

**FESTIVAL'S,
HOLIDAYS'S
AND
FREEDOM IN
MESSIAH**



Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

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Galatians - Getting a Good Grip on G-d's Great Grace

A Summary Paper by Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

In this epistle, the Apostle Paul, formerly known as Rabbi Saul, is dealing with the troublesome heresy of **Judaizing** that seemed to follow his ministry. This dangerous and damnable doctrine was propagated by a group of very passionate, but sincerely wrong, zealous missionaries for *Moses then Messiah*, who believed with every fiber of their being that the keeping of the Torah was an absolutely necessary prerequisite for receiving salvation through faith in Y'shua the Messiah.

Paul begins this epistle by explaining that his apostolic calling was from G-d and not from men. From the outset he is establishing the crux of the gospel message that he has been called to proclaim to the nations.

Grace and peace to you from G-d our Father and the L-RD Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah, who gave Himself for our sins to rescue us from this present evil age, according to the will of our G-d and Father, to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen. Galatians 1:3-5

He struggled to understand how Gentiles could be drawn away from the grace of Messiah to another gospel, which was really no gospel at all, since gospel means **Good News**, and how could a message of Y'shua plus anything, be considered good news? What did He die for anyway? So we could work harder or work smarter? The apostle was enraged by such foolishness. Especially, from those whom he had so recently visited. He was so angered by this corrupt concept that he put a curse upon anyone who would dare to preach such rank heresy.

Evidently, some people are throwing you into confusion and are trying to pervert the gospel of Messiah. But even if we or any angel from heaven should preach a gospel other than the one we preached to you, let him be eternally condemned! Galatians 1:7-8

At the end of Chapter 2, Paul draws from his confrontation with Peter to make his argument for not seeking justification (legally declared righteous before G-d) by works, but rather justification only through faith in Messiah, plus nothing else.

*We, who were born into observant Jewish families and have not lived as Gentiles, know that a man is not justified by observing the Torah, but by faith in Y'shua the Messiah. Therefore, we too, have put our faith in Messiah Jesus that we may be justified by faith in Messiah and not by observing the Torah, **because by observing the Torah, no one will be justified. I am crucified with Messiah, it is no longer I who live, but Messiah who lives in me. I do not set aside the grace of G-d, for if righteousness could be gained through the observance of Torah, Messiah died for nothing! Galatians 2:15-16 & 20-21***

Paul expresses his contempt for the Galatians departure from his clear teaching on salvation by faith in Messiah alone. He uses some of the most emotionally volatile language recorded in any of his epistles.

You foolish Galatians! Who has bewitched you? Before your very eyes, Y'shua the Messiah was clearly portrayed as crucified. I would like to learn just one thing from you: Did you receive the Spirit by observing the Torah, or by believing what you heard? Are you so foolish? After beginning with the Spirit, are you now trying to attain your goal by human effort? Does G-d give you His Spirit and work miracles among you because you observe the Torah, or because you believe what you heard? Galatians 3:1-5

In Romans 10:17 where Paul states, "**Faith comes by hearing, and hearing by the Word of G-d.**" Paul is reestablishing the truth that faith comes not by the works we do, but by the grace of G-d, revealed through the preaching / teaching of His Word. Our good works are the result of His grace working in our hearts, by the life changing anointing of His Spirit and the heart-transforming power of His Word.

He further drives this point home by spelling out the spiritual condition of those who trust in observance of Torah, rather than putting their faith in the Messiah.

*All who rely upon Torah observance are under a curse, for it is written: “Cursed is everyone who does not continue to do everything written in the Book of the Law.” Clearly no one is justified before G-d by the Torah because, **The righteous will live by faith.** Galatians 3:10-11*

*Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the Torah by becoming a curse for us, for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who is hung on a tree.” **He redeemed us in order that the blessing given to Abraham might come to the Gentiles through Jesus the Messiah,** so that by faith we might receive the promise of the Spirit. Galatians 3:13-14*

Paul is deeply committed to helping the Galatians grasp the awesome beauty and grandeur of the Gospel of the Grace of G-d. He wanted them to experience it's life-transforming power and the harmony that it could bring to a divided and deeply segregated society.

***You are all the children of G-d through faith in Messiah Jesus,** for all of you who were baptized into Messiah have clothed yourselves with Messiah. There is neither Jew nor Greek, slave nor free, male nor female, **for you are all one in Messiah Y'shua.** If you belong to Messiah, you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Galatians 3:26-29*

This did not mean that there are no longer differences between people, but that G-d's Spirit living within each of His children made us one in Messiah. In His presence, before His throne, there are no favorites. As the old saying goes, “The ground is level at the cross.”

In the fourth Chapter, Paul is using the illustration of a tutor or guardian to portray the changing relationship between the New Covenant believer, the Torah, and the Rabbinic traditions that had been built around the Torah. The Torah was our tutor, given to us by G-d that kept the Jewish people a separate, unique, and holy covenant people, so that we could give the Holy Scriptures to the world. At the appointed time the Torah also enabled us to bring forth the promised Messiah, the Holy One of Israel. The Torah led us to faith in Messiah, so that we might be redeemed from trusting in religious tradition and from bondage to sin, so that all of us could be adopted into G-d's forever family and enjoy eternity in Heaven.

Now what I mean, is that as long as the heir is a child and under age, he does not differ from a slave, although he may be the master of all the estate; But he is under a guardian and administrator (or a tutor and trustee), until the time set by his father.

*So it is also with us Messianic Jews, when we were minors we were kept like slaves (under the rules of Hebrew rituals and traditions, subject to) the elementary teachings of a system of external observance and regulations. **But when the proper time had fully come, G-d sent His Son, born of a woman, born subject to the regulations of the Torah, to purchase the freedom of (to ransom, to atone for) those who were subject to the rules and regulations of Torah, that we might be adopted and be recognized as the children of G-d. And because now we really are His children, G-d has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts crying, Abba (Daddy), Father!** Galatians 4:1-6*

Paul reiterates his intense concern that the Galatians catch the vision of freedom in Messiah and once again uses language full of passion to penetrate their thinking and to deeply inscribe his message upon their hearts. He does not want Gentile New Covenant believers to be burdened with a yoke that he and his forefathers could not bear (Acts 15:10-11).

***Stand fast therefore in the liberty for which Messiah has made us free and be not entangled again in the yoke of bondage.** Galatians 5:1*

Paul then clarifies that this new found liberty in Messiah is not an excuse to do whatever comes naturally, but the freedom to serve G-d from the heart by loving those G-d has brought into your life. The fruit of the Spirit is the ultimate purpose of the Torah fulfilled by living out the gospel through reliance upon G-d's grace.

*For you have been called to liberty; only do not use liberty as an opportunity for your flesh, but through (agape'- sacrificial) love serve one another. **For all the Torah is fulfilled in one word, even in this: You shall love your neighbor as yourself.** Galatians 5:13-14*

*The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, gentleness, goodness, faithfulness, and self-control. **Against such there is no Torah.** Galatians 5:22-23*

The Apostle Paul then instructs the believers to live out their walk in the Spirit by treating each person with profound grace and respect, realizing that is the godliest demonstration of how we fulfill the Torah of the Messiah and build the Kingdom of G-d in our everyday world.

*If someone is overtaken in any trespass, you who are spiritual restore such a one in a spirit of gentleness, considering yourself, lest you also be tempted. **Bear one another's burdens and so fulfill the Torah of Messiah.** Galatians 6:1-2*

In closing Paul clinches his argument by laying down the bottom line, refocusing us on the cross of Messiah, for that is what enables us to become a new creation in Messiah. That is what really counts in the eternal scheme of all things.

***G-d forbid that I should boast, except in the cross of our L-RD Y'shua the Messiah, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Messiah Jesus, neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.* Galatians 6:14-15**

Galatians is a message that seems as though it was written for such a time as this. It is amazing how history keeps repeating itself and yet we still refuse to learn from it, falling prey to the same old lies, generation after generation. My prayer for the Messianic, Sabbath Keeping, Jewish & Hebraic Roots movements is that we would all return to our first love, to our L-RD Y'shua, (Jesus) the Messiah. That He would be pre-eminent (1st place) in everything. That we'd never forget that our salvation is a gift, the result of the finished work of Y'shua and cannot be earned by even our most heroic deeds and altruistic efforts. That in Him alone is found all that the human heart yearns for. That He alone is worthy of all our adoration & devotion. He alone suffered, died, & rose from the dead, so that we could know with absolute certainty that our debt of sin has been cancelled, the payment for our sin has been satisfied. He alone can provide the abiding peace of knowing our sins are forgiven and forgotten. He alone can convince us deep in our kishka's (our innermost being) that we've been blessed with the gift of life everlasting and give us the assurance that Heaven is our ultimate destination, our eternal home! These are the things that we should be focusing on and longing for. These are the truths that unite us, that answer the most essential intercessory prayers of our Messiah. These are the truths that give us new life in Messiah Y'shua and increased intimacy with our Heavenly Abba! May the great, grand, and glorious grace of our L-RD Y'shua the Messiah be with your spirit, Amen.

Sabbath Keeping Made Simple
By Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman,
with assistance from Gordon Helle & Bruce Neiger

Fellowship with G-d & The Sabbath Rest Principle

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed and all their hosts. And by the seventh day G-d completed His work which He had done; and He rested on the seventh day from all His work which He had done. Then G-d blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work that G-d had created and made (Genesis 2:1-3).

From almost the very beginning of the Book of Beginnings, in Genesis chapter Two, G-d had completed creating the heavens and the earth and all that is in them, on the seventh day He rested from all the work that He'd done. Then G-d blessed (favored and anointed) the seventh day and sanctified it (set it apart as holy unto the L-RD) because in it He rested from all His work of creation.

This reference to the Seventh Day pre-dates the 10 Commandments and the Law of Moses, so by virtue of the Law of 1st Reference, this becomes the initial lens through which we view the Seventh Day in the Older Covenant scriptures. This introduces the Seventh Day as a day of rest, thus providing a revelation of the Sabbath Rest Principle that is seen throughout all of Holy Scripture.

The Hebrew words for Rest in these verses are a variant of Shabbat, which is translated in English as Sabbath. The Sabbath Rest Principle is the deep-rooted Spirit birthed conviction and heart felt necessity of finding a time and a place of rest (through praise, worship, study & fellowship) in the intimate presence of G-d, both privately & corporately.

And they heard the sound of the L-RD G-d walking in the Garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the L-RD G-d among the trees in the garden (Genesis 3:8).

G-d has always wanted to have a one-on-one relationship with His creation. In Genesis 3:8 it talks about how He would walk in the garden with Adam & Eve in the cool of the day. They would enjoy the intimate presence of the L-RD G-d until sin caused them to fear His presence, rather than welcome it.

Then we see in Genesis 3:9-24, how G-d was forced to separate Himself from them because they had been seduced by the serpent and allowed Hasatan's rebellion to thoroughly infect them with the destructive nature of sin, which resulted in their spiritual and eventually their physical death. G-d would be forced to drive them out of the Garden and away from the Tree of Life, so that they would not be trapped eternally in their wretched rebellious body of sin and death.

Then the L-RD G-d said, "Behold the man has become like one of Us, to know good and evil. And now lest he put out his hand and take also of the tree of life and eat and live forever," . . . therefore the L-RD G-d sent him out of the garden of Eden to till the ground from which he was taken. So He drove out the man; and He placed Cherubim at the east of the garden of Eden and a flaming sword which turned every way, to guard the way to the tree of life. (Genesis 3:22-24)

G-d's heart must have broken as He was compelled to shut off the intimate fellowship He had enjoyed daily with them. In His sovereign wisdom, He had already revealed the first step in His plan of redemption; He set aside one day in the week when His people could dedicate time to focus solely on their relationship with their Creator. Y'shua, as L-RD of the Sabbath taught us in Mark 2:27, that the Sabbath was a gift, given to His people, and His people were not made to keep the Sabbath. Try to remember that, it is a very significant key to unraveling the mess and maze that religion has made of the Sabbath.

The Sabbath Law & the Sanctity of Israel

Centuries ago, well-meaning Rabbi's feared that their people would break the sanctity of the Sabbath. So they created 1521 Sabbatic laws, compiled in the Shulchan Aruch (the Code of Jewish Law). Creating a protective wall around the Sabbath, keeping the Jewish community so overwhelmed and busy with worrying about how not to break the Sabbath, their hope was they would never even get close to doing that.

The religious confusion comes in when we do not differentiate between the Mosaic covenant separating Israel from all other nations and the New Covenant (2 Corinthians 3:4-18) that created One New Man (Ephesians 2:11-15). This grafted all of the nations into the olive tree of Israel, uniting them through faith in Y'shua the Messiah (Romans 11:16-24) resulting in a circumcised heart, which are the sacrifices of G-d, sacrifices that He will not despise.

Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart and be stiff-necked no longer (Deuteronomy 10:16)

The sacrifices of G-d are a broken spirit, a broken and contrite heart, . . . these, O G-d, You will not despise (Psalm 51:17).

For he is not a Jew (one who lives to give praise to G-d) who is merely one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely that which is outward in the flesh. But he is a Jew (one who lives to give praise to G-d) who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter only, whose praise is not from men but from G-d (Romans 2:28-29).

By differentiate; we do not mean to denigrate the Torah, for the Torah is holy, spiritual, just and good (Romans 7:12). What were trying to clarify is that G-d has had a unique covenantal relationship with Israel that was unlike any other nation had with any other god. The Torah was Israel's national spiritual constitution and kept them separated unto the L-RD so that He could bring His Word to the world, both the written and Living Word. The Sabbath has kept Israel unique among the nations, even if all of Israel did not keep the Sabbath. If Israel did not survive as a separate and distinct people, the Messiah would never have been able to arrive when and how He did and our salvation would have been forever averted, to our eternal peril.

Thanks be to G-d who always causes us to triumph in Messiah (2 Corinthians 2:14). By means of His Torah (Deuteronomy 7:6-11), His Spirit (Zechariah 4:6-7) and His Angels (Daniel 12:a), Israel was kept as a nation wholly set apart unto G-d. And G-d was then able to bring His only begotten Son into the world to redeem it and will ultimately restore Israel to a greater glory than she has ever known.

Now it shall come to pass in the latter days, that the mountain of the L-RD's house shall be established on the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills, and all nations shall flow to it. Many people shall come to say, "Come let us go up to the mountain of the L-RD, to the house of the G-d of Jacob; He will teach us His ways, and we shall walk in His paths." For out of Zion shall go forth the Law and the Word of the L-RD from Jerusalem (Isaiah 2:2-3).

The inhabitants of one city shall go to another saying, "Let us continue to go and pray before the L-RD, and seek the L-RD of hosts, I myself will also go. Yes, many peoples and strong nations shall come to seek the L-RD of hosts in Jerusalem, and to pray before the L-RD." "Thus says the L-RD of hosts, "In those days ten men from every language of the nations shall grasp the sleeve of a Jew, saying, "Let us go with you, for we have heard that G-d is with you (Zechariah 8:21-23)." ' ' "

And it shall come to pass that everyone who is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall go up from year to year to worship the King, the L-RD of hosts, and to keep the Feast of Tabernacles (Zechariah 14:16).

The True Heart of the Sabbath

G-d further reveals His purpose for the Sabbath through the prophet Isaiah. In the latter portion of his prophetic ministry, Isaiah received words from G-d concerning how the Sabbath distinguishes the people of G-d and how they were to honor the Sabbath. Honoring the Sabbath was open and available to those Gentiles who were drawn to the faith of the G-d of Israel. G-d was especially pleased with those from among the Nations, who were not naturally responsible to love G-d and honor His commandments, but were provoked to jealousy by His nearness to His people (Deuteronomy 4:5-8).

Thus says the L-RD, Keep justice and do righteousness, for My salvation (My Y'shua) is about to come, and My righteousness to be revealed. Blessed is the man who does this and the son of man who lays hold of it; who keeps from defiling the Sabbath and keeps his hand from doing evil. Do not let the son of the stranger, that hath joined himself to the L-RD, speak, saying, The L-RD hath utterly separated me from His people: neither let the eunuch say, Behold, I am a dry tree. For thus says the Lord unto the eunuchs that keep My Sabbaths, choose the things that please Me, and take hold of My covenant. Unto them will I give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off (Isaiah 56:1-5).

It is through the enhanced spiritual intimacy that can be known by living in the Sabbath Rest Principle, that people can best enjoy a personal relationship with G-d. He is revealing that it is no longer based solely on our pedigree that we are allowed into relationship with Him, but through entering the eternal rest that He so graciously provides. The Sabbath Rest Principle is beyond time, it is eternal. It began in Eden, before the Mosaic Covenant and continues throughout the New Covenant into eternity, even into the future prophetic era of the new heavens and the new earth. His ultimate purpose is for all of humanity to know the precious blessing of everlasting Sabbath Rest by means of a personal redemptive relationship with G-d through His Son, Y'shua the Messiah.

*For as the new heavens and the new earth, which I will make, shall remain before Me, says the L-RD, so shall your seed and your name remain. And it shall come to pass, that from one new moon to another, and from one Sabbath to another shall **all flesh** come to worship before me, saith the L-RD (Isaiah 66:22-23).*

G-d further clarifies the proper attitude of truly spiritual Sabbath observance in Isaiah 58. Here, G-d explains the motivation for how people are to fast and observe His Shabbat. We are not to do it merely to afflict ourselves, but in order to yield our hearts and minds so that we can be more perfectly aligned to the will and word of G-d.

Is this not the fast that I have chosen? To loose the bands of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, and to let the oppressed go free, and that ye break every yoke? Is it not to share your bread with the hungry, and that you bring to your house the poor who are cast out; and when you see the naked to cover them (Isaiah 58:6-7)?

Observing the Sabbath laws with scrupulous legalism, thinking that we are perfectly honoring the Sabbath by keeping every law, is not what G-d is getting at here. True Sabbath rest comes from fixing our hearts and minds on the things of G-d, such as looking after the sick, the needy and the poor. We are also exhorted to treat one another in a manner that is honoring to G-d. As we learn to live in the Sabbath Rest Principle, G-d promises that wonderful blessings will be for us and for our children's children.

If you take away the yoke from your midst, the pointing of the finger and speaking wickedness, if you extend your soul to the hungry and satisfy the afflicted soul, then your light shall dawn in the darkness, and your darkness shall be as the noonday. Then the L-RD will guide you continually and satisfy your soul in drought, and strengthen your bones; you shall be like a well-watered garden, and like a spring of water, whose streams will never fail. Those from among you shall build the old waste places, you shall raise up the foundations of many generations; and you shall be called The Repairer of the Breach, The Restorer of

Paths to Dwell In. If you turn away thy foot from the Sabbath, from doing thy pleasure on My holy day; and call the Sabbath a delight, the holy of the L-RD, honourable; and shalt honour Him, not doing thine own ways, nor finding thine own pleasure, nor speaking thine own words: then shalt thou delight thyself in the L-RD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the L-RD hath spoken it (Isaiah 58:9b-14).

Isaiah clearly states G-d's plan. The Sabbath is a time to be freed from the distractions and trappings that this world places upon us, and it is an opportunity for us to more completely focus our minds on things above, upon which G-d also thinks. This is our time to dwell upon the needs of others, and upon delighting in the L-RD, who cares for us all.

The Sabbath Law vs. The Sabbath Rest Principle

It will also be important to understand the difference between the Sabbath Rest Principle and the Sabbath Law, which was given to and required of only the children of Abraham under the Mosaic Covenant given at Mt. Sinai. The Sabbath Law was given to Israel as a sign of their covenant, a symbol of their unique and special relationship to G-d, like an engagement ring given upon betrothal, and it was given only to them and to no other nation. In the New Covenant, the Sabbath Rest Principle is seen in the L-RD's Supper (Communion). It is the sign of our betrothal as the Bride of Messiah. It is meant to include believers from every tribe, every tongue, every people and every nation, and yet it is meant to be more intimate than any other religious ritual, being experienced on an individual, rather than a national basis.

Messianic Gentiles & The Law of Moses

In Acts 15, the Jerusalem Council was called to deal with the question of, "What should we do with all these Gentiles who are coming to faith in Y'shua?" On one side there was a group of Messianic Pharisees that were requiring the Gentiles to be circumcised and to observe the Torah in order to become converts to the new Messianic faith. On the other was the Apostles Paul and Barnabas, along with Peter and James, who saw that G-d was saving the Gentiles simply by faith in Y'shua alone.

Peter questions why would they even consider putting upon the Gentiles a yoke that neither they nor their fathers could bear. And then James gave only 4 rules for Gentiles obey so that they could worship and have table fellowship with the Messianic Jewish community. He required the new Gentile believers to abstain from:

1. things polluted by idols (food offered to idols / demons),
2. from sexual immorality (fornication was a part of pagan worship),
3. from things strangled (the food offered to idols / demons was strangled),
4. and from blood (the blood of the offering was not drained and was either eaten or drank by the worshipper as an act of worship to their god).

Why would G-d ask only 4 things of the Gentiles, and such unusual things at that? I believe there are two reasons for this. The first is that the G-d of Israel did not want the new Messianic Gentile converts to worship Him in the same manner that they worshipped their pagan demonic gods, with harlotry and debauchery. The second is that these rules from the Noahic covenant (Genesis 9:1-7) were necessary to facilitate worship and table fellowship between Jews and Gentiles who were to become One New Man in Messiah (Ephesians 2:15).

Those pagan worship rituals would be totally repugnant to the any Jewish believer. These 4 rules did not include the 10 commandments, most noticeably the Sabbath commandment. James left the option of studying and observing the Mosaic covenant for those who chose voluntarily to do so by attending a synagogue on the Sabbath. The conversion process for a Gentile was not as easy as an oral confession of faith, but would include circumcision, ritual immersion, as well as a lengthy period of study under a Rabbi. This option would not be very popular among the large majority of the Gentile masses. Could you imagine Billy Graham giving an altar call that included circumcision?

I believe that the reason James made it so much easier for the Gentiles to convert to the Messianic faith is that the Moral commandments would be taught by the Apostles and then written on their hearts by the Holy Spirit. They would be disciplined by those within their local Messianic communities. Keeping the Sabbath is a Ritual observance commandment and those commandments are not required by anyone who accepts faith in Y'shua (see Romans 14).

For as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse, for it is written, "Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the Book of the Law, to do them." But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of G-d is evident, for "the just shall live by faith," yet the Law is not of faith, but "the man who does them shall live by them (Galatians 3:10-12)."

So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or Sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Messiah (Colossians 2:16-17).

Because Y'shua was the fulfillment of the Torah as the Word made flesh, none of the ritual commandments are a requirement for salvation for either Jews or Gentiles. The Apostle Paul urges that our focus rather be on developing a faith that is motivated by selfless sacrificial love (Galatians 5:6).

How Y'shua Kept The Sabbath

"The word was made flesh and dwelt among us and we beheld his glory." These words are found in John 1:14. This Word, Y'shua, helps believers to better understand the first words, which can be found in the first thirty-nine books of the Bible. One of the areas that Y'shua helps to clear up is the importance of Sabbath keeping for believers in Messiah.

Y'shua makes it clear, in Matthew 5:17, that He did not come to this earth to put an end to the law. He states that His purpose is to be a fulfillment of the words of the first Covenant. Because of this, it is important to view the words and actions of Y'shua to gain an understanding of how believers should observe the Sabbath.

We first find Y'shua getting into trouble over the Sabbath in Mark 2:23-28. When challenged that His followers were eating from a field on the Sabbath, Y'shua said that the Sabbath was made for man, and not the other way around. In a parallel passage, Matthew 12:1-13, Y'shua reminds his accusers that David ate the showbread consecrated for the priests, and the priests themselves would violate the Sabbath every week. Declaring that He is L-RD of and greater than the Sabbath, Y'shua cites the Prophet Hosea where G-d cries out that He desires compassion rather than sacrifice.

The point is made clearer in John chapters 5 and 9 where Y'shua heals two people who are in need of His supernatural powers. Y'shua is showing that the typical understanding of the Sabbath is not the way that He sees it, that doing good does not cease at sundown on Friday and begin again after sundown on Saturday. Loving, serving and blessing are meant to be 24 / 7 / 365, anytime, anywhere, Thy Kingdom come, Thy will be done, on earth, as it is in Heaven.

We see in the Sermon on the Mount, in Matthew 5-7, that Y'shua is more concerned about the heart of a person than his actions. He makes this plain in his commands not to hate, for it is equal to murder; and not to lust, in that it is the equivalent of Adultery. He is showing that it is not through ritualistic observance of any command, let alone the Sabbath, that a person is justified before G-d.

The Apostle Paul & The Law of Moses

The Apostle Paul expounds upon this point in Romans 3:20-22, which says, “*By the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His [G-d’s] sight, for by the Law is knowledge of sin. But now the righteousness of G-d apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, even the righteousness of G-d through faith in Messiah Y’shua, to all who believe.*” Paul is saying that it is not through observance of the Law that a person is saved, but through belief in Messiah Y’shua. Thus, legalistic observance of the Torah is no longer a means of or a requirement for access to G-d, because that is now found through repentance from sin and trusting faith in Y’shua.

This does not mean that the Law is abolished. For by the Torah is the knowledge of sin and G-d’s gracious provision of Messiah. As mentioned above, Matthew 5:17 makes it clear that Y’shua fulfilled the law. In Mark 12:28-31, Y’shua is asked what the most important commandment was. He responded that it is of utmost importance to love G-d with all our hearts and our neighbor as ourselves. Y’shua is thus saying that it is not a matter of actions, but a truly a matter of the heart. All that is required to keep the Law is to have humble devotion to G-d and selfless love for others, thus fulfilling both it’s ultimate intent and maximum purpose.

And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the L-RD and not to men (Colossians 3:23).

Paul further qualifies our necessary action in Colossians 3:23, where he says that all that a believer does should be done as unto the L-RD. He is not just talking about what we do on the Sabbath, but how we live every day. Thus, the New Covenant is requiring far more than the First Covenant did. It is not just on the Sabbath that a person must act appropriately, but everyday. Thus, Y’shua is calling His followers to a higher level of spirituality by asking us to live for G-d, with loving motives, at all times.

I beseech you therefore brethren, by the mercies of G-d, that you present your bodies, a living sacrifice, holy acceptable to G-d, which your reasonable service of spiritual worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good, acceptable and perfect will of G-d (Romans 12:1-2).

Thus, It is important not to be judgmental of any believers in Messiah, no matter when or how they worship. As Paul says in Romans 12:1-2, all of life should be worship unto God, not just one day of the week.

One person esteems one day above another; another esteems every day alike. Let each be fully convinced (persuaded) in their own mind. He who observes the day, observes it to the L-RD and he who does not observe the day, to the L-RD he does not observe it (Romans 14:5-6).

So, we should follow the example found in Romans 14:5-6. Here, Paul says that certain people find one day exceptionally holy, while others find all days the same. He points out that, either way, it is imperative that this difference does not cause a rift in the body of Messiah. If a person wants to worship on the seventh day of the week, that is fine. If another person desires to worship on the first day of the week, that is also fine. Everyday, in every way, the followers of Y’shua should be worshipping Him and loving one another.

Entering G-d’s Eternal Sabbath Rest

Finally, it is important to remember to keep in mind what Paul says in Galatians 2:15-16 which says, “*A person is not declared righteous by G-d on the ground of his legalistic observance of Torah commands, but through the Messiah Y’shua’s trusting faithfulness.*”

The goal of the Torah was to point people to Y’shua. It is now the responsibility of all believers in Messiah to follow the Law that He laid down, being the very essence of the Law. That is to love God and others. This is a daily command, not to be followed on only one day. Through doing this, a person is keeping the Sabbath, no matter

what day on which they worship. Hopefully, after understanding the message of Sabbath, each day will be an opportunity to more deeply worship and serve the Creator and Redeemer of our souls.

It is our hope that we have laid out a clear explanation of G-d's ultimate intention for the Law and particularly for the Sabbath. That it was to keep Israel separate unto Him so that He could eventually reach out to the ends of the earth with the Gospel of Grace and Forgiveness that was to be totally inclusive, rather than nationally and religiously exclusive. We are very blessed to live under a new Law, the Law of the Spirit of Life in Messiah Y'shua (Romans 8:1-4). We are now enabled to live in the perpetual rest of an intimate fellowship with G-d and an ever-growing unity with His Body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all (Ephesians 1:23).

“There remains therefore a Sabbath rest for the people of G-d. For the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as G-d did from His (Hebrews 4:9-10).”

Shavuot - Two Testaments on Two Mountains

A Kingdom of Priests, Set Apart for G-d's Service;
Torah Engrafted - Spirit Empowered

By Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

In the third month after the Israelites left Egypt, on the very day, they came to the wilderness of Sinai. After they set out from Rephidim, they entered the desert of Sinai and Israel camped there in the wilderness in front of the mountain. Then Moses went up to G-d and the L-RD called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel. You yourselves have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. Now if you obey Me fully and keep My covenant, then out all the nations you will be My special treasured possession. Although the whole earth is Mine, you will be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (consecrated, set apart to the service of G-d). These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites. Exodus 19:1-6

A Tale of Two Mountains

G-d brought Israel to Mount Sinai selecting the inaugural Feast of Shavuot as His appointed time to give them the Torah as His Ketubah. About 1500 years later, on another Shavuot [Acts 2:1-4 & 16-21], His faithful followers gathered in the temple on Mount Moriah, fulfilling the prophecy of Joel 2:28-29, concerning the outpouring of HaRuach HaKodesh (The Holy Spirit) upon His people. This resulted in the engrafting of His Torah upon their hearts [Jeremiah 31:33 & Ezekiel 36:26-27] as He empowered them to become His witnesses [Acts 1:8] and able ministers of the Brit Hadashah (New Covenant) [2 Corinthians 3:6].

On the first mountain He gave Israel His covenant through Moses as an act of betrothal. On the second mountain He wrote that covenant on their hearts as the seal of the eternal union that was theirs as members of the elect remnant Bride of Messiah. This was the predestined purpose of our awesome Abba in Heaven. It is no coincidence that Mount Moriah was the same place where G-d confirmed His covenant with Abraham, to provide him a lamb. He fulfilled that promise on a nearby mount called Golgotha by providing His only begotten Son to die in the place of every human being, redeeming us all from the penalty of our sinful rebellion to G-d.

The Torah reveals to us the righteous requirements of being His chosen covenant people, bearing His holy name before the nations. It reminds us of how holy G-d is and of how much we've all fallen short of His glory. We need His abundant grace and mercy to be close to Him and to become more like Him. This can only happen as we allow HaRuach Elohim (The Spirit of G-d) to write His Torah (teaching, instruction) upon our hearts. This happens more in the ordinary humdrum activities of our everyday lives than in the momentous mountaintop miracles, which we would very much prefer, but are all too few and far between.

Meeting G-d On The Mountains

It came to pass in the morning that there was thunderings and lightnings and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the shofar was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. Now Mount Sinai was covered in smoke, because the L-RD descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the shofar sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke and G-d answered him by voice. Exodus 19:16-19

The festival of Shavuot had finally arrived; they were all with one accord in one place. And suddenly there came a sound from heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributed and resting on each of them. And they were all filled with the Ruach HaKodesh and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Now there were staying in Jerusalem religious Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound,

a crowd gathered: they were confused, because each one heard the believers speaking in their own language. Totally amazed they asked, "How is this possible? Aren't all these people who are speaking from the Galilee? How is it that we hear them speaking in our own native languages?"

We are Parthians, Medes, Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Judah, Cappodacia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, Libya, Rome, Crete and Arabia! How is it that we hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things G-d has done?" Acts 2:1-11

There are several striking similarities between the two Shavuot encounters with G-d on the two mountaintops.

1. On both occasions the Torah was given to G-d's people, but in very different methods. The Torah was given on the first mountain on tablets of stone by the finger of G-d [Exodus 31:18]. On the second mountain, the Torah was written on the fleshly tables of their hearts by the Spirit of G-d [2 Corinthians 3:3].
2. Both of the Shavuot encounters were accompanied by very unusual and extremely powerful phenomena. Do you think G-d was trying to get our attention? Talk about special effects!
3. G-d revealed Himself in a majestic and historic manner, completely altering the way Israel would relate to Him [Deuteronomy 3:24]. The first time *was* for 1500 years and the second time *is* for all eternity.
4. Both Shavuot encounters were accompanied by fire. Everyone saw the fire on the first mountain from a distance, for it was an external national covenant. On the second mountain the experience was meant for each person, as an individual. Now G-d could place His Torah in the heart of each believer and dwell in them as a temple of His holy presence, so the fire was seen upon each of the 120 talmideem (disciples).
5. At the first mountain there was a mixed multitude [Exodus 12:38] that was with them and heard the thunderings (Hebrew - Coal = voices) of G-d. An ancient Midrash (commentary) on this passage suggests that there were 70 voices of G-d so all nations could hear and receive the Torah from G-d. On the second mountain the Spirit gave them other tongues and a mixed multitude that was in Jerusalem for Shavuot heard the wonderful works of G-d in their own tongue!

Two Mountains, One Message

There is continuity in the message of these two different covenants inaugurated on two separate mountains. G-d has always desired the same thing from His people, no matter when they were alive or where they were living. He wants us to know and understand that He loves us unconditionally and completely and wants us to respond to this awesome truth by loving Him with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength and our neighbor as ourselves.

And because He loved your fathers, therefore He chose their descendants after them; and brought you out of Egypt with His Presence, with His mighty power. Deuteronomy 4:37 & 7:8

And now Israel, what does the L-RD your G-d require of you, but to revere the L-RD your G-d, to walk in His ways and to love Him, to serve the L-RD your G-d with all your heart and with all your soul. Deuteronomy 10:12

For G-d so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whosoever believes in Him should not perish, but shall have everlasting life. John 3:16

As the father loved Me, I also have loved you; abide in My love. If you keep my commandments, you will abide in My love, just as I have kept My Father's commandments and abide in His love. John 15:9-10. There is a very clear message that G-d has endeavored to impart His love to all humanity and we have been very slow in understanding and thus practicing it.

G-d has been trying to show us that when His Word abides in us, so does His Spirit. The result being that knowing and experiencing His love will change the way we see ourselves and the world around us. We will begin to love our neighbor as ourselves and love one another as He loved us. The central theme of the Torah is the same as the New Covenant, "Love G-d with all your heart and love others as He has loved you." Matthew 22:37-40

We have all tried to keep the Torah, in one form or another, in our own strength and to the very best of our ability. We strive do this as a testimony to G-d and others of how much we love Him and how serious we are about our faith. Sadly we have all failed miserably in our sincerest attempts of living up to the absolute perfect holiness of Torah.

Our only hope is to completely surrender to G-d, embracing Him as L-RD & Master, and confessing to Him that we have sinned and fallen short of His glory. Unless we allow G-d's Word to abide in us and we also abide in Him, we will never walk in the power of His Spirit or know the fulfillment of His love.

We all need a daily immersion in the Word of G-d and the power of His Spirit, if we ever hope to obey His commandments out of a heart overflowing with His agape' love for our family, friends, neighbors, and coworkers, as well as demonstrating G-d's love to our enemies.

Shavuot means *Weeks* or *Sevens*. It is the culmination of the 49 days of counting the Omer (beginning the day after the Sabbath during the week of Unleavened Bread), a specific measure of barley, from which bread was made as a sacrificial wave offering on the temple altar.

This seems to imply that there is a supernatural connection between Passover and Shavuot. Seven is the number of perfection and completion. Seven times seven indicates the ultimate perfection and completion made available to us by G-d's supernatural intervention.

On Passover G-d Himself provided *The Lamb* slain from the foundations of the world to provide all humanity with eternal redemption. Shavuot takes our redemption from the future (Heaven) to the present (filling us with G-d's Holy Spirit). Fulfilling the prayer Y'shua taught His talmideem, "Your Kingdom come, Your will be done, in earth as it is in Heaven." G-d wanted His will of His Kingdom to come into the earth through us, His earthen vessels.

"For G-d Who said, Let light shine out of darkness, has shined His light into our hearts to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of G-d in the face of Y'shua the Messiah. But we have this treasure in earthen vessels to show that this all-surpassing excellence of the power may be from G-d and not from us."

This perfect fulfillment of all the righteous requirements of Torah has been paid for by our Messiah Himself and then imparted to everyone who believes by the outpouring of HaRuach HaKodesh on the feast of Shavuot. Living within us is the perfect righteousness of the Son of G-d through the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit. This is the Shekinah (the manifest presence of G-d) that once dwelt in the Holy of Holies, deep within the holy Temple. Now, by the miraculous grace of G-d revealed to us through the New Covenant, we can actually receive that same presence into our own heart, changing our lives forever, for we have become the Temples of the Living G-d.

"Do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, Who is in you, Whom you have received from G-d? You are not your own, for you have been bought at a price (the precious blood of Y'shua). Therefore glorify G-d with your body."

We are now privileged to enjoy intimate fellowship with G-d as He had originally planned for us to do in the Garden of Eden, where Adam and Eve walked and talked with G-d in the cool of the day. This is what we were created for and this is what ***the two covenants on two mountains*** testify to.

Our salvation is not just for our own enjoyment. G-d loves the whole world and wants to impact every person on this planet with the message of His amazing love before the end of the world is upon us.

As we read in the Prophet Joel:

“And afterward (after the restoration of physical Israel [1948] and Jerusalem [1967]), I will pour out my Spirit upon all flesh. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your old men will dream dreams; your young men shall see visions. Even on my handmaids and my servants, I will pour out my Spirit in those days.

I will show signs and wonders in the heavens and on the earth, blood, fire and billows of smoke. The sun shall be darkened and the moon shall be turned to blood, before the great and dreadful Day of the L-RD.

And everyone who calls on the name of the L-RD will be saved; for on Mount Zion and in Jerusalem there will be deliverance, as the L-RD has said, among the remnant whom the L-RD shall call.”

We see that G-d wants to pour out His Spirit on all people, Jews & Gentiles, the Young & Old, Men & Women. No one is left out of this awesome opportunity to have G-d's holy presence live within them and empower them to minister the Gospel.

These verses remind us that G-d is going to have great revival amongst the Jewish people in the land of Israel before Messiah returns. His Kingdom come, His will be done; in earth (in us) as it is in Heaven, when Messiah's body will truly be ONE!

The Parallel Paradigms of Pesach & Purim

By Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

In each of our lives there are defining moments when we find ourselves faced with a predicament of unimaginable magnitude. In the midst of circumstances that are so completely out of our control that it seems as though hell itself is bent on our destruction. The Biblical feasts of Passover and Purim present powerful, yet practical parallel paradigms of the providential purpose that G-d has eternally prepared to preserve us for our prophetic destiny. Passover and Purim portray G-d protecting us from power-mad predators while fulfilling His promise to our patriarchs and their progeny. In this hyper-skeptical age of computer-generated special effects, psychobabble, and information overload we all can humbly learn from these ancient epochs of divine intervention that G-d is still a very present help in our time of trouble (Psalm 46:1). He is the same compassionate deliverer for us today as He was for Israel in days of old (Hebrews 13:8).

Passover and Purim have a unique inter-relationship in their juxtaposition to each other. On one hand they are as different as night and day in that Passover is first of the major feasts of the L-RD and one of three pilgrimage festivals cited in Exodus 34:18-24. While Purim is a minor feast, that does not carry a negative consequence for failing to observe it and it is the very last feast to be celebrated in the Jewish calendar year. Yet, both Purim and Passover have common paradigms meant to teach us the same profound, life changing lessons. The combined revelation of these two feasts can re-energize our faith, empowering us to confidently face catastrophic circumstances that will not only challenge the depth of our spirituality, but will shake us to the very core of our reliance upon G-d and the trustworthiness of His eternal Word.

Passover is the first of the seven major biblical feasts of the L-RD found in Leviticus 23:1-44 and is celebrated on the fourteenth day of Aviv or Nissan, the first month of the biblical Jewish calendar. It is interesting to find that the symbol for this month among the constellations of the Mazzaroth is the Lamb, being that Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah is revealed in scripture as the Lamb of G-d who takes away the sins of the world! The dramatic story leading up to and including Passover is told in Exodus, chapters 1-14.

The roots of Passover can be found in Genesis 15 when G-d made a covenant with Abram and revealed to him the future of his descendants living in affliction and servitude in a strange land for 430 years. He further disclosed that He would judge that nation (Egypt) for abusing His covenant people and bring the Israelites out of their captivity with great wealth. They would have to languish in bondage until the iniquity of the Amorite's had reached its full measure (Genesis 15:13-16). He intended to take Israel, a nation of simple slaves to exact His justice upon an utterly immoral people guilty of giving their sons & daughters as burnt offerings to Chemosh, the national idol they worshipped. In Numbers 21:21-32, we find the account of Israel trying to pass peacefully through the land of the Amorite's until they were attacked by them and subsequently totally annihilated.

Purim reveals the same paradigms within the tapestry of its incredible story found in the Book of Esther, which never mentions G-d once. Yet His omnipotent power and omniscient knowledge are as clearly apparent as the catastrophic calamity that the Jews found themselves in over and over again. The book of Esther is a must read. It contains all the ingredients of a classic movie epic. It chronicles the events of those Jews that were carried away into exile by King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, and they were now living under the rule of Ahasuerus, king of the Medes and Persians, who conquered the Babylonians.

Throughout the book of Esther we can clearly see the fingerprints of the hand of G-d moving behind the scenes to manifest deliverance for His covenant people. This can be seen from the banishment of Queen Vashti to the selection of Esther as the new queen. And continues from Mordecai uncovering the plot to kill the king to the exaltation of Haman and his plot to annihilate the Jews. From Mordecai's refusal to bow to Haman, to the king commanding Haman to honor Mordecai before all the people of Susa. From Mordecai challenging Esther to risk her life to save her people, to the surprise turn of events that hung Haman on the gallows built for Mordecai and enabled the Jewish people to defend themselves and vanquish their enemies. Over and over we see G-d working in

the daily affairs of ordinary people to bring about miraculous intervention from a cataclysmic crisis that demanded their total surrender and reliance upon G-d.

The Purpose Paradigm

This brings us to the first of the paradigms or life lessons that can be learned from Passover and Purim: Our life has **purpose** in the eternal plan of G-d. G-d is absolutely Sovereign concerning all the events in each of our lives. He puts us where He wants us when He wants to, without revealing why He wants us there! Proverbs 3:5-6 instructs us to: “Trust in the L-RD with all your heart and lean not to your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He will direct your paths.” G-d does not take any joy in our suffering. **His** overriding **purpose** in each moment of our life is always to conform us to the image and likeness of His Son, Y’shua (Jesus) the Messiah. That is what Romans 8:28 means, when it says, “All things work together for the good of those that love G-d and are called according to **His purpose**.”

Each of us that have surrendered our lives to G-d will inevitably find ourselves in a fix that G-d has fixed to finally fix us. This phrase colorfully portrays the paradigm G-d employs to engender spiritual maturity in anyone that has bowed their knee to Y’shua (Jesus) as L-RD and have committed themselves to be His talmideem (disciples). In each event of our daily lives G-d is targeting the common enemy within us, namely our old man, the carnal mind, or the flesh, to be crucified with Messiah so that His life may be seen in us. The final fix is to be crucified with Y’shua so that we may be resurrected with Him too.

The “Present Yourselfes” Paradigm

Knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to G-d in Messiah Jesus our L-RD. Do not yield the members of your body as instruments of unrighteousness to sin. But **present yourselves to G-d** as being alive from the dead **and the members of your body as instruments of righteousness to G-d.** Romans 6:6, 11, & 13

For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. The carnal mind is at war with G-d; for it is not subject to the law of G-d and is unable to be. So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please G-d. But you are not in the flesh, but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of G-d dwells in you. If you do not have the Spirit of Messiah, you are not His. And if Messiah is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is alive because of righteousness. If you live according to the flesh you will die you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. **For as many as are led by the Spirit of G-d, these are the mature sons and daughters of G-d. Romans 8:5-10 & 13-14**

Since Messiah suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for those who have suffered in the flesh have ceased from sin. **To the end that we no longer should live the rest of our life** for the lusts of the flesh, but **for the will of G-d.** 1 Peter 4:1-2

The Permission Paradigm

If we want our lives to bring honor and glory to G-d in the same way that Moses & Mordecai did, we must daily **yield** to His sovereign authority, trusting the leading of His Spirit through His written Word and by communion with Him in prayer and worship. Yielding is giving G-d permission to use our lives as instruments of His eternal kingdom purposes. Will we go where He leads and will we do what He asks? No matter how challenging it may be to our own ideas, our likes or dislikes, to our comfort and convenience? Will we choose to deny ourselves, take up our cross, and follow Him (Mark 8:34)? To sum it up, will we give the King of the Universe **permission** to be our L-RD and Master?

The Persistence Paradigm

The Feasts of Passover and Purim clearly demonstrate the paradigm of **persistence**. It appears that every breakthrough in the history of G-d's dealings with His people has required not just faith, but faithfulness or persistence to see the fulfillment of the promises of G-d. Internationally respected bible teachers Bob Mumford and John Hagee have taught three simple points that explain how the paradigm of persistence works in a way that helps make them easy to remember.

1. Promise – G-d loves His people and makes wonderful promises to us that we can totally rely on.
2. Problem – G-d takes us through difficulty to reveal where our heart is, what are we trusting in.
3. Provision – G-d provides our need, as we trust Him (His promise) to get us through the problem.

*“Will not G-d bring about justice for His chosen ones, who cry out to Him day and night? Will He keep putting them off? I tell you, He will see that they get justice and quickly. However, when the Son of Man comes, will He find **persistent** faith on the earth?” Luke 18:7*

The Persecution Paradigm

The last paradigm and definitely not the least, is the paradigm of persecution. Most of us who live in the western world, in free societies that allow religious freedom, know very little about persecution. Not that I am wishing it on any of us, yet I have seen in the lives of those who have endured persecution, the clearest expression of the likeness of Messiah. It has been my honor and privilege to meet Corrie Ten Boom and Richard Wurmbrand, both of whom have gone to their much-deserved heavenly reward. These two saints exemplify the rich spiritual rewards that result from suffering for our faith with trust in the sovereign goodness of G-d. When we respond to persecution with an attitude of trust that enables us to give praise to G-d, it testifies to the overwhelming reality of G-d's love and the awesome power of His grace in our lives. Rabbi Saul, later known as the Apostle Paul, lived with suffering and persecution as a regular part of his daily life and learned to use it for G-d to make him spiritual dynamite for the kingdom of G-d.

“I have been in prison often and have frequently been severely flogged. I have been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jewish leaders thirty-nine lashes. Three times I was beaten with rods, and once I was stoned and left for dead. Three times I have been shipwrecked, once spending a day and a night in the open sea. I have been constantly on the move, in danger from rivers and from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from the Gentiles; in danger in the city, in the country, at sea, and from false brethren. I have labored and toiled and gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst, and have been cold and naked. Along with all of this, I daily face the pressure of concern for all the congregations that I have started.” 2 Corinthians 11:23b-28

In 2 Corinthians 12, The Apostle Paul describes how G-d responded to his pleas for deliverance from all of this demonically inspired persecution and how he learned to rejoice in the midst of difficulty and distress. He learned to use it as an opportunity to overcome by the blood of the Lamb, the word of his testimony, and by not loving his life unto death (Revelation 12:10).

“To keep me from becoming conceited because of the surpassingly great revelations I have received, there was given to me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, sent to torment me. Three times I besought the L-RD to take it away from me. But He said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you. My power that strengthens you is perfected in your weakness.” Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that the power of Messiah may rest upon me. That is why for the sake of Messiah, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, and in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong.” 2 Corinthians 12:7-10

“You, however know all about my teaching, my way of life, my purpose, faith, patience, love, endurance, persecutions, sufferings – what kinds of things happened to me in Antioch, Iconium, and Lystra, the persecutions I endured. Yet the L-RD rescued me from all of them. In fact, everyone who wants to live a godly life in Messiah Y’shua (Jesus) will suffer persecution.”
2 timothy 3:10-12

As we look over the vast testimony of scripture at all the people who have been called and chosen by G-d to reveal His glory in the earth, we see a repetitive pattern of the paradigm of persecution. Many times there was miraculous deliverance for G-d’s people. Others He supernaturally sustained through their ordeal, bringing them home to their eternal reward as martyrs honored for their faith (Hebrews 11:1-39). The common thread that we must grasp and hold onto deep within us, is the awareness that we will be persecuted for our faith while confidently knowing that G-d is in control!

I am reminded of Tevya, who after a small pogrom that rudely disrupted his oldest daughter’s wedding reception, questioned G-d about the burden of being the Chosen people. Why couldn’t He choose somebody else for awhile? If we desire to fulfill G-d’s ultimate purpose for our lives, one of the major life lessons we will learn is because we are precious to G-d, we are putrid to Hasatan, our adversary, the devil. We must come to understand the evil spiritual dynamics that is behind the pernicious perspective of prejudice or we will naively think that politics and diplomacy can eventually solve the world’s problems and bring about a utopian society. No such luck. The prophet Jeremiah warned us, “our heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked: who can know it? (Jeremiah 17:9)”

There is coming a day when there will be no more sorrow or suffering, no more hatred and wars. Until that day we will keep learning the lessons or paradigms of purpose, present ourselves, permission, persistence, and persecution. As you celebrate the feasts of Passover and Purim, try to remember these themes and may G-d bless you and bring you further along in your pilgrimage through these paradigms.

“The day of the L-RD will come like a thief in the night. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of G-d and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the fervent heat. But in keeping with His promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the dwelling place of righteousness.” 2 Peter 3:10-13

Without Hanukkah, There could be no Christmas

By Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

The Time: 168 BCE. The Place: Mohdeen, a village several miles northwest of Jerusalem. The People: Mattathias, a Hasmonean priest who served in the Temple & Apelles, a Royal officer with soldiers sent from Antiochus Epiphanes. The Situation: Antiochus (Opposer, withstander) Epiphanes (G-d manifest), a vile ungodly, power hungry descendent of Seleucid. He ruled the portion of the empire conquered by Alexander the Great that included the area from Syria to the Mediterranean Sea. He was a type of the false Messiah spoken of in the books of Daniel & Matthew.

The Jewish people have always been different from all the other peoples of the earth. Exodus 19:5 says, "If you will obey My voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure unto Me from all other people: for all the earth is mine." The Torah, the Sabbath, their language, customs and dress have kept them separate from the other nations for several thousand years. Antiochus commanded that all the peoples under his authority become Hellenized (Greek in speech, customs, religion & thought). He believed that this would consolidate his control over everyone in his kingdom, but underestimated the unwillingness of the children of Israel to serve the false gods of their oppressors.

Antiochus was a man on a mission. He was obsessed with wiping out anything that stood in his way of total cultural domination. He forbid any Jew to worship the G-d of Israel by observing the Sabbath, keeping kosher or circumcising their sons. He forced Jewish brides to spend their wedding night with one of his officers, thus defiling them, intending to eventually erase our identity as a unique people. He sent his soldiers all over Israel to enforce these malicious edicts.

Throughout the land of Israel, many Jews relented, for fear of dying a gruesome death. But when the troops came to Mohdeen, they met their match in Mattathias and his sons. Apelles, the royal officers, sent by Antiochus, ordered Mattathias to sacrifice a pig to Zeus (chief of the Greek gods), eat its meat and repudiate his faith in the L-RD G-d of Israel. He rose up and killed the soldier for ordering to commit blasphemy. Immediately his sons joined him and slew the other soldiers. They fled to the hills of Judea and started a revolutionary war for independence from the despot, Antiochus. Through G-d's supernatural intervention, this small band of guerilla warriors fought bravely for 3 years and overthrew the numerically superior Seleucidian forces. Mattathias' son, Judas the Maccabee (the Hammerer), led the revolt and succeeded in throwing off the tyrannical hold of Antiochus. Some scholars believe that G-d spoke of this great victory in prophecy (Zechariah 9:8-17), to give them hope to fight until the battle was won.

On the 25th of Kislev (a Hebrew month which coincides with December), 165 BCE, they eventually recaptured the Temple in Jerusalem. Antiochus had viciously desecrated it. He had sacrificed pigs on the Holy Altar to Zeus and other Greek deities and poured pig's broth all over the sacred scrolls and vessels. This was a prophetic picture of what is described in Daniel 9:27 and Matthew 24:15, as the Abomination of Desolation standing in the Holy Place. The Ner Tamid (Eternal Light), the candelabra that perpetually burned in the Holy Place, had been snuffed out. Legends has it, that as the Temple was being cleansed, enough consecrated oil was found to last only one day. As they rededicated the Temple to G-d in faith, lighting the Menorah (the Candelabra) in the Holy Place, they marveled as the oil lasted and the light kept burning for 7 more days, until more holy oil could be consecrated. This is how long they celebrated their victory. They also celebrated for 8 days to commemorate the Feast of Sukkot (Tabernacles), which takes place in Tishri (a Hebrew month which coincides with September & October). Sukkot has a ceremony where great menorahs are lit in the courtyard of the Temple. That's when Y'shua (Jesus) said, "I am the Light of the world." John 10:22 reveals to us that Y'shua went to Jerusalem during the Feast of Dedication (Hannukah).

Today, Hannukah, which means Dedication, is celebrated for 8 days by lighting candles and retelling the story of how G-d miraculously delivered His people from tyranny and caused the oil to supernaturally keep burning for 8 days and nights. We need to understand that if there had been no Hannukah, there could be no miraculous birth of

the Messiah in Bethlehem to a young Jewish virgin named Miryam (Mary) and thus, there would be no Christmas.

Proverbs 20:27 instructs us that, “the spirit of man is the candle of the L-RD. There are nine candles on a Hannukah menorah. The ninth candle is called the Shammah (or Servant), which lights all the others. John 1:9 says that, “He was the True Light, that lights everyone that comes into the world.” We can also rededicate ourselves to G-d as we are reminded in Matthew 5:14-16 that we are, “the Light of the world, not to hide our light under a bushel and to let our light shine so others might give glory to our Father in Heaven.”

The 9 candles also speak to us of the 9 gifts & fruit of the Ruach HaKodesh (Holy Spirit), which need to be rekindled in us through rededication of our lives as a living sacrifice to G-d. 1 Corinthians 6:19-20 teaches us that our bodies are the Temples of the Holy Spirit, we are to therefore glorify G-d in our body and our spirit. The Shammash, or servant candle is used to kindle the others. In the same way, each of us is used to ignite faith, hope and love in the hearts of those whose lives are touched by ours. Isaiah, the Prophet, called Y’shua, G-d’s Servant (Isaiah 52:13). Y’shua declared that He came not to be served, but to serve (Matthew 20:28). Y’shua calls upon all who follow Him to be the servants of all (Mark 10:44). This Hannukah may we DEDICATE our lives, as Temples of the Holy Spirit, to be holy for His glory and to be bright lights, shining in a dark world, holding for the Word of Life.

Shouldn't Christmas be a Jewish Holiday?

By Messianic Rabbi Ed Rothman

In the 21st century, the miraculous birth of Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah is recognized and celebrated by multiplied millions of people from every nation in the world. In 1971, when I became a brand new Jewish believer in Jesus, I joyfully joined in the celebration of Christmas, not knowing anything about the Jewishness of my faith in Y'shua and being ignorant of the pagan roots of this annual observance of Messiah's birth. Looking back I am grateful for the grace through which G-d saw the simple sincerity of my heart. In His kindness He met me where I was in my limited understanding of Him and my lack of knowledge of the darker chapters of church history. At the outset of this discussion, I must make it very clear; G-d loves and accepts each of us more than we can adequately comprehend. He will meet each of us in our genuine adoration of His Son, Jesus the Messiah, even when it may be doctrinally or historically inaccurate. This is the understanding from which this study should be read.

The Pagan Roots of *Christ-Masse*

In the 4th century, the Church found it did not possess the adequate influence to abolish the non-Christian pagan festivals. In an effort to unite the Church and accommodate the heathen masses, the Church Fathers, who shaped church doctrine & practice, attempted to integrate the pagan festivals with the theological doctrines of Christianity in an attempt to more easily assimilate the multitude of unchurched peoples into the Christian faith. It seems that their plan was to gradually rid the world of paganism by sanctifying the heathen holidays with biblical themes.

They absorbed the *Feast of Saturnalia*, which honored Saturn, the Roman god of agriculture. At this time the people hoped and prayed each year for the restoration of his *Golden Age of Peace & Prosperity* by venerating him with 7 days of celebrating *peace & goodwill toward all men*. Gifts would be given to children accompanied by a spirit of merriment while visiting with and banqueting in each other's homes. All government, business, and school activities would cease. All executions and military operations would be postponed. For 1 week all men, including slaves were equal! The festival took place every year from December 17-24.

They also adapted the Germanic & Celtic rites of the Winter Solstice (Sun stands still), called *Brumalia* (the birthday of the unconquered Sun). The belief was; because December 21st was the shortest day of the year, that on the 22nd the Sun would *die and 3 days later* on the 25th be *born-again or risen from the dead*, as it began to climb in the sky and the days grew longer. This would signal the beginning of wild festivities of mirth with the use of holly, mistletoe, Yule logs, wassail bowls and paradise trees (evergreens trimmed with candles). The obvious connection was to replace celebrating the birth of the *Sun god* with the birth of the *Son of G-d*, who described Himself as *the Light of the World* (John 8:12 & 9:5).

In 350 AD, Julius I, Bishop of Rome, set the date for *the Nativity* (the birth of Messiah) on December 25th. The reasoning for this was to begin with March 25 (the date they believed to be both the Conception & Passion [the Death] of Jesus the Messiah) and then to add 9 months to it, arriving at the 25th of December. By 354 AD the Roman almanac listed December 25th as the anniversary of the birth of Christ.

Is December 25th the Anniversary of *The Nativity (Messiah's birth)*?

Luke 1:5 reveals to us that Zacharias, was a priest of the order of Abijah. King David divided the Aaronic priesthood into 24 orders and the order of Abijah was the 8th order in the course of priestly service (1 Chronicles 24:10). Each priest would serve for 1 week, twice a year and all priests from all 24 divisions would serve during the 3 pilgrimage festivals. Since Zacharias served during the 8th order, take 8 weeks and add 2 weeks for serving during Passover & Shavuot. We do not know for sure the exact year Y'shua was born, hence we do not have the date of the beginning of that Hebrew calendar year.

The 1st month of the Hebrew calendar is Nissan (or Aviv = Spring) which approximates mid-March to mid-April on our calendar. As an estimated guess, we can begin our calculations from Mid-March, add 10 weeks and find

ourselves in early June. If we add a week or two (mid-late-June) for the conception of Yohanon (John) the Immerser (around Shavuot [Pentecost]) and add 6 months for the time when Miryam (Mary) conceived Y'shua through the miraculous intervention of the Holy Spirit [Luke 1:35-36] that will bring us to about mid-late-December). Maybe Y'shua was conceived on Dec. 25th. If you add 9 months to that timeline, it would place the possible birth of Messiah in late-September to early October, which would approximate the time for the celebration of the Feast of Tabernacles. "The Word became flesh and dwelt (or tabernacled) among us (John 1:14)."

Another possibility would be if we began the reckoning from the second priestly course that would start approximately in mid-late September or early October. Once again the timing coincides with the biblical feasts. 10 weeks (including the Feast of Trumpets, the Day of Atonement & Tabernacles) which would bring us to mid-late-December. Was Yochanon, the Immerser conceived on Hanukah and Y'shua at Shavuot (Pentecost)? Could Y'shua have been conceived on the same day that G-d gave birth to the Nation of Israel (Exo. 19:5 & Deut. 32:11) & the Kehilah (the Church)? If that were true, it would mean that Y'shua was born around mid-late March or early April, at Passover. "Behold the Lamb of G-d, which takes away the sin of the World (John 1:29)." Any way you slice it, Y'shua (Jesus) was probably not born on December 25th. Please forgive me if I burst any bubbles or knocked over any sacred cows.

The Star of Bethlehem

In Daniel 2:28 & 5:11, Nebuchadnezzar appointed Daniel as the chief of the Magi (wise men / astrologers). In Matthew 2:1-2 we read of Magi from the east coming to Jerusalem in search of Him who was born, King of the Jews. They saw His star and came to worship Him. On December 25th, 2 BCE (Before Common Era), Jupiter (the Royal planet or planet of Kings) was stationary over Bethlehem as viewed from Jerusalem. Was this the eastern star?

Jupiter was located in the abdominal region (the womb) of Virgo (the Virgin) for 6 days. The ancient rabbinic sages called Jupiter, *Tzedek* (The Righteous One). The holiday of Hanukkah was possibly being celebrated when the Magi presented their gifts to the Messiah King (Matthew 2:9-11). Was December 25th the day that the Magi presented their gifts to Y'shua?

The Biblical Evidence of Messiah's Miraculous Birth

1. The Promised Seed – Genesis 3:15
2. Virgin birth, G-d w/ us – Isaiah 7:14
3. G-d Became a Man – Isaiah 9:6-7
4. Born in Bethlehem – Micah 5:2
5. Born a man to free us – Heb. 2:14-16
6. The Seed of Abraham – Gal. 3:16
7. The Seed of David – John 7:42
8. To sit on David's throne – Luke 1:32
9. G-d's Son by Holy Spirit – Luke 1:35
10. Born King of the Jews – Mat. 2:2

Why have anything to do with a holiday rooted in paganism and now the high holy day of unbridled capitalism? I suggest that we consider for a moment that more people are exposed to the Gospel (Good News) of our L-RD & Savior between Thanksgiving and Christmas than at any other time of the year. And the thing that amazes me the most, is that more often than not, people are more open to the Gospel during this season, than at any other time of the year. On December 24th-25th, multiplied millions of people around the world take time to pause and declare that G-d sent His Son Jesus to this world to save us from our sins.

I believe that G-d has taught me another way of looking at Christmas. Instead of beating the air in fighting the tide of public opinion that proclaims a day of celebration to honor the miraculous birth of the Son of G-d, why not

use this public platform to share the Good News? Since this is the celebration of the 1st advent of the Jewish Messiah, the promised King of Israel, then shouldn't we redeem this time (Eph. 5:16) and use it for the glory of G-d, build His Kingdom and further His eternal purposes for all of mankind?

The Grace of G-d & Human Traditions

“Let no man judge you in meat or in drink or in respect to a holy day, a feast day or of a new moon or of the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of the things to come; but the body is of Messiah (Colossians 2:16-17).”

I believe that Rabbi Saul (Apostle Paul) is speaking here of Jewish observances and not Christian ones, which did not yet exist. But there is a larger principle, which I believe can and should be applied to the observances which are now sacred celebrations to **the majority of those in the Christian arm of Messiah's body.**

In Y'shua's High Priestly intercession before He was to suffer and die for our sins, He entreated His Father to Make us ONE, even as He and the Father are ONE (John 17:21-23). I believe that Y'shua's desire to have tangible loving unity amongst His disciples is of the highest priority and utmost importance to Him (John 13:35). Instead of arguing over how and when to celebrate the birth of our Savior, we should expend our energy in our Heavenly Father's business of edifying fellow believers and reaching those who have yet to know the incomprehensible love He has revealed to us in His only begotten Son, Y'shua (Jesus) the Messiah.

“Let us follow after the things which make for peace & the things whereby we may edify one another (Romans 14:19).

Biographies

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