingdom. We are referred to here as *'the poor in spirit'* because our rebellious spirits are broken and even though we have discovered that we are part of the lost ten tribes, we are remorsefully longing to be fully reconciled to our heavenly Father. We are promised to be *'Elohim's people'* once again, which is a reversal of Hosea's *'Lo-ammi'* proclamation.

The words ***"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted"*** is a promise that those who mourn for the sins of Israel and because they received *'no mercy'* during their time of trouble in exile, will again be consoled, encouraged and strengthened by Elohim. This is a reversal of Hosea's proclamation of *'Lo-ruhamah'* in Hosea 1.

The words ***"Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth"*** is a promise that certain ones as also mentioned in Psalm 37 will inherit the earth. Let's turn to Psalm 37, where we read about the ones who will inherit the land transliterated as *'eretz'* in Hebrew, meaning the land of Israel or more specifically the Promised Land. We read from verses 9, 11, 22, 29 and 34 of Psalm 37 who the ones are who will inherit the land, as Follows:

(9) ***"For evildoers will be cut off, but those who wait for YHVH, they will inherit the land."*** Those who wait for YHVH does not sit doing nothing, they do everything in their power to get into the Kingdom of Elohim, by regularly praying and studying Elohim's word, to get to know Him better as the time draws near.

(11) ***"But the humble will inherit the land, and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity."*** It is only when we are humble like little children who do not yet know how to brag about their superior knowledge that we can truly learn to know our Master. When we humble ourselves before YHVH, He will receive us, as he said in Matthew 18: 4, in this way: ***"Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven."***

(22) ***"For those blessed by Him will inherit the land; but those cursed by Him will be cut off."*** We read about the blessings and curses by Elohim from Deuteronomy 28. Under what conditions will we be blessed and under what other conditions will we be cursed. We read the answers to these questions from verses 13 & 15 of Deuteronomy 28, as follows: ***"And YHVH shall make you the head and not the tail, and you only shall be above, and you shall not be underneath, if you will listen to the commandments of YHVH your Elohim, which charge you today, to observe them carefully. (15) But it shall come about, if you will not obey YHVH your Elohim, to observe to do all His commandments and His statutes with which I charge you today, that all these curses shall come upon you and overtake you."***

(29) ***"The righteous will inherit the land, and dwell in it forever."*** Righteous people are those who do righteousness, as opposed to lawlessness which is sin. We read from Psalm 119: 172, ***"Let my tongue sing thy word, for all Thy commandments are righteousness."*** Righteous people are those who obey all Elohim's commandments. The words *'dwell in it forever'*, shows they will have gained eternal life, at Messiah's return.

(34) ***"Wait for YHVH, and keep His way, and He will exalt you to inherit the land; when the wicked are cut off, you will see it."*** So we see that these four verses in Psalm 37 are all a reversal of the *'Jezreel'* proclamation by Hosea.

Isn't this wonderful? In the first three verses of Yahshua's first major teaching, he proclaims a marvelous threefold prophetic restoration of the dreadful threefold prophetic proclamation made by Hosea. Even so, let everything be established by two or three witnesses as Yahshua said in Matthew 18: 16. Now let's turn our focus on the next three blessings in Yahshua's teaching in Matthew 5:

We read accordingly from verse 6: ***"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied."*** With what shall they be satisfied? Simply put, they shall be satisfied by what they hunger and thirst for. Let's in this case turn to Psalm 18: 24, for another definition of righteousness, as follows: ***"Therefore YHVH has recompensed me according to my righteousness,***

according to the cleanness of my hands in His eyes.’ This is talking about our application of the commandments or Torah in what we do with our hands. Do we commit sin with our hands or do we do what is right – do we help the less fortunate and work to earn a living, or do we steal, kill and murder with our hands. We need to praise YHVH for His gift of righteousness; He has made us righteous through faith in Yahshua as witnessed in Romans 8: 3 & 4, in this way: ***“For what the Law could not do, weak as it was through the flesh, Elohim did: sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and as an offering for sin, He condemned sin in the flesh, (4) in order that the requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit.”*** Because of trusting faith in Yahshua’s sacrifice for us, the right standing of the house of Israel in the eyes of YHVH has been restored. Those in right standing with YHVH are no longer, ‘not My people.’ Here Yahshua provides a witness to the reversal of the ‘Lo-ammi’ declaration of Hosea.

Continuing in Matthew 5: 7, we read: ***“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.”*** We are merciful if we forgive other their transgressions against us, including those who owe us money and cannot repay because of the current economic conditions. Another word for mercy is compassion. We are truly compassionate when we help those who are poor and cannot repay us, instead of demanding that they be imprisoned for debt owed us. Yahshua here provides us with a witness to the reversal of the ‘Lo-ruhamah’ declaration of Hosea.

Finally we read from verse 8 of Matthew 5: ***“Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see Elohim.”*** YHVH looks at our hearts – our belief system. Do we practice what we preach, or do we deceive people by not telling the whole truth. We need to remember that we are able to deceive other people, but YHVH knows exactly what we do and say. This is saying that those who are pure in their hearts, will see Yahshua at His return to earth one day on Yom Teruah, as witnessed in first Thessalonians 4: 13 – 17, in this way: ***‘But we do not want you to be uninformed, brethren, about those who are asleep, that you may not grieve, as so the rest who have no hope. (14) For if we believe that Yahshua died and rose again, even so Elohim will bring with Him those who have fallen asleep in Yahshua. (15) For this we say to you by the word of the Master, that we who are alive, and remain until the coming of the Master, shall not precede those who have fallen asleep. (16) For the Master Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of the archangel, and with the trumpet of Elohim; and the dead in Messiah shall rise first. (17) Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Master in the air (on the Mount of Olives), and thus shall always be with the Master.’*** Yahshua will one day rule the world from Jerusalem. If we overcome Satan, the world and our own human nature, we will be with Him and see Him in the Promised Land. This is clearly a complete reversal of the ‘Jezreel’ declaration of Hosea.

Yahshua was sent to seek and save the lost sheep of the house of Israel. Praise YHVH, He overturned the threefold divorce proclamation of Hosea 1 and Jeremiah 3. He did this by systematically reversing each of the dreadful proclamations by Hosea, promising restoration at each step. This is interestingly enough; the same method of restoration that Yahshua used with Kepha following Kepha’s threefold denial of Him after His betrayal by Judas Iscariot. Kepha denied Yahshua three times and Yahshua provided a three-step restoration in John 21: 15 – 17, as follows: ***‘So when they had finished breakfast, Yahshua said to Simon Peter, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?” He said to Him, “Yes, Master; You know that I love you.” He said to him, “Tend My lambs” (16) He said to him again a second time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” He said to Him, “Yes, Master; You know that I love You.” He said to him, “Shepherd My sheep.” (17) He said to him the third time, “Simon, son of John, do you love Me?” Kepha was grieved because He said to him the third time, “Do you love Me?” And he said to Him, “Master, You know all things: You know that I love You.” Yahshua said to him, “Tend My sheep.”’*** Despite Rav Kepha having denied Yahshua

three times, Yahshua restored him as a teacher sent by Him (an apostle) to teach the men, women and children in the ecclesia of Elohim.

The parallel of Hosea's and Yahshua's teachings go one step further. Matthew 5: 9 reads: ***"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of Elohim."*** This agrees with Hosea 1: 10, in this way: ***'Yet the number of the sons of Israel will be like the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured or numbered; and it will come about that, in the place where it is said to them, "You are not My people, "it will be said to them, "you are the sons of the living Elohim."*** The restoration of (YHVH)'s people to Himself is the primary message of Yahshua. This message is of such importance to our loving Father that He sent Yahshua to deliver His loving message of restoration to His lost sheep.

Let these encouraging words fill your spirit, as we conclude by reading from Hosea 2: 19 – 23, as follows: ***"And I will betroth you to Me forever; yes I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, in lovingkindness and in passion, (20) and I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know YHVH. (21) And this will come about in that day that I will respond," declares YHVH. "I will respond to the heavens and they will respond to the earth, (22) and the earth will respond to the grain, to the new wine, and to the oil, and they will respond to Jezreel. (23) And I will sow her for Myself in the land. I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion, and I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they will say, 'Thou art My Elohim!'"*** YHVH repeats three times, that He will again betroth Israel to Himself, showing the intensity of His love for her. At that time Israel will have returned to Elohim and will no longer be a harlot; He will remarry her and will also provide the entire dowry. What a fantastic future awaits true believers. Baruch HaShem YHVH!

This book is published on behalf of the Nazarene Israelite Two House Congregation of Port Elizabeth an Internet ministry based in Port Elizabeth South Africa. Postal Address: P O Box 15935, Emerald Hill. 6011. Port Elizabeth. South Africa.

Note: All Scriptures quoted from the New American Standard Bible, unless otherwise indicated.

All our material may be downloaded from the Hebrew Roots Teaching Institute's website at www.hrti.co.za at a nominal cost to help cover their administrative costs.

**This book is for educational
purposes only and is not to be sold.**