

Covenant Relationships

Loving YHWH and our
Neighbors as Ourselves

Updated First Edition (v1.43)

By Norman B. Willis

By Norman B. Willis
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May the name of YHWH be glorified.

In Yeshua's name, amein.

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1st Thessalonians 5:21

***21 Prove all things.
Hold fast what is good.***

Preface

Shalom Nazarene,

Readers sometimes ask me what version of Scripture I use. Unless otherwise noted, I have generally begun with the New King James Version. It is accurate in 99 percent of all cases, except for the fact that it desecrates (i.e., fails to use) the true Hebraic names. Therefore I correct the names to the Hebrew forms and point out wherever else it differs from the source texts.

The nature of this study requires that we focus a lot on those places where the text is mistranslated. When pointing out translational errors, I have tried to display the source texts alongside the English, so that the reader can check things for himself. The Hebrew is quoted from the Hebrew Masoretic Text. While not the original, it is the text most commonly used by our brothers and sisters in Judah. For the Aramaic, I have usually copied from BibleWorks 8 in a block letter font, noting which version I used. My reason for using the block letter font (rather than the Aramaic Estrangelo script) is simply that the Estrangelo script can be very unfamiliar and hard to read, and the block letters make the point just as well.

Finally, while I am often asked to provide western style footnotes (and other western style cross references), I have typically avoided this practice. I believe Scripture is the highest and best authority on all matters of doctrine. If one cannot understand a point simply by looking at the relevant passage of Scripture, then why reference a man's words?

In the past, both Ephraimites and Jews have paid more attention to the words of men than they have to the word of Elohim. I believe this is wrong. My approach, therefore, is simply to show what YHWH's word states, and then provide only enough commentary to show how the verses relate to each other. My hope in this is to lead people to focus on His words, rather than my own.

This particular volume is a collection of older studies that were originally published as stand-alone articles in years past. Each article was intended to be read as a stand-alone article, so there is some repetition between chapters. The formatting on some of the articles is older, but the content is still good. I ask that you please pray to the Father, ask Him to cause you to prove all things, and hold fast only to that which is good. We are always seeking to make our studies better, and more accurate, so please send any comments or ideas for improvement to servants@nazareneisrael.org.

May YHWH lead all of us into His perfect truth.

Norman B. Willis
In the Dispersion
2013 CE (+/- 6013 HRT)

Foreword

Why a book of studies on covenant relationships? At the end of the day, YHWH's kingdom is His people. How His people treat Him and each other defines the condition of His kingdom.

If we all would love YHWH with all that we have, and love our neighbors as we love ourselves, the kingdom would fall together like a self-assembling puzzle.

One of my dreams is that we as His people will all take seriously not just the Great Commission, but also the two greatest of the commandments, and teach our children to do the same.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 22:37-40

37 Yeshua said to him, "'You shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.'

38 This is the first and great commandment.

39 And the second is like it: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.'

40 On these two commandments hang all the Torah and the Prophets."

May it be so, even in our day, amein.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:4-5

4 "Hear, O Israel: YHWH our Elohim, YHWH is one!

5 You shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength."

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 19:17-18

17 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely reprove your neighbor, (so as to) not bear sin because of him.

18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am YHWH."

Imagine Yourself a Prince

Imagine that you and your family are at dinner in your home. A strange man lets himself into your house, sits down at your table, and starts eating your food. When you ask him what on earth he thinks he is doing, he tells you he is “building your kingdom.”

You are big into kindness, forgiveness, and charity, so you let him stay, just for right now. However, day after day he sits at your table, asks all sorts of questions, and eats your food. He never helps with the grocery bills, never cleans up after himself, and never offers to help out around your house.

He continually takes what is free, asks lots of questions, and offers a lot of opinions. Each day when you politely inquire as to when he is going to start doing something to help you in return, he either looks at you with curious stares, or gets mad and yells. How long will it be before you call 911 and have this man forcibly removed from your home?

Let us take a second scenario. A man lets himself into King David’s palace, sits down at King David’s table, and begins feeding himself. Day after day, all he does is sit and eat. He gives all sorts of unsolicited advice without truly understanding how King David’s court really works, but he never does anything that King David really finds helpful in expanding David’s empire. When King David asks him how he intends to help him expand his empire, he just gives him a hostile glare. How long will King David let this man live?

Now imagine that a man lets himself into YHWH’s throne room in heaven, seats himself down at YHWH’s table, and begins eating. This man never did anything tangible to help build Yeshua’s empire on earth, and yet he feels it is his right to eat at YHWH’s table. When asked why, he says that he “got fed” on Sabbath each week.

YHWH’s table is very long, but still there are only so many places. For this man to take a seat, one of the patriarchs, one of Israel’s righteous kings, one of YHWH’s prophets, or one of Yeshua’s apostles has to stand.

If you were YHWH, what would you do? Would you make one of the patriarchs, one of the righteous kings of Israel, one of your prophets, or one of your Son’s apostles leave the table, just so that this man could sit down? Or would you not rather see this man bound hand and foot, and cast into the outer darkness?

A Reward Based on What?

What would you do if this were your own house?

Very few believers honestly live their lives like the apostles did, forsaking all to do His will. Yet, most believers believe they will receive the same rewards as the apostles will, simply because they “got fed” on Sabbath. But does this really make any sense?

Do those who *read* about the good works of others usually receive the same rewards as those who actually *did* the good works? Or do they usually receive the same reward as those who *helped* the workers in their work? Does YHWH hand out rewards just for eating?

Reward Based on Works

Very few believers dedicate their entire lives to furthering His empire here on earth. Very few believers show the same devotion to duty as King David, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the apostles did, and yet these same people seem to believe they will be part of His bride.

What is wrong with this picture? Why are most believers' expectations of their reward so completely out of line with their contributions in building His empire? How can they neither work, nor help those who are doing the work, and yet expect a reward just for getting fed?

Hitgalut (Revelation) 20:12-13

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

13 The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. And they were judged, each one according to his works.

Why do such large discrepancies between perception and reality exist? Why do His people seem to believe they can live their lives in the world, and yet be counted as having laid them down?

How is it that so many in Ephraim do not want to help His priesthood bring the stick of Ephraim together, and yet they still expect to receive the same eternal reward as if they had dedicated their whole lives to extending and furthering His empire?

A Fresh Look at Bridehood

Most Christians have always been taught that all they must do to be taken as part of His bride is just to “believe” on Yeshua (in an intellectual sense). How many times have we heard the preachers say, “Just call on the name of Jesus, and you shall be saved!” However, is this what Scripture really teaches? Or is there not something more to it than that?

Strangely, at least judging from their behavior, most Messianics (and even some Nazarenes) seem to believe that all they need to do is just accept Yeshua as the Messiah, and then keep the Sabbath and festivals. They seem to believe that by picking and choosing what commandments they want to keep (i.e., whatever is easy for them), they automatically become part of His bride. Scripture does not teach this.

Scripture teaches again and again that there are different levels of reward for different levels of sacrifice and service. As we will show in the chapter “Heart of Wisdom,” those who do not actively further and expand His empire will not even make it *into* the kingdom, so why would they make it into the bride?

And why do those who make less than their best effort believe they will eat at the King’s table, or enter the King’s bridal chambers? Although they might make it into the kingdom, why would they be part of His bride?

Think about it: In any kingdom, there are many different positions. There are cooks, clerks, drivers, farmers, doctors, lawyers, ministers, officials, courtesans, and even the court jester. While all of these are noble professions, are all of these the bride?

Or is not bridehood reserved only for those who *strive*?

Running Our Best Race

Indeed, the apostle Shaul (Paul) teaches us that we are not to sit back and just *assume* that our entry into His kingdom is assured. Rather, we are to give our all for His kingdom at all times, as if we were running a race.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Cor) 9:24-25
24 Do you not know that of those who run in a race, indeed all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain.

Correspondingly, while there will be many who may make it into His kingdom, in order to be taken in marriage, one must give everything one has to His service (and without thought of self). One must earnestly strive to do one's utmost to serve Him, and His people.

From His Perspective

Most of us are familiar with the concept of a free market economy. In order to succeed in a free market economy, one must somehow provide the "best" product. One way or another, one must provide the best quality, the best price, the best service, or in some other fashion one must be "the best" at something, in order to get business at all.

Is it any different with Yeshua? As the King of kings, does He not also look for the "best"? Or why would the King of kings marry anything less than the very "best of the best"?

Put yourself in Yeshua's sandals for a moment and see what kind of selection of bride you would make. Then ask yourself, "What kind of a bride am I to Him, *really*?"

Imagine Yourself a Prince

Imagine for a moment that you are a prince. Your father the king will soon give you absolute authority over the realm.

When you take charge of your realm, you will have to assign positions in your court. You have many applicants, but to be wise, you should select only those who have shown their prior dedication in service to your father. Moreover, your father bids you to wed, and soon you will have to choose at least one bride. Since you are an absolute monarch, you can take as many (or as few) brides as you want. Your decision is absolute and final.

There are many maidens in your soon coming realm who dream of becoming your bride, but you know that you must choose wisely. The question then becomes, young prince, which one (or ones) do you choose?

The first maiden curtsies and blushes when she says she loves you. She thinks of you lovingly all day long, and she spends all of her money and time trying her best to further your reign. Each day she reads transcripts of your speeches, trying to memorize what you have said, so she can teach your words to others. She has given everything she has to your service, and she is constantly looking for ways to convince others to treasure you as much as she does. Clearly, this maiden loves you.

The second maiden also says she loves you. She pays her tribute, but also gives you additional gifts, and tries to help those who work for you just as much as she can. She tells all of her friends how much she loves you, and even composes songs about you in her spare time (and teaches these songs to others).

The third maiden tells you that she loves you, but you can see that she is not very happy about paying tribute. While she would love to be your wife, you cannot shake the feeling that she does not really want to do anything more to help build your kingdom than she really has to. She happily eats at your table, but while she sings the songs that others compose, she does not really do so with heart.

The fourth maiden loudly protests that she loves you, but she never pays her tribute, and never helps your officials in their work. She rests on the days that you have set apart, and she sings songs about you on that day, if someone else leads. She loves to eat at the Sabbath table, but whenever anyone asks her why she does not pay the necessary tribute, she hotly snaps that it should be obvious how much she really loves you.

The fifth maiden has dedicated the rest of her life to telling other people about you. She has traveled to distant countries, suffered many hardships, and has told many people what a wonderful prince you are, and what a great king you will soon be. She has even spent time in jail for trying to convince the citizens of other nations that they should pledge their allegiance to you (rather than to their current king or flag). This damsel has given her life for you and has even suffered bloody torture in faraway places for your benefit.

The sixth maiden gladly pays her tribute, and helps your ministers and officials with their work. She also sends you gifts from time to time, and she went to special expense to hire a lawyer to get the fifth maiden out of prison.

The seventh maiden gives no regular tribute, but sends you small gifts from time to time. She sings in a local choir, and she loves to meet and fellowship with others who eat clean foods on the Sabbath day.

Apart from these seven maidens, there are thousands of other women who would love to be your queen. Some of them pay their regular tribute, and some don't. Some of them keep your commandments, and some don't. Although you love each one of your subjects deeply, and would gladly lay down your life for them, you cannot take all of these maidens for your queen. You do not need many brides, just pure ones.

So the question, young prince, is this: Which of these maidens will you take as your wife (or wives)? Remember that you must choose wisely, as your father forbids divorce. If you marry the wrong woman, she is yours forever (so choose wisely).

Yeshua's Choice

As a newly crowned king, you will also have many other jobs to fulfill in your kingdom, besides handpicking your bride(s). Which of these maidens will you assign to work in the fields, in the bakery, or in the stables? Which of these maidens will you assign to work in these areas? And which of these young women will you take to be your queen?

Dear brothers and sisters, isn't this precisely the kind of decision that Yeshua will have to make with each one of us on Judgment Day? So now ask yourself, which type of maiden are you (really)? Are you doing all that you realistically can to help your Prince build His empire? Regardless of your present station, are you doing all that you can to help your Prince become King over a greatly expanded empire? Or are you just sitting down at His table feeding yourself and waiting for the wedding?

On Earth, as it is in Heaven

What Yeshua will look for in His bride is probably the same thing that you or I would look for in a bride. You or I would look for someone who loves us so much that she is constantly searching for pleasant and agreeable ways to help us build up our house.

So ask yourself again this Sabbath, "Am I really doing all I can to help Yeshua build His house? Or am I just sitting down at His table and feeding myself?"

It is your eternal salvation that is at stake here, so if you truly treasure the thought of being taken in bridehood forever, then why not make His decision easy for Him? Why not start giving your all for Him, right now?

Qorintim Aleph (1st Cor) 9:24-25
24 Do you not know that of those who run in a race, indeed all run, but only one receives the prize?
Run in such a way that you may obtain it.

Heart of Wisdom

In Psalm 90, Moshe HaNavi (Moses the Prophet) sings a psalm unto YHWH, his Creator.

Tehillim (Psalms) 90:10-12

10 The days of our lives are seventy years; but if by reason of strength they are eighty years,

Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow;

For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

11 Who knows the power of Your anger?

For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath.

***12 So teach us to number our days,
That we may gain a heart of wisdom.***

Moshe's prayer was that YHWH would teach us to number our days, so we might gain a heart of wisdom.

But what did Moshe mean by this? How will numbering our days lead us to gain a heart of wisdom?

Let us go ahead and number our days, so we can find out what Moshe meant. Perhaps as a result of numbering our days, we too shall gain this heart of wisdom. But how should we number our days?

Let us begin by counting how many we have.

Thirty Thousand Days

Moshe's song tells us that the average Israelite will live to be approximately seventy years old. However, if we are strong, we may live to be eighty.

10 The days of our lives are seventy years; but if by reason of strength they are eighty years, Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow; For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

While there are 365 days in the western Roman (Gregorian) calendar, there are only 360 days in the Hebrew calendar year. However, in order to adjust itself to the start of the agricultural growing season in Israel, the Hebrew calendar adds leap months every so often. That being the case, over millennia, the average year works out to about 365.25 days; let us use that number here.

If we should live for 70 years (verse 10), then at 365.25 days per year, most of us will live approximately 25,568 days.

$$70 \times 365.25 = 25,568$$

Let us round this number up to 26,000.

If we should live to be 80 years old (by reason of strength), then we will live approximately 29,200 days.

$$80 \times 365.25 = 29,200$$

Let us round this number up to 30,000.

According to Scripture, then, most of us will live a lifespan of not more than about thirty thousand days. Our personal (individual) life span may average a little

more or less than this, but the point is that our days are finite and limited.

But how does the knowledge that our days are finite and limited help us to gain a heart of wisdom? The answer has to do with our eternal reward.

Earning Our Reward

There can be no doubt that salvation is a free gift. Scripture is clear that salvation comes by grace through faith, and even the faith that we have been given is not of our own doing. Even that is a gift of Elohim (of which we are not worthy).

Ephesim (Ephesians) 2:8-9
8 For by favor (or grace) you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of Elohim,
9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

No man should ever boast; our salvation is not something that we have earned.

And yet, at the exact same time, Scripture is also very clear that although our salvation is a free gift, the reward we will receive will be determined according to our works.

Hitgalut (Revelation) 22:12
12 "And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work.

Parable of the Minas

What is more, Yeshua tells us that if we do not use our post-salvational lives to serve Him, then we may not have a reward at all.

In the parable of the minas, Yeshua tells us that if we do not value our free gift of salvation enough to commit our post-salvational lives to serving Him (and to building His kingdom), then we can only look forward to everlasting punishment.

As you read the following passage, try thinking of the ten minas that the master gives to his ten servants as their post-salvational lives.

Luqa (Luke) 19:11-27
11 Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem, and because they thought the kingdom of Elohim would appear immediately.
12 Therefore He said:
"A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return.
13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.'
14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.'
15 "And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading.

16 Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'

17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.'

Because this first servant used his post-salvational life to win more souls for Yeshua, he will be rewarded with much in the new earth.

18 And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'

19 Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.'

Though not as successful as the first servant, the second servant also dedicated himself, and will also be placed over much in the new earth (according to his work).

20 "Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief.

21 For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.'

22 And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant! You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow.

23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?'

What does Yeshua mean, "...put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?" Is it possible that Yeshua could mean, "Why did you not help those who are doing the work, so that your mina could have been used to help build My kingdom?"

24 "And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas!'

25 (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.')

26 'For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him!

Ephraim has been listening to the church mantra of "love without rules" for so long that he has forgotten who his Messiah really is. He has forgotten that Yeshua is a King who, like any king, demands loyalty and service: He promises to slay all those who do not dedicate their lives to serving Him.

27 'But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me!'"

Just as Judah has a hard time accepting that Yeshua is the Messiah, Ephraim sometimes has a hard time with the idea that the Messiah is actually an imperialist dictator that promises to slay all who say they believe on Him, but who do not use their salvation to serve Him.

The Messiah: Son of King David

It may be a tough thing to digest, but most Ephraimites' idea of who they *want* the Messiah to be, is not who the Messiah actually said He is.

It was prophesied that the Messiah would be the Son of King David (e.g., 2 Samuel 7:12-15); King David was a military conqueror for YHWH. He was a man with a "take no prisoners" attitude.

Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 8:1-4

1 After this it came to pass that David attacked the Philistines and subdued them. And David took Metheg Ammah from the hand of the Philistines.

2 Then he defeated Moab. Forcing them down to the ground, he measured them off with a line. With two lines he measured off those to be put to death, and with one full line those to be kept alive (i.e., as slaves).

Genesis 1 tells us that living beings reproduce after their kinds (e.g. Genesis 1:24), and Judah typically understands that this implies the Messiah would also be an imperialist military dictator, just like his forefather King David.

An Ephraimite might not like it, and they might think it sounds cruel, but King David was an imperialist conqueror who had no qualms about either killing or enslaving anyone who refused to serve the true Creator of heaven and earth, YHWH Elohim; and that, by extension, his Seed (Yeshua) would very likely behave the same way.

Notice, then, that Yeshua also speaks just as King David would have spoken. Yeshua promises to kill all those

who refuse to dedicate their lives to serving YHWH and advancing His kingdom here on earth.

Luqa (Luke) 19:27

27 'But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me!'"

This understanding accords with Yeshua's other parables which tell us that those who do not take it to heart to serve their Husband will not be taken to the wedding banquet, but rather will be discarded, burned, or thrown out.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 13:47-50

47 "Again, the kingdom of heaven is like a dragnet that was cast into the sea and gathered some of every kind, 48 which, when it was full, they drew to shore; and they sat down and gathered the good into vessels, but threw the bad away.

49 So it will be at the end of the world. The messengers will come forth, separate the wicked from among the just,

50 and cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth."

Notice what a far cry this is from the cherished Christian ideal of "inexpensive grace." Rather than promising to embrace slackers in their vanity, Yeshua promises to abandon the slackers because of their laxity. Perhaps this comes as a shock to many people, but why should the words of Scripture come as a shock?

Children Learn by Example

Just as actions speak louder than words, children learn by watching and imitating their parents. The example a parent gives his children has a direct impact on their behavior.

So, what kind of an example are we giving our children with our thirty thousand days? Are we giving our children an example of how to earn an eternal reward for themselves? That is to say, have we done all we can with the mina called “today,” so that our children will learn to obtain the reward of the righteous? And what will we do with the mina called “tomorrow,” to help them truly succeed? Is there something more we can do?

Still Wanting to be Entertained?

Brother, have you given your life to Messiah? And if so, do you still watch television? Do you still spend your time watching Hollywood movies and television sitcoms? How are you spending your Master’s minas?

Minas are a lot like real money: if you do not make a conscious decision to invest them wisely, they are soon gone, and they fly away. The days of our lives are also like that. If we do not stay on task, soon the “minas of our lives” are gone, and we have nothing to show for them.

Tehillim (Psalms) 90:10-12

***10 The days of our lives are seventy years; but if by reason of strength they are eighty years,
Yet their boast is only labor and sorrow;
For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.***

Brother, let me ask you: If you are expecting an eternal reward, then have you turned your life over to Messiah? And if you have turned your life over to the Messiah, then how much time do you spend building your Master’s kingdom?

Hearers or Doers?

Brother, let us be honest with ourselves. Are we hearers or doers of the word? More importantly, to what extent are we doers of His word?

Ya’akov (James) 1:22-24

22 But be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves.

***23 For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man observing his natural face in a mirror;
24 for he observes himself, goes away, and immediately forgets what kind of man he was.***

Perhaps you rest on the Sabbath and festival days, and perhaps you wear tzitzit. But do you truly live your life on faith? Are you honestly doing all that you can to help build Yeshua’s kingdom here on earth?

How much time do you spend doing the things of this fleshly, material world? How important to you is your car, your bank card, your appearance, and your home? And if I may be so bold, how much money do you spend on things that do nothing much to further your Husband’s kingdom or work?

How many of your thirty thousand minas do you spend *not* seeking to build His kingdom? And what kind of reward do you expect to get, for *not* seeking to help Him?

New Heavens, New Earth

As we explain in *Revelation and the End Times*, Isaiah tells us that by the time we get to the new heaven and the new earth (after the Day of Judgment which follows the end of the millennium), we *won't even remember* what happened in this life. Think about that for a moment.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 65:17-25

17 "For behold! I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered, or come to mind."

After the Day of Judgment, we won't even remember the time we spent watching television or Hollywood movies. We won't even remember our hunting and fishing trips. We also won't remember the fun we had wasting the minas that would have better been spent furthering our Husband's kingdom.

When all is said and done, the only thing we will remember is the reward we received for every single mina that we used in helping sow seed for our Master.

Luqa (Luke) 19:16-19

16 Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.'
17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant! Because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities!'

18 And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.'

19 Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities!'

So how many days (or how many minas) do we have left to spend for Him? And how will we spend what we have left of that dwindling supply of minas, in order to benefit Him, ourselves, and our children?

In each and every moment that we are mindful of this question, this is a heart of wisdom.

Heart of Wisdom

Moshe HaNavi asked Elohim to teach us to number our days, so that we might gain a heart of wisdom.

Tehillim (Psalms) 90:10-12

10 The days of our lives are seventy years; and if by reason of strength they are eighty years, yet their boast is only labor and sorrow;

For it is soon cut off, and we fly away.

11 Who knows the power of Your anger? For as the fear of You, so is Your wrath.

12 So teach us to number our days, That we may gain a heart of wisdom.

The wisdom that comes from numbering our days is to realize that we only have a limited amount of time to build a reward for ourselves. And, just like earthly money, if we do not spend our thirty thousand minas wisely (but party with them, and pleasure ourselves),

soon all of our minas will be gone, and we will be left with nothing.

Realizing that our days are limited, and that we must *earn* our eternal reward, how are we spending our minas? Are we spending our days to help the Son of David build His empire, thus earning an eternal reward (and a place and an eternal name) for ourselves? What are we doing for our Husband today? And what do we plan to do for His kingdom tomorrow?

Got Brokenness?

YHWH commands us to afflict our souls at Yom Kippur.

Bemidbar (Numbers) 29:7-8

7 “On the tenth day of this seventh month you shall have a set-apart gathering. You shall afflict your souls; you shall not do any work.”

Although there are other methods, most people choose to fulfill this commandment by abstaining from food and water for a day. But is that all YHWH wants--for us to go hungry and thirsty for twenty-four hours?

What if, more than just being a collection of commands, the instructions of YHWH are really a path to spiritual refinement? And what if the purpose of Yom Kippur is to give us an opportunity to develop the broken and contrite heart that YHWH says He will not despise?

Tehillim (Psalms) 51:17

17 The sacrifices of Elohim are a broken spirit, a broken and a contrite heart — These, O Elohim, You will not despise.

If we consider this verse, doesn't it say that unless we have a broken spirit, and a broken and contrite heart, that YHWH will despise our spirit and heart on the Day of Judgment? How will we ever make it into His favor that way?

But what is wrong with our spirit and heart? Aren't we pleasing just as we are, once we confess Yeshua?

The world teaches that humans are basically good, but Scripture teaches us that the human heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked. It also tells us that most people will not be aware of this fact (but that they will rationalize their evil away).

Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 17:9

***9 "The heart is deceitful above all things,
And desperately wicked;
Who can know it?"***

Get this: Our animal nature is so bad that even though we are born basically selfish and self-serving, we think of ourselves as being good and righteous (all the time). We continually justify and rationalize our bad behavior, and make excuses for what we do wrong. All of this is the fruit of any heart which is not broken or contrite.

What we have to understand is that YHWH wants more than just "checklist" behavior from us. In addition to believing on Yeshua, and in addition to resting on His Sabbath and the festivals, and in addition to abstaining from food and drink on Yom Kippur, and in addition to helping to spread His Good News however we can, we also need to understand that our default animal nature is not good. We need to mindfully develop a heart that does not lift itself up, and that continually checks itself for the fruits of the Spirit (or the lack thereof).

Galatim (Galatians) 5:22-26

***22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy,
peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness,
faithfulness,
23 gentleness, self-control. Against such
there is no Instruction (i.e., there is no
Instruction against these).***

***24 And those who are Messiah's have
crucified (put to death) the flesh with its
passions and desires.***

***25 If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in
the Spirit.***

***26 Let us not become conceited, provoking
one another, envying one another.***

More than just going hungry, what if the purpose of Yom Kippur is to take our own thoughts into captivity, so we can hear and obey His voice?

Qorintim Bet (2nd Corinthians) 10:4-6

***4 For the weapons of our warfare are not
carnal, but mighty in Elohim for pulling down
strongholds,***

***5 casting down arguments and every high
thing that exalts itself against the know-
ledge of Elohim, bringing every thought into
captivity to the obedience of Messiah,***

***6 and being ready to punish all dis-
obedience when your obedience is fulfilled.***

And what if the mental quietness of taking our thoughts into captivity allows us to have a personal one-on-one relationship with Yeshua, such that we are able to abide in Him, and He in us?

Yochanan (John) 15:1-8

***15 "I am the true vine, and My Father is the
vinedresser.***

***2 Every branch in Me that does not bear fruit
He takes away; and every branch that bears
fruit He prunes, that it may bear more fruit.***

***3 You are already clean because of the word
which I have spoken to you.***

4 Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

A common mistake is to believe that we are filled with His Spirit automatically upon becoming saved. That is not true. We need to pray for His Spirit, and once it comes we need to be careful not to quench it. I talk about this in the study "Don't Quench the Spirit."

The problem is that after we receive His Spirit, very few of us let it lead us. His Spirit will focus on doing His will all of the time, but most of us let some other spirit (i.e., some other priority) creep in and take up residence. This is attested every time we do things that are not glorifying to YHWH. YHWH's Spirit will never do these kinds of things (and hence they can only be the fruit of some other spirit).

What we need, then, is to be delivered of every spirit that is not His. We need to ask YHWH to take those other spirits away from us, so that YHWH's Spirit alone dwells in us. This is where fasting and prayer come in.

Marqaus (Mark) 9:28-29

28 And when He had come into the house, His disciples asked Him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?"

29 So He said to them, "This kind can come out by nothing but prayer and fasting."

The reason fasting is so important is that our hearts are deceitful and rebellious, and like to exalt themselves. Just like our Pharisee/Orthodox brothers like to pretend that their own commandments are of Elohim, so too the people in this movement like to do their own will, and pretend that it comes from YHWH. They open the door to all sorts of other spirits, but they pretend that they only have YHWH's Spirit because they perform some of the outward commandments. This is exactly what Yeshua decried when He criticized the Pharisees (Orthodox Jews) for keeping YHWH's commands as a checklist of steps to spiritual purification.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 23:23-28

23 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law: justice and mercy and faith. These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone.

24 Blind guides, who strain out a gnat and swallow a camel!

25 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence.

26 Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also.

27 "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs which indeed appear beautiful outwardly, but inside are full of dead men's bones and all uncleanness.

28 Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but inside you are full of hypocrisy and Torahlessness."

If we believe we are above the same reproach because we believe on Yeshua and keep Sabbath and festivals, then we have badly deceived ourselves. When we think of ourselves as righteous, *that* is when we are the very farthest from His righteousness.

Luqa (Luke) 18:9-14

9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 "Two men went up to the temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'Elohim, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'Elohim be merciful to me, a sinner!'

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

The fruit of the Spirit includes joy, and YHWH generally wants us to be happy. There are also many times to be as bold as a lion, and stand up for what is right; but if in general we think of ourselves as being good and righteous people, then that is the opposite of having a broken, humble, and contrite heart.

In Hebrew the root word for "contrite" is *daka* (דכד).

OT:1792 daka' (daw-kaw'); a primitive root (compare OT:1794); to crumble; transitively, to bruise (literally or figuratively):

KJV - beat to pieces, break (in pieces), bruise, contrite, crush, destroy, humble, oppress, smite.

When we look at the reference to OT:1794 we see that it means "to collapse" (or to have collapsed).

OT:1794 dakah (daw-kaw'); a primitive root (compare OT:1790, OT:1792); to collapse (phys. or mentally):

KJV - break (sore), contrite, crouch.

When our hearts and our spirits are collapsed, that is when our hearts and our spirits are contrite, and at those times He does not despise our spirit or our heart. But brothers, what percentage of the time does this honestly describe our hearts? The rest of the time we are not pleasing.

Have you ever wondered why there is so much sin and corruption in the body? Have you ever wondered why there is so much fraud, lying, stealing, adultery, book merchandising, and general making-of-way-for-Satan in the Messianic movement? It is because of a general lack of brokenness on the part of our people.

If we receive Yeshua as our Master and our unclean spirits go out of us, but we do not take care to cultivate and maintain a broken and collapsed heart condition, Yeshua says we are spiritually worse than before.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 12:43-45

43 "When an unclean spirit goes out of a man, he goes through dry places, seeking rest, and finds none.

44 Then he says, 'I will return to my house from which I came.' And when he comes, he finds it empty, swept, and put in order.

45 Then he goes and takes with him seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter and dwell there; and the last state of that man is worse than the first. So shall it also be with this wicked generation."

Yeshua was speaking of the Pharisees here, but He might just as well have been speaking of our people. Our Orthodox brothers think of themselves as being good and righteous because they are descendants of Judah, and because they perform the works of their hands. How many in the Messianic world think they are doing all that they need to do because they wear tzitzit, keep Sabbath and festival days, and abstain from food and water for twenty-four hours on Yom Kippur?

YHWH's Spirit is capable of flourishing in us even when we are fasting. In fact, it even nourishes us.

Yochanan (John) 4:31-35

31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

32 But He said to them, "I have food to eat of which you do not know."

33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?"

34 Yeshua said to them, "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work."

Yet while YHWH's Spirit can survive without food, our own spirits cannot. Because our own spirits' energies are corrupt, they need to be fed. When we fast, we cut this outside fuel off, and after an initial convulsion the corrupt spirits begin to fade.

Once the corrupt spirits that are within us have begun to starve; grudges, hatreds, and animosities can fade, and we can begin to forgive. At a certain point, fears, worries, and anxieties also fade, and we can begin to understand that YHWH will sustain us as long as it serves His purposes; and that this is all that really matters. This is YHWH's Spirit talking to us and nourishing us spiritually. Once we reach this point, we need to pray for YHWH to cause it to stay with us, and for all of the other spirits to stay out.

When we are no longer worried about the future and hold no grudges about the past, we can become as little children, completely trusting in our Father, and ready to enter into His kingdom.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 18:1-5

8 At that time the disciples came to Yeshua, saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2 Then Yeshua called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,

3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little

children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

5 Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.”

It is not easy to humble our hearts and become as little children. It is not easy to set the binoculars aside and look for flaws in the mirror. It takes discipline to humble ourselves sufficiently and take the log out of our own eye before we take the speck out of our brother's eye, but this is the kind of humble and contrite spirit that YHWH says He will save.

Tehillim (Psalms) 34:16

18 YHWH is near to those who have a broken heart,

And saves such as have a contrite spirit.

This is also the same kind of thing Shaul was talking about in 2 Corinthians. His humility and contrite spirit came from a different kind of affliction, but the principle is the same: when our own spirit is weak, that is when we must turn to Him for strength, and that is when His Spirit can shine brightly through us.

Qorintim Bet (2nd Corinthians) 12:7-10

7 And lest I should be exalted above measure by the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, a messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I be exalted above measure.

8 Concerning this thing I pleaded with YHWH three times that it might depart from me.

9 And He said to me, "My favor is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness." Therefore most gladly I will rather boast in my infirmities, that the power of Messiah may rest upon me.

10 Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Messiah's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong.

Clearly we need to eat sometime, and there are other ways to become broken and contrite; yet one reason they call it “fasting” is that it is the fastest way to starve out our wrong spirit, so we can be filled with His. Therefore, rather than look at Yom Kippur as a “check the box” activity that we *have* to go through once a year, why not look forward to fasting as a blessed opportunity to re-zero our meters, and get back in touch with Him? Why not look forward to the fast as a blessed once a year opportunity to be reminded that we are literally nothing more than bags of dirt, and to carry that realization with us, moment by moment, until our next calibration the following year?

When YHWH brings us back to His land there will once again be a temple and all of the rites and rituals that go along with Yom Kippur. But even then, abstaining from food and water for twenty-four hours will not do us any good, unless we use it to learn to become humble, broken, and contrite all year long.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 66:1-2

1 Thus says YHWH:

"Heaven is My throne,

And earth is My footstool.

Where is the house that you will build Me?

And where is the place of My rest?

**2 For all those things My hand has made,
And all those things exist,"
Says YHWH.
"But on this one will I look:
On him who is poor and of a contrite spirit,
And who trembles at My word."**

And within that broken, humble, and contrite state, now let us find joy and abundant life.

Don't Quench the Spirit

In 1Thessalonians 5:19, the apostle Shaul tells us not to quench the Spirit.

Thessaloniqim Aleph (1st Thess.) 5:16-22
16 Rejoice always,
17 pray without ceasing,
18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of Elohim in Messiah Yeshua for you.
19 Do not quench the Spirit.
20 Do not despise prophecies.
21 Test all things; hold fast what is good.
22 Abstain from every form of evil.

What does it mean, not to quench the Spirit?

Originally, Adam and Havvah (Eve) lived in YHWH's favor (grace). However, at first YHWH did not give mankind His Set-apart Spirit; he only gave man the breath of life (נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים).

<p>Genesis 2:7 7 And YHWH Elohim formed man of the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.</p>	<p>(7) וַיִּצְרֶה יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים אֶת הָאָדָם עָפָר מִן הָאֲדָמָה וַיִּפְחַ בְּאַפָּיו נְשִׁמַת חַיִּים וַיְהִי הָאָדָם לְנֶפֶשׁ חַיָּה</p>
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Because they only had the breath of life, Adam and Havvah were not Spirit led beings. It would only be later that YHWH would give the Still Small Voice to those who believed on His Son, to guide their footsteps day by day, letting them know which way to go.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 30:21

21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand, or whenever you turn to the left.

Without the Spirit to guide them, the only thing Adam and Havvah could do was to try to live their lives by their limited human intellect. But since the intellect alone will not lead us to hear or obey YHWH's voice, Adam and Havvah were unable to stay in YHWH's favor (grace).

King Solomon was the wisest man who ever lived. He told us that there is a way that seems right to a man's intellect, but its end is only the way of death.

Mishle (Proverbs) 14:12

12 There is a way that seems right to a man, But its end is the way of death.

Without submitting to the leading and guiding of the Spirit, men cannot live together in peace with other men; for even if we do what seems right to us, and they do what seems right to them, no matter how we might try to fool ourselves, all that really happens is that we all follow after our own fleshly desires and lusts.

While the book of Genesis describes real events that actually occurred, it is also symbolic. Genesis 3 tells us how Havvah saw that the tree was good for food, pleasing to the eyes, and desirable to make one wise.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 3:6

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

Rather than obey what YHWH had said, she did what seemed right in her own eyes: she partook of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Her husband, who was with her, not only allowed it, but he did the same.

From our other study, "Tree of Knowledge, Tree of Life," we know that the tree of knowledge is not a literal fruit tree. Rather, it is symbolic of our desire to decide for ourselves what is right and wrong, rather than submitting to YHWH's opinion. But let us notice that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil was "in the midst" of the garden.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 3:2-3

2 And the woman said to the serpent, "We may eat the fruit of the trees of the garden; 3 but of the fruit of the tree which is in the midst of the garden, Elohim has said, 'You shall not eat it, nor shall you touch it, lest you die.'"

That the tree of knowledge was in the "middle" of the garden is symbolic of our fleshly human desire to do what seems good in our own eyes (rather than in YHWH's eyes). The desire to make up our own minds about what is right and wrong is central to our makeup.

The book of Genesis is prophetic, in that it describes patterns that repeat themselves throughout history. The things that appear in Genesis can be seen in later human history as well.

Lucifer is described as “the light bringer,” and we can see Lucifer’s influence in the Enlightenment (i.e., the “light bringing”). One of the founding “thinkers” of the Enlightenment was Rene Descartes, a French philosopher who had a series of disturbing dreams in which he felt he was “communicated with” (by Lucifer). After these dreams Descartes arrived at his famous saying, “I think, therefore I am.” While this phrase is celebrated throughout the West, let us understand the scriptural significance of the phrase, “I am.”

Shemote (Exodus) 3:13-14

13 Then Moshe said to Elohim, "Indeed, when I come to the children of Israel and say to them, 'The Elohim of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they say to me, 'What is His name?' what shall I say to them?"

14 And Elohim said to Moshe, "I AM WHO I AM." And He said, "Thus you shall say to the children of Israel, 'I AM has sent me to you.'"

Yeshua also says, “I am.”

Yochanan (John) 8:58

58 Yeshua said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, before Abraham was, I AM."

Therefore, when the philosopher Rene Descartes said, “I think, therefore I am,” is this not the same as to say, “I AM, because I think”? Indeed, it is.

In philosophy, those who believe on Yahweh are called “Yahwists,” and the world calls our belief “Yahwism.” We are called “Yahwists” because of our belief that YHWH created us, and that only He can justify us.

However, if we believe we exist because we think, then in scriptural terms, we believe our thinking created us. Those who believe this way are called “rationalists,” and crazier still is their view that “Because I think, I am (an) elohim (a g-d).” That is basically what Descartes said. Ironically, this is the predominant school of thought that is taught in most mainstream universities and colleges throughout the “Christianized” West.

If YHWH created us, then we owe our lives to Him, and only He can justify us. Furthermore, if we are justified by YHWH, we should figure out who He is and what He wants, and we should do as He says. However, in contrast, if we exist simply because we think, then we do not owe any allegiance to YHWH at all. We can do whatever seems good and right to us because we think of ourselves as our own elohim. This is, in actual fact, the way that most of the world thinks.

YHWH manifested Himself in human form, and came to dwell among us. (We discuss Yeshua’s nature in the study, “Yeshua: Manifestation of Elohim,” which is part of *Nazarene Scripture Studies Volume 1*). To restore us to His favor, He took the punishment for our failures to live in obedience to Him. However, once we have accepted His sacrifice, then we do owe the rest of our lives to Him. Further, out of a deep sense of gratitude, we want to be like Him in all of our ways.

Yochanan (John) 13:15

15 "For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you."

But in addition to using our intellect to try to be like Him, we also need to ask the Father to put His Spirit inside of us. That way, His Spirit can dwell within us, and guide us more easily along the right path.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 30:21

21 Your ears shall hear a word behind you, saying, "This is the way, walk in it," whenever you turn to the right hand, or whenever you turn to the left.

This is the same as to say that we maintain a deep, abiding, personal one-on-one relationship with Yeshua. When we abide in Him, His Spirit remains in us so that we can live in constant communion with Him. That way we can be led by the Spirit like never before.

Yochanan (John) 15:5

5 "I am the Vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; but without Me you can do nothing."

Restoring communion between Yahweh and man is all about inviting Him to come take control of our lives, and let Him lead us, day by day; for if we do not let Him lead us, then right relationship is not restored, and we cannot help but fall out of His favor again. This is something that all believers in Yeshua should consider.

Scripture gives us many different ways in which we are to seek to be in communion with YHWH Elohim. One is the Great Shema.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 6:4-9

4 "Hear, O Israel: YHWH our Elohim, YHWH is One (United)!"

5 You shall love YHWH your Elohim with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength.

6 "And these words which I command you today shall be in your heart.

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

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

9 You shall write them on the doorposts of your house and on your gates."

The word "hear" is the Hebrew word *shema* (שמע). In Hebrew this word means not just to hear the sounds, but to hear and then obey. Both are required concepts.

OT:8085 shama` (shaw-mah'); a primitive root; to hear intelligently (often with implication of attention, obedience, etc.; causatively, to tell, etc.):

We are also told to seek YHWH's face, and the Psalmist was satisfied when he awoke in His likeness.

Tehillim (Psalms) 17:15

15 As for me, I will see Your face in righteousness; I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness.

We also need to keep our eyes on Yeshua, for it was only when Kepha (Peter) took his eyes off of Yeshua that he could no longer walk on water.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 14:29-31

29 So He said, "Come." And when Kepha had come down out of the boat, he walked on the water to go to Yeshua.

30 But when he saw that the wind was boisterous, he was afraid; and beginning to sink he cried out, saying, "Adon, save me!"

31 And immediately Yeshua stretched out His hand and caught him, and said to him, "O you of little faith, why did you doubt?"

This is also allegorical, for it is when we stop focusing on Yeshua that we begin to sink. We fall from our restored place of favor. We are no longer "in the vine."

Yochanan (John) 15:4-8

4 "Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.

5 "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing.

6 If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.

7 If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.

8 By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples."

In closing his letter to the Thessalonians, the apostle Shaul tells us to rejoice always, pray without ceasing, and in everything give thanks. And then, curiously, Shaul also tells us not to "quench the Spirit."

Thessaloniqim Aleph (1st Thess.) 5:16-19

16 Rejoice always,

17 pray without ceasing,

18 in everything give thanks; for this is the will of Elohim in Messiah Yeshua for you.

19 Do not quench the Spirit.

In the Peshitta Aramaic, the word "Spirit" here is *Rucha* (רוחא), which is the Aramaic equivalent of the Hebrew *Ruach* (רוח).

19 Do not quench the Spirit.	^{PEH} 1 Thessalonians 5:19 רוחא לא תדעבון:
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Interestingly, the word *Ruach* means not just "Spirit," but also "wind" and "breath." The root of the word means "to blow," and anything that blows (including breath) can be described by this word.

OT:7306 ruwach (roo'-akh); a primitive root; properly, to blow, i.e. breathe; only (literally) to smell or (by implication, perceive (figuratively, to anticipate, enjoy)

In Scripture, when YHWH wants to signify the breath in the lungs, sometimes He uses the word *nishamat*, as we saw at the beginning of this study (נְשִׁמָּת). However, He also uses the word *ruach* (רוּחַ), and it has the exact same meaning, as in Genesis 6:17.

Genesis 6:17	
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17 And behold, I Myself am bringing floodwaters on the earth, to destroy from under heaven all flesh in which is the breath of life; everything that is on the earth shall die.

וַאֲנִי הַנְּנִי מִבְּיָא
 אֶת הַמַּבּוּל מֵיָם עַל
 הָאָרֶץ לְשַׁחַת כָּל בְּשָׂר
 אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ רוּחַ חַיִּים
 מִתַּחַת הַשָּׁמַיִם אִלּוּ
 אֲשֶׁר בְּאָרֶץ יִגּוּעַ

By not “quenching the Spirit,” could it be that the apostle Shaul is telling us not to hold our breath?

**First Thessalonians 5:19 (possibility):
 19 Do not hold the breath.**

Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that comes out of the mouth of YHWH.

**Mattityahu (Matthew) 4:4
 4 But He answered and said, "It is written, 'Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of Elohim.'"**

And yet, of all the physical bodily needs, what is more immediate than the breath (the ruach)?

Scripture tells us that the life is in the blood.

**Vayiqra (Leviticus) 17:13-14
 13 "Whatever man of the children of Israel, or of the strangers who dwell among you, who hunts and catches any animal or bird that may be eaten, he shall pour out its blood and cover it with dust;**

14 for it is the life of all flesh. Its blood sustains its life. Therefore I said to the children of Israel, 'You shall not eat the blood of any flesh, for the life of all flesh is its blood. Whoever eats it shall be cut off.'

What does the blood carry, but the exact same oxygen that the breath extracts from the air?

And why do we hold our breath, except for worry over worldly matters? Yeshua tells us that to worry over worldly cares (and even to worry over life and death) is anathema to the kingdom of Elohim.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 6:25-34

25 "Therefore I say to you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or what you will drink; nor about your body, what you will put on. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing?

26 Look at the birds of the air, for they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?

27 Which of you by worrying can add one cubit to his stature?

28 "So why do you worry about clothing? Consider the lilies of the field, how they grow: they neither toil nor spin;

29 and yet I say to you that even Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like one of these.

30 Now if Elohim so clothes the grass of the field, which today is, and tomorrow is thrown into the oven, will He not much more clothe you, O you of little faith?

31 "Therefore do not worry, saying, 'What shall we eat?' or 'What shall we drink?' or 'What shall we wear?'

32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things.

33 But seek first the kingdom of Elohim and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you.

34 Therefore do not worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will worry about its own things. Sufficient for the day is its own trouble."

There are many ways we can refine ourselves in this world of troubles and cares. To hold our breath in worry is not one of them. When we find ourselves holding our breath in worry, we can be honest about it, and ask YHWH to help us cast that care upon Him, so that we can breathe freely again, being anxious for nothing.

Philippim (Philippians) 4:6-7

6 Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, with thanksgiving, let your requests be made known to Elohim;

7 and the peace of Elohim, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and minds through Messiah Yeshua.

Though it is a simple discipline, it does not come easily to us. Yet in the model prayer, Yeshua implies that we should never worry, but just trust YHWH to give us what He wants us to have (and be happy with that).

Luqa (Luke) 11:2-13

2 So He said to them, "When you pray, say: Our Father in heaven, set Your name apart.

Your kingdom come. Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven.

3 Give us day by day our daily bread.

4 And forgive us our sins, as we also forgive everyone who is indebted to us. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one."

It is true that we are allowed to pray for our needs.

5 And He said to them, "Which of you shall have a friend, and go to him at midnight and say to him, 'Friend, lend me three loaves;

6 for a friend of mine has come to me on his journey, and I have nothing to set before him';

7 and he will answer from within and say, 'Do not trouble me; the door is now shut, and my children are with me in bed; I cannot rise and give to you'?

8 I say to you, though he will not rise and give to him because he is his friend, yet because of his persistence he will rise and give him as many as he needs.

Yeshua is not talking about the things of the world here, but the Set-apart Breath. Yahweh knows what our needs are, and He is faithful to take care of us.

9 "So I say to you, ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you.

10 For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened.

11 If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he

asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish?

12 Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion?

13 If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Set-apart Spirit to those who ask Him!"

May YHWH our Elohim give all of us this Set-apart Breath, that we will trust YHWH to provide everything we need, and not worry about the cares or the troubles of this life.

In Yeshua's name, amein.

Gender Roles in the Kingdom

Yahweh created woman as a help meet corresponding to her man.

Genesis 2:18 18 And Yahweh Elohim said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him."	(18) וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים לֹא טוֹב הָיִיתָ הָאָדָם לְבַדּוֹ אֶעֱשֶׂה לוֹ עֵזֶר כְּגֹדֹל
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This word "comparable" is the Hebrew word *neged* (נָגַד), and it refers to a counterpart.

OT:5048 neged (neh'-ghed); from OT:5046; a front, i.e. part opposite; specifically a counterpart, or mate; usually (adverbial, especially with preposition) over against or before:

Most mainstream translations tell us that Yahweh made Havvah (Eve) from one of Adam's ribs.

Genesis 2:21 21 And Yahweh Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.	(21) וַיִּפֹּל יְהוָה אֱלֹהִים תְּרֵדָמָה עַל הָאָדָם וַיִּישָׁן וַיִּקַּח אַחַת מִצְלָעָתָיו וַיִּסְגֶּר בָּשָׂר תַּחְתָּנָהּ
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This word “rib” is actually the Hebrew word *tselah*, and it refers not to a rib, but to a side.

OT:6763 tselah` (tsay-law'); or (feminine) tsal`ah (tsal-aw'); from OT:6760; a rib (as curved), literally (of the body) or figuratively (of a door, i.e. leaf); hence, a side, literally (of a person) or figuratively (of an object or the sky, i.e. quarter); architecturally, a (especially floor or ceiling) timber or plank (single or collective, i.e. a flooring):

It is an interpretation, but perhaps what Yahweh did was to take Adam’s feminine side, and make it into his helper, so she could be his completeness.

It is obvious that men and women are created different, just as boys are different than girls. Neither one is any “better” than the other, but Yahweh did ordain that the men generally take the lead role, while the women help their men. Yet some people tell us that after Yeshua’s sacrifice, there are no more gender roles for men and women. This argument is usually based on Galatians 3:28, where the Apostle Shaul tells us that there is neither male nor female in Messiah Yeshua.

Galatim (Galatians) 3:28

28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Messiah Yeshua.

Those who favor dispensing with gender roles also remind us how Yeshua said that in the resurrection we will be neither male nor female, but we will be as the messengers (angels) of Elohim.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 22:30

30 “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like messengers of Elohim in heaven.”

As we explain in *Revelation and the End Times*, what Yeshua is talking about here is the time when the earth has ended, and our spirits are all taken up into heaven to stand in the judgment. During this period of time we will not have physical bodies (or gender) because we will be purely spiritual beings. However, those of us who are selected to go on to the new earth will almost assuredly have physical bodies (and physical gender) once again. We can see this from Isaiah 65:20, which tells us that there will be old men (i.e., males) and children in the new earth. And if there are children, then surely there are married couples.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 65:17-20

17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth; and the former shall not be remembered or come to mind.

18 But be glad and rejoice forever in what I create; for behold, I create Jerusalem as a rejoicing, and her people a joy.

19 I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people; the voice of weeping shall no longer be heard in her, nor the voice of crying.

20 No more shall an infant from there live but a few days, nor an old man who has not fulfilled his days; for the child shall die one hundred years old, but the sinner being one hundred years old shall be accursed.”

While we may not have gender roles when we stand before the throne, it seems clear that there are natural gender roles here on earth. But what are they? For its

part, rabbinical Judaism suggests that a man has three roles, which it describes as the three *P*'s. A man is to be (1) the priest of his household, (2) the provider for his family, and (3) the protector. These three *P*'s give us a reasonable description of the role that most men play. Men are basically warriors who are called to protect and provide for their families, and represent their families at all Israelite gatherings.

In contrast to this, rabbinical Judaism suggests that the woman's role is to (1) cover herself, so as not to provoke or attract unnecessary male attention, (2) be an astute businesswoman, and (3) love the Torah. While there is much wisdom in these descriptions, they only scratch the surface of the many diverse roles any real woman of Torah must play, not just as a wife, but also as a mother, as a member of her extended family, and as part of Israelite society at large.

Others look to the traditional Christian roles for women, and suggest that a woman should never work outside the home. These tell us that a woman's only correct place is in the home, raising children. While this is certainly a valid lifestyle for those who can afford it, most Jewish families have raised their children in community schools since ancient times. In fact, Shaul was the product of such community-based schooling.

Ma'asei (Acts) 22:2b-3

2b Then he said:

3 "I am indeed a Jew, born in Tarsus of Cilicia, but brought up in this city at the feet of Gamliel, taught according to the strictness of our fathers' Torah, and was zealous toward Elohim as you all are today."

It is true that given the choice, many women prefer to stay at home and raise their children full time. However, Scripture does not confine women to the home. For example, Proverbs 31 sings the praises of a "woman of valor."

<p>Mishle (Proverbs) 31:10 10 A woman of valor who will find? And far above pearls is her worth.</p>	<p>(10) אִשֶּׁת חַיִּל מִי יִמְצָא וְרַחֵק מִפְּנֵינִים מְכָרָה :</p>
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This word "valor" is the Hebrew word *chayil* (חַיִּל), which is translated in various ways. It essentially refers to a powerful figure, such as a warrior, or a soldier.

OT:2428 chayil; from OT:2342; probably a force, whether of men, means, or other resources; i.e., an army, wealth, virtue, valor, strength:

Our forefathers had a saying for wives who always worked hard to take care of the family, and who did not complain when the going got tough. They would praise her by saying, "She is a real trooper!" Chayil has the same meaning.

The Hebrew language teaches that life is a struggle (or war). In Proverbs 31, an *aishet chayil* (woman of valor) is someone who, through wisdom, diligence, and hard work takes care not only of her husband and family, but also those of the faith who are in need.

Mishle (Proverbs) 31:10-24

10 A woman of valor, who can find? For her worth is far above rubies.

11 The heart of her husband safely trusts her; so he will have no lack of gain.

12 She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

13 She seeks wool and flax, and willingly works with her hands.

14 She is like the merchant ships; she brings her food from afar.

15 She also rises while it is yet night, and provides food for her household, and a portion for her maidservants.

16 She considers a field and buys it; from her profits she plants a vineyard.

17 She girds herself with strength, and strengthens her arms.

18 She perceives that her merchandise is good, and her lamp does not go out by night.

19 She stretches out her hands to the distaff, and her hand holds the spindle.

20 She extends her hand to the poor: Yes, she reaches out her hands to the needy.

21 She is not afraid of snow for her household, for all her household is clothed with scarlet.

22 She makes tapestry for herself; her clothing is fine linen and purple.

23 Her husband is known in the gates, when he sits among the elders of the land.

24 She makes linen garments and sells them, and supplies sashes for the merchants.

While Ephraimites sometimes idealize weak, passive women who cannot work outside the home, our Jewish brothers seek successful, accomplished women. They seek an aishet chayil, a woman warrior who is not only loving and nurturing, but who is also savvy and wise.

So if Yahweh made men and women as counterparts, then how do they work best together? To answer this, let us look at Genesis 3, where things did not work. This passage shows us that a woman's carnal nature is to be more impulsive (based on emotion), while a man's carnal nature is to want to shirk responsibility, and to deflect blame.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 3:6-13

6 So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, that it was pleasant to the eyes, and a tree desirable to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate. She also gave to her husband with her, and he ate.

7 Then the eyes of both of them were opened, and they knew that they were naked; and they sewed fig leaves together and made themselves coverings.

8 And they heard the sound of Yahweh Elohim walking in the garden in the cool of the day, and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of Yahweh Elohim among the trees of the garden.

9 Then Yahweh Elohim called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?"

10 So he said, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself."

11 And He said, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?"

12 Then the man said, "The woman whom You gave to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I ate."

13 And Yahweh Elohim said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" The woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Yahweh has a great sense of poetic justice. Because Hавvah gave into her desires, he made her submit to her husband. And because the man did not want to take responsibility for what had happened, but had listened to the voice of his wife (rather than obeying Yahweh's voice), he was given to toil.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 3:16-19

16 To the woman He said:

"I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception: In pain you shall bring forth children. Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

17 Then to Adam He said, "Because you have heeded the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree of which I commanded you, saying, 'You shall not eat of it': "Cursed is the ground for your sake; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life.

18 Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, and you shall eat the herb of the field.

19 In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; for dust you are, and to dust you shall return."

This shows us the principle that those who have been given more authority also bear greater responsibility. Whatever Yahweh gives us, He expects us to use it for the betterment of all Israelites.

Luqa (Luke) 12:48b

48b "For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more."

In many ways, Scripture tells us that Israel is the army (or armies) of the living Elohim.

Shemote (Exodus) 12:51

51 And it came to pass, on that very same day, that Yahweh brought the children of Israel out of the land of Egypt according to their armies.

While it may sound funny, if Israel is the army of the living Elohim, then it needs to be organized as an army; and if we can receive it, this is how Yahweh set the family structure up. The men are the officer corps. Their job is to make tough decisions, and to set the example. The women are NCO's (non-commissioned officers, or sergeants). They advise the officers, and carry out the decisions with wisdom. The children are enlisted men, who are to do as their parents instruct, and grow up in the way they should go, eventually becoming good life warriors themselves.

Traditionally, an officer's job is to lead troops in battle (either literally or spiritually). The NCO's job is to make sure that the soldiers have their material needs taken care of (food, clothing, water, etc.), so they can perform the mission. Although the officer is in the lead, in order for him to be effective, he must take his NCO's seriously, and his soldiers must know that he cares about them. Unless the NCOs and men feel that their leader cares about them and their welfare, they will not feel motivated to support him to the same extent.

In any army there are times when NCOs and enlisted men need to speak up; yet some believe that women are not supposed to talk in an assembly, based on a misinterpretation of 1 Corinthians 14:34-36.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Cor.) 14:34-36.

34 Let your women be silent in the assemblies, for they are not allowed to speak; but let them subject themselves, as the Torah also says.

35 And if they wish to learn whatever, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in an assembly.

36 Or did the word of Elohim go out from you? Or did it reach only to you?"

It might at first seem Shaul is saying that women need to keep silent in the assemblies, citing the Torah as his authority. However, the Torah says no such thing. To make matters worse, verse 36 makes a statement that seems to come out of nowhere. So what do we do?

In the Greek *Textus Receptus*, the problem lies mainly in poor translation, and a misunderstanding of Greek grammar. Verse 36 of the *Textus Receptus* begins with the Greek preposition *ay* (ἢ). *Strong's Concordance* NT:2228 tells us that this word describes a disjunction, or a sharp contrast between the two things it joins together.

NT:2228 e (ay!); a primary particle of distinction between two connected terms: disjunctive, or; comparative, than:

When used at the beginning of a sentence, the word “ay!” can mean “or,” but it usually means something more like the Hebrew *Oy!* (Oh, my enemies!); and, as we will see, Shaul likely wrote “Oy!” in the original Semitic manuscripts. If we were to translate “Oy!” into English, it would probably translate into something like, “What nonsense!”

In the first century, there were no quotation marks in Hebrew, Aramaic, or Greek. Thus, even though Shaul does not specifically tell us he is quoting in verses 34 and 35, the fact that he indicates a sharp contrast at the start of verse 36 (“Oy!”) tells us that verses 34 and 35 are not his own words. Bearing all of this in mind, let us take a fresh look at this passage.

<p>1st Corinthians 14:34-36 34 [Quoting:] "Let your women be silent in the assemblies, for they are not allowed to speak; but let them subject themselves, as the Torah also says. 35 [Still quoting] And if they wish to learn whatever, let them ask their own husbands at home, for it is improper for women to speak in an assembly." [end quote] 36 [Shaul's response] What nonsense! Did the word of Elohim go out (i.e., originate) from you? Or did it reach only to you?</p>	<p>BGT 1 Corinthians 14:34 αἱ γυναῖκες ἐν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις σιγάτωσαν· οὐ γὰρ ἐπιτρέπεται αὐταῖς λαλεῖν, ἀλλὰ ὑποταστέσθωσαν, καθὼς καὶ ὁ νόμος λέγει. BGT 1 Corinthians 14:35 εἰ δέ τι μαθεῖν θέλουσιν, ἐν οἴκῳ τοῦς ἰδίους ἄνδρας ἐπερωτάτωσαν· αἰσχρὸν γὰρ ἐστὶν γυναικὶ λαλεῖν ἐν ἐκκλησίᾳ. BGT 1 Corinthians 14:36 ἢ ἀφ' ὑμῶν ὁ λόγος τοῦ θεοῦ ἐξῆλθεν, ἢ εἰς ὑμᾶς μόνους κατήτησεν;</p>
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In essence, Shaul is shaming the author of verses 34 and 35 by saying, “Where is this Torah commandment that no one except you has seen? Who do you think you are anyhow—making up rules no one else has even heard of? Are you Elohim? Did you give the Torah?”

While the church fathers tell us that the original Renewed Covenant (New Testament) manuscripts were inspired in Hebrew and/or Aramaic, in other places we show why the Peshitta is most likely not the original. Nevertheless, the Peshitta gives us some very important insights. In the Peshitta, the Greek word *ay!* is given as the Aramaic word *oh!* (או). J. Payne Smith's *Compendious Syriac Dictionary* tells us that the Aramaic word *Oh!* (או) indicates an expression of simultaneous wonderment, grief, and reproof.

או: *Interjection, expressing the vocative, wonder, grief, reproof; ~ O! Oh!*

This confirms that Shaul was probably saying, "Oy!"

<p>1st Corinthians 14:36 36 Oh! Went forth from you the Word of Elaha? Oh! Arrived it to you only?</p>	<p>או דלמא מנכון הו נפקת מלתה דאלאהא. או לותכון הו בלהוד מטת.</p>
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Shaul's is being sarcastic. He is saying, "I was raised at the feet of Gamliel, and I never heard of a Torah commandment that says women are supposed to be silent in the assemblies. So then, did you write this command? Or are you the only one who heard it?"

Some authors suggest Shaul was referring to Genesis 3:16, which we saw earlier in this study.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 3:16
16 "I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception. In pain you shall bring forth

children: Your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you."

However, while Genesis 3:16 does indicate that the men need to lead (both in the assemblies and in the home) it never implies that women are not allowed to speak; and from the standpoint of the military model, giving the NCO's a blanket commandment to be silent would be highly counterproductive. It would destroy not only morale, but also impede efficiency, which is not Yahweh's purpose. Rather, Yahweh just wants to show us how things can work best.

Now before we discuss the prophetess Deborah, we need to discuss a fourth class of soldier called the warrant officer. A warrant officer is basically an NCO who has special skills and abilities; and because he has special skills and abilities, he warrants being treated like an officer. He can even take charge of an army group when no qualified commissioned officers are available to fulfill the role.

In *Torah Government* we explain that there are three main offices in Scripture: the king, the priest, and the prophet. There is also the judge, who is a special combination of all three. Deborah was a female judge who served in both the prophet and kingship roles because the men in her day were not doing their jobs. Deborah agreed to go out to war with Barak, but she said he would receive no glory from it because it is not the women's duty to take the army out to war: it is the men's job.

Shophetim (Judges) 4:8-9
8 And Barak said to her, "If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!"

9 So she said, "I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for Yahweh will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman."

Leadership had ceased in Israel until Deborah arose. This was a great shame to the men, and like a true prophetess, Deborah rubbed their faces in it.

Shophetim (Judges) 5:7

7 "Leadership ceased! It ceased in Israel until I, Deborah, arose! A mother in Israel arose!"

What kind of a disgrace would it be if a mom had to lead NATO and the Pentagon? That is what Deborah was saying. She thought the situation was wrong.

Interestingly, Deborah's husband was Lappidoth. His name refers to someone who is a "flambeau" (i.e., someone flamboyant, or a showboat).

OT:3940 lappiyd (lap-peed'); or lappid (lap-peed'); from an unused root probably meaning to shine; a flambeau, lamp or flame:

Deborah did not revel in having to step up to fill the men's shoes; yet how many women are eager to teach, and to lead congregations, who point to Deborah as an excuse? This is to misapply Deborah's example.

Priscilla and Aquila's example is often misapplied as well. While Hebrews normally recorded the husband before the wife, Shaul generally does the opposite. He records Priscilla before Aquila in Romans 16:3, 2 Timothy 4:19, and 1 Corinthians 16:19. Luke mentions them as a husband-wife team in Acts 18:24-26.

Ma'asei (Acts) 18: 24-26

24 And a certain Jew named Apollo, born at Alexandria, a learned man and mighty in the Scriptures, came to Ephesus.

25 This one had been instructed in the Way of the Master. And being fervent in Spirit, he was speaking and teaching the matters about the Master exactly, though he knew only the immersion of Yochanan.

26 And he began to speak boldly in the congregation. And when Aquila and Priscilla heard him, they took him aside and explained to him the way of Elohim more exactly.

The thing is, sometimes a husband is given a gift for ministry that the wife does not have; and by the same token, sometimes the wife is given a gift for ministry, while the husband is not. The woman can exercise her gift so long as she operates as part of a husband-wife team, with the husband acting as her covering. Notice in verse 26 that Priscilla and Aquila explained the Good News to Apollo, and they did so, as a team. It does not say that Priscilla counseled men (such as Apollo) by herself; and in fact, Shaul tells us that women should not teach men by themselves.

Timoteos Aleph (1st Timothy) 2:12-15

12 And I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence (regarding teaching),

13 For Adam was formed first, then Havvah (Eve).

14 And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.

15 Nevertheless she will be saved in childbearing (Peshitta: "but she has life by way

of her children”) if they continue in faith, love, and set-apartness, with self-control.

Women can speak with men, but Yahweh’s order is for the women to teach other women (and the children). This is how Yahweh set things up; and if we will happily turn away from our carnal natures and embrace His order, then we and our families will be blessed.

Abstinence, Celibacy, and Nazirites

Numbers 6 gives us the instructions (Torah) of the Nazirite—one who is separated from normal daily life to serve YHWH and His people.

Bemidbar (Numbers) 6:1-8, 21

***1 And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying,
2 “Speak to the children of Yisrael, and say to them, ‘When a man or woman does separate, by making a vow of a Nazirite, to be separate to YHWH,
3 he separates himself from wine and strong drink - - he drinks neither vinegar of wine nor vinegar of strong drink (of grapes), neither does he drink any grape juice, nor eat grapes or raisins.
4 All the days of his separation he does not eat what is made of the grapevine, from seed to skin.
5 All the days of the vow of his separation a razor does not come upon his head. Until the days are completed for which he does separate himself to YHWH, he is set-apart. He shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long.
6 All the days of his separation to YHWH he does not go near a dead body.
7 He does not make himself unclean (through mourning) for his father, or for his mother, for his brother or his sister,***

when they die, because his separation to Elohim is on his head.

8 All the days of his separation he is set-apart to YHWH.”

In Hebrew the term Nazirite is Nazir (נָזִיר). The first use of the term Nazir occurs in Genesis 49, where we are told that our forefather Joseph was Nazir (נָזִיר) (meaning “separated”) from his brothers in order to fulfill YHWH’s divine purpose.

<p>Genesis 49:26 26 The blessings of your father have excelled the blessings of my ancestors, up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills. They shall be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of him who was separated from his brothers.</p>	<p>(26) בְּרַכַּת אָבִיךָ גְּבֻרָה עַל בְּרַכַּת הוֹרֵי עַד תְּאֵנוֹת גִּבְעַת עוֹלָם תְּהִינָן לְרֹאשׁ יוֹסֵף וְלִקְדָּקֵד נָזִיר אֶחָיו :</p>
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What this passage shows us is that one can become Nazir (separated) even unintentionally. By the very act of being sent into Egypt, Joseph had become a Nazir (separated).

But why did Joseph receive such great blessings in light of the fact that his separation was involuntary? One reason is that humans are highly social creatures. It is difficult for human beings to be separated from their brothers and sisters, for YHWH made man a social creature (and not an antisocial one).

Mishle (Proverbs) 18:1

1 A man who isolates himself seeks his own desire; he rages against all wise judgment.

Separation from our brothers is a real trial, and it forces us to seek YHWH’s face in order to survive. Such isolation forces us to draw closer to Him; but this is a hidden blessing, for when we draw closer to YHWH, He draws closer to us, and blesses us.

In *Nazarene Israel* we show how the prodigal son represents the lost ten tribes of Israel (Ephraim). Although the prodigal son voluntarily separated himself from his father’s house, one day he realized his error, turned, and decided to return home to his father.

Luqa (Luke) 15:11-19

11 Then He said: "A certain man had two sons.

12 And the younger of them said to his father, 'Father, give me the portion of goods that falls to me.' So he divided to them his livelihood.

13 And not many days after, the younger son gathered all together, journeyed to a far country, and there wasted his possessions with prodigal living.

14 "But when he had spent all, there arose a severe famine in that land, and he began to be in want.

15 Then he went and joined himself to a citizen of that country, and he sent him into his fields to feed swine.

16 And he would gladly have filled his stomach with the pods that the swine ate, and no one gave him anything.

17 But when he came to himself, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have bread enough and to spare, and I perish with hunger!

18 I will arise and go to my father, and will say to him, "Father, I have sinned against heaven and before you,

19 and I am no longer worthy to be called your son. Make me like one of your hired servants."'"

Having realized what he was missing, the prodigal son ultimately became more zealous for his father. In a certain sense, the Ephraimites have now begun to realize what they have been missing, and as a result, they are becoming more zealous for the Father as well.

However, while our forefather Joseph was separated from his family against his will, and while the prodigal son and the house of Ephraim both became separated from Israel as a result of their own poor choices, the Nazirite vow in Numbers 6 implies an active choice to become separated from the world and its pleasures, in order to serve YHWH and His people.

OT:5139 naziyr (naw-zeer'); or nazir (naw-zeer'); from OT:5144; separate, i.e. consecrated (as prince, a Nazirite); hence (figuratively from the latter) an unpruned vine (like an unshorn Nazirite):

The reference at Strong's OT:5144 also refers to someone who "abstains" or "holds aloof" from normal life, in order to fulfill some divine mission.

OT:5144 nazir (naw-zar'); a primitive root; to hold aloof, i.e. (intransitively) abstain (from food and drink, from impurity, and even from divine worship [i.e. apostatize]); specifically, to set apart (to sacred purposes), i.e. devote.

This shows us that the Nazirite vow is about holding aloof or abstaining from the normal things of the material world, so as to gain more time to serve YHWH and His people. By turning away from the normal things of the world, a Nazirite turns away from all that is in the world, which is but the lust of the eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life.

Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 2:16-17

16 For all that is in the world — the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life — is not of the Father but is of the world.

17 And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the will of Elohim abides forever.

Notice that Yeshua also asks us to turn away from the things of the world, in order to serve Him.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 10:38-39

38 "And he who does not take his stake (or cross) and follow after Me is not worthy of Me.

39 He who finds his life will lose it, and he who loses his life for My sake will find it."

It can be difficult to accept that YHWH would approve of voluntary abstention from either sex or marriage, for it is clearly not good for most men to be alone.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 2:18

18 And YHWH Elohim said, "It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper corresponding to him."

Further, YHWH gave the first man and his wife the urge (and many say the commandment) to reproduce.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 1:28

28 Then Elohim (G-d) blessed them, and Elohim said to them, "Be fruitful and multiply; fill the earth and subdue it...."

Scripture also shows us that it is a good thing for men and women to marry and raise families, for Psalm 127 tells us that children are a reward from YHWH.

Tehillim (Psalms) 127:3-5

3 Behold, children are a heritage from YHWH, the fruit of the womb is a reward.

4 Like arrows in the hand of a warrior, So are the children of one's youth.

5 Happy is the man who has his quiver full of them; they shall not be ashamed, but shall speak with their enemies in the gate.

Most Israelites are called to get married and raise up children in the way they should go.

Mishle (Proverbs) 22:6

6 Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it.

For most, matrimony and parenthood are not just great and wonderful blessings, but they are also highly challenging paths of spiritual refinement.

Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 16:44-45

44 "Indeed everyone who quotes proverbs will use this proverb against you: 'Like mother, like daughter!'"

By giving us children who are similar to us, YHWH asks us to deal with our issues in an adult sort of a way.

Yet there are two other paths of refinement: the Nazirite vow and the abstinent/celebrate vow. While Nazirites (such as Samson) commonly marry, others are additionally celibate (never marry, such as Yeshua and Shaul/Paul) or abstinent (marry, but restrain from indulging in sexual relations when they are to be set-apart, such as Moses). This takes their refinement to yet another level.

Again, the Nazirite vow and the abstinent/celebrate vow are entirely separate vows. One can be abstinent/celebrate without being a Nazirite, and one can be a Nazirite without being abstinent/celebrate; it all depends on how YHWH leads. However, because the abstinent/celebrate vow and the Nazirite vow call for a departure from the usual pattern of daily life within a

marriage, in order to serve YHWH and His people, these vows often go together.

But if it is not good for the man to be alone, and if a wife and children are great blessings from YHWH, then why would YHWH bless anyone for abstaining from either sex or marriage?

We discuss matters of ritual purity in more detail in *Nazarene Israel*. However, to recap the main points, no one who has a discharge of any kind is fit to stand before Elohim and serve, whether that discharge is a discharge of semen, a menstrual flow, a runny nose, or any other kind of discharge. For example, Leviticus 15:16-18 shows us that when a man has a seminal emission, he is ritually impure, or unclean.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 15:16-18

16 'If any man has an emission of semen, then he shall wash all his body in water, and be unclean until evening.

17 And any garment and any leather on which there is semen, it shall be washed with water, and be unclean until evening.

18 Also, when a woman lies with a man, and there is an emission of semen, they shall bathe in water, and be unclean until evening.

As we show in other places, those who are ritually unclean are not able to stand before Elohim and serve Him; therefore they are not able to serve in a priestly capacity until after they are ritually cleansed. This is the basis of the Orthodox belief that Moshe (Moses) was abstinent with his wife.

Bemidbar (Numbers) 12:1-3

1 Then Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe because of the Kushite (Ethiopian) woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman.

2 So they said, "Has YHWH indeed spoken only through Moshe? Has He not spoken through us also?" And YHWH heard it.

3 Now the man Moshe was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.

We are told that Moshe's wife was Tzipporah, the daughter of Yithro (Jethro), priest of the Midian. Tzipporah would therefore be identified as a Midianite woman, not as a Kushite (Ethiopian) woman.

Shemote (Exodus) 2:21

21 Then Moshe was content to live with the man, and he gave Tzipporah his daughter to Moshe.

There are two ways to interpret this. One is that Moshe had more than one wife. The other is the Orthodox belief that the word "Kushite" here was really a term of endearment, in that Hebrews sometimes refer to those they love in a derogatory fashion, both as a term of endearment, and in an effort to keep them from becoming vain. This second interpretation makes sense in that the purpose of this otherwise mysterious passage may be to show us that Moshe was being abstinent with his wife. Since Moshe had to be ready to serve in the Tent of Meeting at all times, Moshe had to remain continuously ritually pure. Because of this, he had to

refrain from marital relations with his wife (whether it was Tzipporah or another woman).

The Orthodox hypothesis is that however she may have learned about it, Miriam may have felt that it was unnecessary for Moshe to refrain from having marital relations with his wife, since both Miriam and Aharon (Aaron) were also prophets. Perhaps Miriam felt that she and Aharon could “stand in” for Moshe during those times that Moshe was unclean due to consorting with his wife. However, YHWH then let Miriam and Aharon know that Moshe was chosen for his task; therefore he had to remain ritually pure at all times (which required him to abstain from seminal emission).

While the Orthodox hypothesis is just a hypothesis, we do know from our other studies that historically YHWH has commanded His people to abstain from sex on His set apart days, when they are to draw closer to Him. For example, all males were to abstain from sex in order to be “prepared” (purified) at Mount Sinai.

Shemote (Exodus) 19:15
15 “And he said to the people, ‘Be prepared by the third day: do not come near a wife.’”

We also know that even though YHWH gave men the desire (and some say the commandment) to procreate, and even though most people do get married and raise families, YHWH promises a better reward to those eunuchs who guard the Torah. They are not to think of themselves as a “dry tree,” for YHWH says He will give them a place and a name “better than that of sons and daughters.” He promises them an “everlasting name.”

<p>Isaiah 56:3-5 3 “For thus said YHWH, ‘And let not the son of the foreigner speak, saying, “YHWH has certainly separated me from His people”; nor let the eunuch say, “Look, I am a dry tree.” 4 For thus said YHWH, “To the eunuchs who guard My Sabbaths, and have chosen what pleases Me, and hold fast to My covenant: 5 to them I shall give in My house and within My walls a place and a name better than that of sons and daughters – I give them an everlasting name that is not cut off.””</p>	<p>(3) וְאֵל יֹאמֶר בֶּן הַנֶּכֶד הַנִּלְוָה אֶל יְהוָה לֵאמֹר הַבְּדֵל יַבְדִּילֵנִי יְהוָה מֵעַל עַמּוֹ וְאֵל יֹאמֶר הַסָּרִיס הֵן אֲנִי (4) כִּי כֹה עֵץ יָבֵשׁ: אָמַר יְהוָה לַסָּרִיסִים אֲשֶׁר יִשְׁמְרוּ אֶת שַׁבְּתוֹתַי וּבָחֲרוּ בְּאֲשֶׁר חִפְצָתִי וּמְחִזְקִים בְּבְרִיתִי: (5) וְנָתַתִּי לָהֶם בְּבֵיתִי וּבְחוֹמֹתַי יָד וְשֵׁם טוֹב מִבְּנִים וּמִבְּנוֹת וְשֵׁם עוֹלָם אֶתֵּן לוֹ אֲשֶׁר לֹא יִכָּרֵת</p>
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The word for “eunuch” here is *sar-ees* (סָרִיס), and *Strong’s Concordance* tells us that it speaks of one who has been castrated.

**OT:5631 cariy (saw-reece’); or caric (saw-reece’); from an unused root meaning to castrate; a eunuch; by implication, valet (especially of the female apartments), and thus, a minister of state:
 KJV - chamberlain, eunuch, officer.**

However, this is confusing, for while Isaiah tells us that the eunuchs who guard YHWH's Torah will receive "a place and a name better than sons and daughters," the Torah also tells us that no one who has a physical deformity or who has "broken his stones" (מְרוּחַ אֲשָׁד) is allowed to serve in YHWH's temple. While he may eat of the priestly tithes, he is not to stand before YHWH to make the offerings.

<p>Leviticus 21:16-23 16 And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying, 17 "Speak to Aharon, saying: 'No man of your descendants in succeeding generations, who has any defect, may approach to offer the bread of his Elohim. 18 For any man who has a defect shall not approach: a man blind or lame, who has a marred face or any limb too long, 19 a man who has a broken foot or broken hand, 20 or is a hunchback or a dwarf, or a man who has a defect in his eye, or eczema or scab, or has broken his stones. 21 No man of the descendants of Aharon the priest, who has a defect, shall come near</p>	<p>(16) וַיְדַבֵּר יְהוָה אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: (17) דַּבֵּר אֶל אַהֲרֹן לֵאמֹר אִישׁ מִזֶּרְעֶךָ לְדֹרֹתֶם אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בּוֹ מוֹם לֹא יִקְרַב לְהַקְרִיב לַחֶם אֱלֹהֵיוֹ: (18) כִּי כָל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ מוֹם לֹא יִקְרַב אִישׁ עֹר אוֹ פֶסֶח אוֹ חֲרָם אוֹ שָׂרוּעַ: (19) אוֹ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר יִהְיֶה בּוֹ שִׁבְר רֶגֶל אוֹ שִׁבְר יָד: (20) אוֹ גִבֹּן אוֹ דָק אוֹ תִבְלָל בְּעֵינָיו אוֹ גֶרֶב אוֹ יִלְפָת אוֹ מְרוּחַ אֲשָׁד: (21) כָּל אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר בּוֹ</p>
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<p>to offer the offerings made by fire to YHWH. He has a defect; he shall not come near to offer the bread of his Elohim. 22 He may eat the bread of his Elohim, both the most set apart and the set apart; 23 only he shall not go near the veil or approach the altar, because he has a defect, lest he profane My sanctuaries; for I YHWH set them apart."</p>	<p>מוֹם מִזֶּרַע אַהֲרֹן הִכְהֵן לֹא יִגַּשׁ לְהַקְרִיב אֶת אֲשֵׁי יְהוָה מוֹם בּוֹ אֵת לַחֶם אֱלֹהֵיוֹ לֹא יִגַּשׁ לְהַקְרִיב: (22) לַחֶם אֱלֹהֵיוֹ מִקְדָּשֵׁי הַקְּדָשִׁים וּמִן הַקְּדָשִׁים יֹאכַל: (23) אֲדָ אֶל הַפְּרֻכָּת לֹא יָבֵא וְאֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ לֹא יִגַּשׁ כִּי מוֹם בּוֹ וְלֹא יַחֲלִל אֶת מִקְדָּשֵׁי כִּי אֲנִי יְהוָה מְקַדְּשָׁם</p>
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But if those who are physically deformed or whose "stones are broken" are not allowed to serve in the temple, then why would YHWH promise a better place and a better name to eunuchs? Is YHWH really promising a better place to those who are physically castrated? We can resolve this apparent contradiction if we understand that He is speaking euphemistically about those who are voluntarily abstinent or celibate. As we have already seen, Moshe was probably abstinent with his wife, and as we will see later, both Yeshua and Shaul were voluntarily celibate.

But why would voluntary abstinence or celibacy receive a greater reward from YHWH? We might guess that there is no benefit in remaining abstinent or celibate for its sake alone. If one were to be abstinent or celibate,

but not use one's time to serve YHWH's people, then there is no benefit (and no reward).

The decision to abstain from sex inside of marriage must also be mutual, or else it violates the terms of the marriage. We will speak more about this a little later, but the main advantage in abstaining from marital relations (or from marriage) is that it gives one more time to do YHWH's work, and to serve one's brothers and sisters. Instead of taking time to raise up one's own family, one lays that time down (as Moshe, Yeshua, and Shaul did), thereby metaphorically "laying down one's own life" in exchange for the privilege of serving the rest of YHWH's people Israel.

Yochanan (John) 15:13

13 Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends.

Again, while the Nazirite and the abstinent/celibate vows are not synonymous, they go together easily because they are based on the same principles. We might also note that when a Nazirite is abstinent or celibate we see a lifestyle that looks like the ministries of many of the most famous prophets of Scripture. While kings were often polygynous and priests were typically monogamous, prophets were often abstinent or celibate Nazirites. What we will see is a pattern of them giving their lives to the service of YHWH and His people. The dedication is often taken to an extreme, such that an abstinent or celibate Nazirite

1. Foregoes having sexual relations
2. Learns not to care about what other people think of his (or her) looks

3. Gives all of his (or her) worldly possessions and time over to YHWH Elohim and His work, and then trusts solely in YHWH for provision

Whether a Nazirite is abstinent or not, the vow is not easy. A Nazirite must learn to focus not on the things of this world, but only on the things of YHWH. This is the attitude that any spiritual leader in Israel should have, thus it is not surprising that this is the attitude Shaul advocates to the believers in Rome.

Romim (Romans) 12:1-2

12:1 I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of Elohim, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, set-apart, acceptable to Elohim, which is (no more than) your reasonable service.

2 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 and acceptable and perfect will of Elohim.

Yeshua tells us that those who worship YHWH must worship Him both in Spirit and in truth.

Yochanan (John) 4:23

23 But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in Spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him.

But if the Nazirite seeks to learn how to serve YHWH in a spirit of total dedication, what are the specifics of the Nazirite vow? If we take a closer look at Numbers 6, we see that a Nazirite is

- 1) To abstain from all alcohol
- 2) To abstain from all grapes and grape products
- 3) To abstain from cutting one's hair
- 4) To avoid contact with corpses
- 5) Not to become unclean (i.e., grieve) at anyone's death (not even for one's father or mother)
- 6) To dedicate all one can to YHWH's work, in terms of both time and money (verse 21)

Bemidbar (Numbers) 6:1-8, 21

***1 And YHWH spoke to Moshe, saying,
 2 "Speak to the children of Yisrael, and say to them, 'When a man or woman does separate, by making a vow of a Nazirite, to be separate to YHWH,
 3 he (or she) separates himself from wine and strong drink - - he drinks neither vinegar of wine nor vinegar of strong drink (of grapes), neither does he drink any grape juice, nor eat grapes or raisins.
 4 All the days of his separation he does not eat what is made of the grapevine, from seed to skin.
 5 All the days of the vow of his separation a razor does not come upon his head. Until the days are completed for which he does separate himself to YHWH, he is set-apart. He shall let the locks of the hair of his head grow long.
 6 All the days of his separation to YHWH he does not go near a dead body.
 7 He does not make himself unclean for his father, or for his mother, for his brother or his sister, when they die,***

because his separation to Elohim is on his head.

8 All the days of his separation he is set-apart to YHWH.

Then, in addition to set offerings, verse 21 tells us the Nazirite should dedicate all that he can to YHWH.

21 This is the Torah of the Nazirite, who vows to YHWH the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide. According to the vow [that] he takes, so he shall do according to the Torah of his separation.

Historically, the Nazirite vow has been taken to different degrees; it also manifests itself in different ways. A single man or woman might give to YHWH all that he or she has, to such an extent that he or she has nothing left to provide for a spouse and children. Alternately, a married person might donate all of his time to YHWH. While he might at least hypothetically spend a lot of time around his wife, he might no longer consort with her, so that he can remain ritually pure before YHWH at all times.

But in order to understand the Nazirite vow a little better, and to understand why so many of the prophets have taken this vow, let us take a closer look at its precepts.

1. Abstain from all grape products and/or alcohol

We will look at the first two precepts together, which include abstention from alcohol and all grapes and grape products (including raisins and most vinegar). It is easy to understand why YHWH might want someone who is

supposed to be “separated” unto service to Him to abstain from alcohol and strong drink.

Luqa (Luke) 12:42-46

42 And the Master said, "Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season?"

43 Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.

44 Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has.

45 But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk,

46 the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers."

It is also logical that anyone who separates himself unto service to YHWH should not waste time. He should spend all his time serving YHWH and His people, or else his vow is really meaningless. Yet the idea of abstaining from all grapes and grape products goes far beyond the idea of simple abstinence from partying. Why should a Nazirite also abstain from raisins, and even most types of vinegar?

Scripture does not tell us why YHWH wants Nazirites to abstain from grapes and grape products, but there is some evidence that grapes are YHWH's celebratory

fruit. Israelites traditionally drink wine on the Sabbath, because the Sabbath is a time to relax among family, friends, and fellowship. However, while wine can be used in a legitimate way, grapes and grape products are often misused, particularly among Ephraimites.

Hoshea (Hosea) 3:1

Then YHWH said to me, "Go again, love a woman loved by a friend, and an adulteress, according to the love of YHWH for the children of Israel, though they are turning to other mighty ones, and love their raisin cakes."

YHWH takes offense that the children of Ephraim would not seek to restore His kingdom, and do not bother to hear and obey His voice; yet they delight themselves in consuming His celebratory fruits. YHWH calls these “the drunkards of Ephraim.”

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 28:1-3

1 Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, whose glorious beauty is a fading flower which is at the head of the verdant valleys, to those who are overcome with wine!

2 Behold, YHWH has a mighty and strong one, like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, who will bring them down to the earth with His hand.

3 The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, will be trampled underfoot....

It can be a wonderful thing for Israelites to relax and celebrate YHWH and His Son with a good glass of wine on the Sabbath and festival days. However, the focus

needs to remain not on physical pleasure or the sensation of wine, but upon building one's personal relationship with YHWH, and with His Son.

While Scripture does not say so outright, there are a number of clues that Yeshua, Yochanan HaMatbil (John the Immerser), and Shaul were likely all celibate Nazirites. Luke tells us that Yochanan HaMatbil was to drink no wine or strong drink at all, from the day of his birth.

Luqa (Luke) 1:15

15 "For he shall be great before YHWH, and shall drink no wine and strong drink at all."

This is the same kind of language that YHWH uses to describe the Nazirite vow in Numbers 6.

Bemidbar (Numbers) 6:2-3

2 "Speak to the children of Yisrael, and say to them, 'When a man or woman does separate, by making a vow of a Nazirite, to be separate to YHWH, 3 he (or she) separates himself (or herself) from wine and strong drink - - he (or she) drinks neither vinegar of wine nor vinegar of strong drink (of grapes), neither does he drink any grape juice, nor eat grapes or raisins.

Scripture also tells us that Yochanan came wearing only a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt. In addition to this, his food was locusts and wild honey, which basically means he was living off the land.

Marqaus (Mark) 1:6

6 Now Yochanan (John) was clothed with camel's hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey.

That John wore only a garment of camel's hair and a leather belt, and that he trusted in YHWH to provide for his nourishment, suggests that he may already have given all of his worldly belongings to YHWH. Note the parallel to the language used in Numbers 6.

Bemidbar (Numbers) 6:21

21 This is the Torah of the Nazirite, who vows to YHWH the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide. According to the vow [that] he (or she) takes, so he shall do according to the Torah of his separation.

And if it was good for Yochanan HaMatbil to be a Nazir, rejecting the things of this world in order to focus on the things of YHWH, then how much more important would it be for Yeshua our Messiah to be a Nazir?

Although Scripture does not say that Yeshua was a Nazirite from birth, we are given some indications that Yeshua was likely a Nazirite before His ministry began, and that He chose to end His vow early.

Yochanan (John) 2:1-4

1 On the third day there was a wedding in Cana of Galil (Galilee), and the mother of Yeshua was there. 2 Now both Yeshua and His disciples were invited to the wedding.

3 And when they ran out of wine, the mother of Yeshua said to Him, "They have no wine."

4 Yeshua said to her, "Woman, what have I to do with you? My hour has not yet come (to separate my Nazirite vow)."

When Yeshua's mother said they had no wine, at first He implied that He could have nothing to do with wine, since He was possibly still under a Nazirite vow.

Numbers 6 tells us that a Nazirite vow does not have to be lifelong. It can be taken for a certain length of time (for example, a certain number of days).

8 All the days of his separation he is set-apart to YHWH.

This could be a set length of time (e.g., two years) or until a certain event took place. It could also be that even though Yeshua said that His time was not yet come, when His mother said there was no wine, He took compassion on the guests and ended His vow early, to serve those who were having the wedding.

YHWH also tells us that if someone dies very suddenly beside a Nazirite (i.e., in an instant), he must shave his head and go up to YHWH's house, where he will make certain animal sacrifices.

Bemidbar (Numbers) 6:9-20

9 'And if anyone dies very suddenly beside him, and he defiles his consecrated head, then he shall shave his head on the day of his cleansing; on the seventh day he shall shave it.

10 Then on the eighth day he shall bring two turtledoves or two young pigeons to the priest, to the door of the Tabernacle of meeting;

11 and the priest shall offer one as a sin offering and the other as a burnt offering, and make atonement for him, because he sinned in regard to the corpse; and he shall sanctify his head that same day.

12 He shall consecrate to YHWH the days of his separation, and bring a male lamb in its first year as a trespass offering; but the former days shall be lost, because his separation was defiled.

Additionally, even when the Nazirite completes his vow normally, such that "the days of his separation are fulfilled," he still must shave his head and go up to YHWH's house, where he will make animal sacrifices in purification.

13 'Now this is the Torah of the Nazirite: When the days of his separation are fulfilled, he shall be brought to the door of the Tabernacle of meeting.

14 And he shall present his offering to YHWH: one male lamb in its first year without blemish as a burnt offering, one ewe lamb in its first year without blemish as a sin offering, one ram without blemish as a peace offering,
15 a basket of unleavened bread, cakes of fine flour mixed with oil, unleavened wafers anointed with oil, and their grain offering with their drink offerings.

16 'Then the priest shall bring them before YHWH and offer his sin offering and his burnt offering;

17 and he shall offer the ram as a sacrifice of a peace offering to YHWH, with the basket of unleavened bread; the priest shall also offer its grain offering and its drink offering.

18 Then the Nazirite shall shave his consecrated head at the door of the tabernacle of meeting, and shall take the hair from his consecrated head and put it on the fire which is under the sacrifice of the peace offering.

19 'And the priest shall take the boiled shoulder of the ram, one unleavened cake from the basket, and one unleavened wafer, and put them upon the hands of the Nazirite after he has shaved his consecrated hair,

20 and the priest shall wave them as a wave offering before YHWH; they are set apart for the priest, together with the breast of the wave offering and the thigh of the heave offering. After that the Nazirite may drink wine.'

If Yeshua really did end a Nazirite vow early in order to make wine for the wedding guests, we would expect to see Him begin to make His way to Jerusalem shortly thereafter, in order to offer the sacrifices for purification. And this is precisely what Yeshua does.

Yochanan (John) 2:11-14

11 This beginning of signs Yeshua did in Qana of Galilee, and manifested His

glory; and His disciples believed in Him.

12 After this He went down to Kepharnahum, He, His mother, His brothers, and His disciples; but they did not stay there many days.

13 Now the Passover of the Jews was at hand, and Yeshua went up to Jerusalem.

Since the Nazirite vow is essentially a vow to focus on the things of YHWH, and the things of YHWH are at odds with the things of the world, the one who “separates” himself sometimes needs to pull away from those who are not similarly dedicated. However, this would have been a problem for Yeshua, in that one of the missions YHWH gave Him was to call the sinners to repentance. This called for being in and amongst them. Perhaps that is the reason Yeshua ended his vow.

Luqa (Luke) 5:31-32

31 Yeshua answered and said to them, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick.

32 I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance."

In order to heal the sick, Yeshua needed to associate with those who needed Him the most. This drew great criticism from those around Him, but as the Peshitta rendering tells us, wisdom is justified by her works.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 11:18-19

18 For Yochanan came neither eating nor drinking, and they say, 'He has a demon.'

19 The Son of Man came eating and drinking, and they say, 'Look, a glutton and a winebibber, a friend of tax collectors and sinners!' But wisdom is justified by her works." (Peshitta)

Therefore it may also be that Yeshua ended His vow so that He could be where His help was needed the most.

2. Refrain from Cutting One's Hair

In some Eastern traditions, those who dedicate their lives to spiritual pursuits shave their heads in order to show that they have “renounced the world.” In contrast to this, the Nazir does not bother to shave his head. Beyond the necessities of basic cleanliness and good general hygiene, the Nazirite does not spend any time seeking to please the face of man.

Galatim (Galatians) 1:10

10 For do I now persuade men, or Elohim? Or do I seek to please men? For if I still pleased men, I would not be a bondservant of Messiah.

The Nazirite only cares what YHWH thinks, and does not allow the opinions of others to affect him. This may be the reason Yochanan HaMatbil was dressed only in a garment made from camel's hair.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 11:7-9

7 As they departed, Yeshua began to say to the multitudes concerning John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed shaken by the wind (i.e., someone playing a

beautiful tune on a flute, in order to tickle your fancy)?

8 But what did you go out to see? A man clothed in soft garments? But rather, those who wear soft clothing are in kings' houses.

Nazirites do not spend any time impressing the face of man. Instead, Nazirites are to listen for YHWH's voice, and then seek to obey it, trusting in YHWH to provide for all of their physical and spiritual needs.

3. Avoid Contact with Corpses

The Torah tells us that corpses are unclean.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 22:4-7

4 "Whatever man of the descendants of Aharon, who is a leper or has a discharge, shall not eat the set apart offerings until he is clean. And whoever touches anything made unclean by a corpse, or a man who has had an emission of semen,

5 or whoever touches any creeping thing by which he would be made unclean, or any person by whom he would become unclean, whatever his uncleanness may be —

6 the person who has touched any such thing shall be unclean until evening, and shall not eat the set apart offerings unless he washes his body with water.

7 And when the sun goes down he shall be clean; and afterward he may eat the set apart offerings, because it is his food."

While it can be a difficult concept for us to understand, there are contaminants in the material world; we become ritually unclean when we come into contact with them. Because Nazirites seek to remain ritually pure before YHWH at all times, they try to avoid all ritual defilements, including corpses (and even mourning).

Funerals are not held for the benefit of the departed, but to console those who have suffered loss. While mourning for the loss of a loved one is Scriptural, and while the feelings of grief and uncertainty are certainly understandable, the Nazirite is supposed to put his faith in YHWH, and trust that all things work together for good.

Romim (Romans) 8:28

28 And we know that all things work together for good to those who love Elohim, to those who are the called according to His purpose.

While an ordinary Israelite might be permitted to grieve and mourn for the loss of his mother or father, the Nazirite is not supposed to. He is to learn not to waste any time at all on things which are beyond his control. Rather, he is to abstain from all of that, and just work for the betterment of YHWH's kingdom without interruption.

4. Give One's All to His Work, and Trust in Him

The idea behind being separated from life is that the Nazirite is to give his all to YHWH. Numbers 6 tells us that the Nazirite is supposed to give or do whatever his hand is able, in order to build YHWH's kingdom.

Bemidbar (Numbers) 6:21

21 This is the Torah of the Nazirite, who vows to YHWH the offering for his separation, and besides that, whatever else his hand is able to provide. According to the vow [that] he (or she) takes, so he shall do according to the Torah of his separation.

Also notice that Yeshua had no place to stay.

Luqa (Luke) 9:58

And Yeshua said to him, "The foxes have holes and the birds of the heaven have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

If Yeshua was a Nazirite, and a Nazirite is to give all he has to YHWH at the time of his cleansing and then trust in YHWH for support, and if Yeshua separated His Nazirite vow when He turned the water into wine, then Yeshua would have had no inheritance; and hence no place to stay.

In Hebrew, to "bury one's father" is an idiom which means, "to collect an inheritance." Even if Yeshua had separated His vow when He began His ministry, His advice to the young man who wanted to bury his father (i.e., collect an inheritance) was a very Nazirite thing for Him to say.

Luqa (Luke) 9:59-60

59 And He said to another, "Follow Me," but he said, "Master, let me first go and bury my father."

60 And Yeshua said to him, "Let the dead bury their own dead; but you go and announce the reign of Elohim."

If the Nazirite truly understands that YHWH is completely and utterly sovereign, and if he has no cares for the things of the world, why should he delay preaching the Good News until such time as he collects an inheritance? So long as one pleases YHWH, YHWH will continue to provide for all of his needs.

Luqa (Luke) 9:61-62

61 And another also said, "Adon, I will follow You, but let me first go and bid them farewell who are at my house."

62 But Yeshua said to him, "No one, having put his hand to the plow, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of Elohim."

The Nazirite is to be so focused on building YHWH's kingdom that he simply does not desire to do anything that is not related to that end. Rather, because YHWH works, he also works.

Yochanan (John) 5:17

17 Yeshua said, "My Father works until now, and I [also] work."

Even though Yeshua technically had no Nazirite vow during the time of His ministry, His attitude was still very Nazirite. While others were celebrating, drinking, marrying, and giving in marriage (all of which indicate a focus on the things of the material realm), Yeshua remained focused on the things of YHWH, as did Shaul, and Moshe before them.

'Samsonite' and Dedicated Nazirites

The Orthodox rabbis consider that there are two types of Nazirites. Although these terms do not exist in Scripture, the Talmud refers to them as Samsonite Nazirites and Dedicated (Separated) Nazirites. The reason for the name "Samsonite" Nazirite is that Samson (Shimshon) did not really set the best example of what a Nazirite should be. For example, Shimshon was around thousands of corpses, and he also desired a Philistine wife.

Shophetim (Judges) 14:1-3

1 Now Shimshon went down to Timnah, and saw a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines.

2 So he went up and told his father and mother, saying, "I have seen a woman in Timnah of the daughters of the Philistines; now therefore, get her for me as a wife."

3 Then his father and mother said to him, "Is there no woman among the daughters of your brethren, or among all my people, that you must go and get a wife from the uncircumcised Philistines?" And Shimshon said to his father, "Get her for me, for she pleases me well."

After his first wife was killed (by the Philistines, no less), Shimshon then consorted with another Philistine, a harlot by the name of Delilah.

Shophetim (Judges) 16:1

1 Now Shimshon went to Gaza and saw a harlot there, and went in to her.

While it is true that Shimshon did not cut his hair, he loved this Philistine harlot so much that he eventually gave in to her pestering and told her the secret of his strength, whereupon she betrayed him.

Shophetim (Judges) 16:16-17

16 And it came to pass, when she pestered him daily with her words and pressed him, so that his soul was vexed to death,

17 that he told her all his heart, and said to her, "No razor has ever come upon my head, for I have been a Nazirite to Elohim from my mother's womb. If I am shaven, then my strength will leave me, and I shall become weak, and be like any other man."

Historically, those who took a Nazirite vow for thirty to ninety days (in order to "dry out" from alcoholism) were called Samsonite Nazirites. These took the vow as a temporary measure, to break an addictive habit.

In contrast, many of our exemplars in Scripture may have been Dedicated Nazirites. For example, Eliyahu the Tishbite (Elijah the Prophet) was probably a dedicated Nazirite, because of all his hair.

Melachim Bet (2nd Kings) 1:7-8

7 Then he said to them, "What kind of man was it who came up to meet you and told you these words?"

8 So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And he said, "It is Eliyahu the Tishbite."

Interestingly, Psalm 22 also tells us that Yeshua would pay a vow before those who fear Him.

Tehillim (Psalm) 22

From You is My praise in the great assembly, I pay My vows before those who fear Him.

While Scripture does not say this was a Nazirite vow, the idea that Yeshua was a Nazirite taking a separate path from what most Israelites are called to do, fits with the rest of His ministry.

While Yeshua separated His vow when he began His ministry, it seems likely that He took the vow again at the Last Supper, the evening before He was offered up as the Passover Lamb.

Luqa (Luke) 22:17-18

17 And taking the cup, giving thanks, He said, "Take this and divide it among yourselves,

18 For I say to you, I shall certainly not drink of the fruit of the vine until the reign of Elohim comes."

Luke does not say Yeshua first drank of the cup and then passed it: He simply passed the cup, telling His disciples that He would not partake of the celebratory fruit again, until the reign of Elohim had come.

Luke also tells us that Yeshua greatly thirsted, yet He did not partake of the sour wine (vinegar) while He was upon the stake (cross).

Luqa (Luke) 23:36-37

**36 And the soldiers were mocking Him too; coming and offering Him sour wine,
37 and saying, "If you are the Sovereign of the Yehudim, save yourself!"**

Also:

**Mattityahu (Matthew) 27:33-34
33 And when they came to a place called Golgotha, that is to say, "Place of a skull,"
34 they gave Him wine mixed with bile to drink. And after tasting, He would not drink it.**

Perhaps it is the Nazirite vow that kept him from partaking of the wine, rather than the fact that it was mixed with gall. He was possibly fulfilling the vow mentioned in Psalm 22 (above), which He had taken again at the Last Supper.

While Scripture does not say so specifically, it makes sense that Shaul was also a celibate Nazirite. As we explain in *Nazarene Israel* (in the chapter entitled "Understanding Acts Chapter 21"), Shaul separated a Nazirite vow during his second missionary voyage.

**Ma'asei (Acts) 18:18
18 And having remained many days more, having taken leave of the brothers, Shaul sailed to Syria, having shaved his head; for he had (taken) a vow.**

In context we understand that Shaul separated a Nazirite vow here, because the Nazirite vow is the only

vow in Scripture in which one shaves one's head. Shaul also separated a second Nazirite vow when he met with the apostles in Acts chapter 21, for Ya'akov (Jacob) urged him to pay the expenses for four other men who were being purified of their Nazirite vows.

**Ma'asei (Acts) 21:22-24
23 Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow.
24 Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that they may shave their heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but that you yourself also walk orderly and keep the Torah.**

First Corinthians 9 also informs us that Shaul was not married, perhaps so he would have more time (and more flexibility) to travel and serve YHWH's people.

**Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 9:3-5
3 My defense to those who examine me is this:
4 Do we have no right to eat and drink?
5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Master, and Kepha?**

Not many people are called to the Nazirite vow, and likewise, not many are called to be abstinent or celibate. Clearly, those who are not called should not attempt it, for the main thing is not to be abstinent or celibate, but to hear and obey whatever YHWH's will is for us. However, in Matthew chapter 19 Yeshua tells us that all those to whom celibacy has been given should receive

it. Because the meanings of the words are disputed, let us look at the source languages.

<p>NKJV Matthew 19:10-12 10 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry." 11 But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given: 12 For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."</p>	<p>BGT Matthew 19:10 ¶ Λέγουσιν αὐτῷ οἱ μαθηταὶ [αὐτοῦ]: εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός, οὐ συμφέρει γαμήσαί.</p> <p>BGT Matthew 19:11 ὁ δὲ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς· οὐ πάντες χωροῦσιν τὸν λόγον [τουτοῦ] ἀλλ' οἷς δέδοται.</p> <p>BGT Matthew 19:12 εἰσὶν γὰρ εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες ἐκ κοιλίας μητρὸς ἐγεννήθησαν οὕτως, καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνουχίσθησαν ὑπὸ τῶν ἀνθρώπων, καὶ εἰσὶν εὐνοῦχοι οἵτινες εὐνούχισαν ἑαυτοὺς διὰ τὴν βασιλείαν τῶν οὐρανῶν. ὁ δυνάμενος χωρεῖν χωρεῖτω.</p>
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The Greek word for "eunuch" is *eunachoi* (εὐνοῦχοι). The meaning is clearly the same as in English: one who is castrated (i.e., whose testicles are cut off).

NT:2135 eunuchos (yoo-noo'-khos); from eune (a bed) and NT:2192; a castrated person (such being employed in Oriental bed-chambers); by extension an impotent or unmarried man; by implication, a chamberlain (state-officer): KJV - eunuch.

The word in the Peshitta is *maheim-nah* (מהימנה). It has a dual meaning, and can either mean "one who is castrated" or "a faithful one." However, if we plug these two different word meanings into the passage, we see that the first meaning ("castrated one") fits perfectly, and gives us an intelligent reading that fits with the context. However, in context, the alternate meaning ("faithful one") makes no sense. Clearly then, the real meaning is "eunuch."

<p>MRD Matthew 19:10 ¶ His disciples say to him: If such is the case between man and wife, it is not expedient to take a wife. MRD Matthew 19:11 But he said to them: Not every one is capable of that thing, but he only to whom it is given. MRD Matthew 19:12 For there are some eunuchs, born so from their mother's womb; and there are some eunuchs, who were made eunuchs by men; and there are</p>	<p>PEH Matthew 19:10 אמרין לה תלמידוהי אן הכנא אית עדליא ביני גברא לאנתתא לא פקח למסב אנתתא: הו PEH Matthew 19:11 דין אמר להון לא כלנש ספק לה למלתא הדא אלא מן דיהיב לה: הו PEH Matthew 19:12 גיר מהימנא דמן</p>
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some eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the sake of the kingdom of heaven. He that can be contented let him be contented.

כרסא דאמהון
אתילדו הכנא ואית
מהימנא דמן בנינשא
הוו מהימנא ואית
מהימנא דהנון עברו
נפשהון מהימנא מטל
מלכותא דשמיא מן
דמשכח דנספק נספק:

In context, Yeshua's disciples are saying that if a man is not able to divorce his wife for any reason, then really it is more spiritually advantageous not to take a wife. Yeshua then responds by saying that while not all men can receive this saying, yes, they are correct. If one can receive it, it is better to be a eunuch, which in this case means one who is celibate (or abstinent).

Parties to a marriage should not attempt abstinence unless both parties desire it, for to do otherwise would be to break their original covenant agreement.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 7:1-9

1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2 Nevertheless, because of (the need to avoid) sexual immorality, let each man (who is not called to celibacy) have his own wife, and let each woman (who is not called to celibacy) have her own husband.

3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

5 (So that the other party does not err,) Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

6 However I say this as a concession, (and) not as a commandment.

7 For I wish that all men were even as I myself (i.e., celibate). However, (I am not better than anyone else, for) each one has his own gift from Elohim, one in this manner and another in that.

8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am (i.e., celibate);

9 but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry. For it is better to marry than to burn.

Scholars differ as to whether Shaul's meaning in verse 9 is that it is better to marry than to burn with passion, or whether it is better to marry than to burn in Gehenna for committing adultery, but both meanings work.

Verse 5 is clearly a reference to married couples who agree to abstain from sex for a time in order to draw closer to YHWH in fasting and in prayer, yet not so long that either of the parties is tempted to stray. What Shaul is essentially encouraging, then, is a short form of the abstinent vow.

Interestingly, Shaul does not tell those who take an abstinent vow to go up to the temple to be cleansed. This could be because the Torah does not give us any instructions as to what to do when we separate a vow of abstinence (or, for another example, a vow of silence). Yet this is in contrast to the Nazirite vow, which as we have seen earlier, requires animal sacrifices in purification.

At the time of this writing, there is no tabernacle or temple, hence we are not able to separate a Nazirite vow in the manner that YHWH commands. Because of this, some feel that the only way one can legitimately take a Nazirite vow at this time is to take it for life. Others feel that since Shaul tells us that our bodies are the temple at this time, we can separate a Nazirite vow without bringing the animal sacrifices for purification.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Cor.) 3:16-17

16 Do you not know that you are the temple of Elohim and that the Spirit of Elohim dwells in you?

17 If anyone defiles the temple of Elohim, Elohim will destroy him. For the temple of Elohim is set apart, which temple you are.

Finally, we should close with some words of caution. Sometimes it happens that when people first learn of the Nazirite and the celibate vows, they take them for life. Young people can get excited and commit themselves to something that may seem easy at the time, but will later seem more difficult. However, as is the saying of our fathers, “A man is only as good as his word,” and YHWH expects us to pay what we vow.

Qohelet (Ecclesiastes) 5:4-5

4 When you make a vow to Elohim, do not delay to pay it; for He has no pleasure in fools. Pay what you have vowed —

5 Better not to vow than to vow and not pay.

One should never take a lifetime celibate vow lightly, for if we think about it, a vow of lifetime celibacy is as radically life altering as marriage. In fact, a lifetime celibate vow is essentially a vow not to marry, and overcoming one’s biology is not easy to do. It probably should not even be attempted unless one genuinely feels called by YHWH. Only when one is called to these vows will one be able to complete them in Him.

Yochanan (John) 15:4

4 “Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me.”

It may be that the sex scandals of the Catholic Church take place because the Catholic Church requires celibacy as a dogma, regardless of whether or not the person entering the Catholic priesthood genuinely feels called to it by YHWH. While Yeshua, Shaul, and Moshe were all undoubtedly abstinent or celibate in one form or another, this cannot be a requirement for priesthood, as the only apostles to be celibate were Shaul and Barnabas.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 9:5-6

5 Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other

***apostles, the brothers of the Master,
and Kepha?***

***6 Or is it only Barnabas and I who have
no right to refrain from working?***

While many of the prophets were either abstinent or celibate Nazirites, those among the priesthood were typically monogamous, and those in the kingship were often polygynous. While it may seem an outlandish thing to say, what is important to remember is not to follow any particular person's example (except perhaps Yeshua's), but to hear what YHWH's will for us is, and then to do that.

Also, if one should feel called to the path of the prophet or the celibate or abstinent Nazirite, one should first sit down and count the cost in all seriousness.

Luqa (Luke) 14:28-30

***28 "For which of you, intending to build
a tower, does not sit down first and
count the cost, whether he has enough
to finish it —***

***29 lest, after he has laid the foundation,
and is not able to finish, all who see it
begin to mock him,***

***30 saying, 'This man began to build and
was not able to finish.'"***

The difficulties of taking the Nazirite, celibate, or abstinent vow should never be underestimated; however, YHWH will reward those who are called to these paths of increased suffering by giving wonderful and mysterious blessings that cannot be described in words.

Polygyny, Concubines, and Kingship

The three main offices within Israel are

1. The king (i.e., government)
2. The priest (i.e., spiritual leadership)
3. The prophet (who is also often a Nazirite)

On top of this there is a fourth and special role: that of the judge. The judge is a special type of a king (i.e., a government leader) whose children do not inherit after him. He is also a prophet. One example of this was Moshe (Moses). Moshe led the nation, prophesied, and also served as Israel's high priest before the Levitical order was established. In contrast, David was a prophet, and inquired of YHWH with the ephod (which is a Levitical role), yet his children did inherit the kingship after him. Because the different offices have different standards of behavior, when those who hold multiple offices at the same time marry, there can be issues.

In ancient times it was considered perfectly acceptable for a king or a wealthy man to have more than one wife. Let us consider the example of Elkanah.

Shemuel Aleph (1st Samuel) 1:2
2 And he had two wives: the name of one was Hannah, and the name of the other Peninnah. Peninnah had children, but Hannah had no children.

Another example is King David, however, in addition to multiple wives, he also had multiple concubines.

Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 5:13
13 And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron. Also more sons and daughters were born to David.

We know David had at least ten concubines, because he left them behind to keep his house when Absalom drove him out of Jerusalem.

Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 15:16
16 Then the king went out with all his household after him. But the king left ten women, concubines, to keep the house.

In *Nazarene Israel*, we explain how living beings reproduce after their own kinds.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 1:25
25 And Elohim made the beast of the earth according to its kind, cattle according to its kind, and everything that creeps on the earth according to its kind. And Elohim saw that it was good.

This pattern of reproducing after one's own kind goes much deeper than just physical traits; it also speaks of personality and preferences. That is, our genetics also influence our inclinations and our desires, and the fact that Solomon was King David's son can help us understand why King Solomon took an even larger number of wives and concubines than his father David did. In fact, Solomon took too many.

In Deuteronomy 17, YHWH told us that Israel would surely have a king (i.e., government), but YHWH also

told Israel's future kings not to "multiply wives" for themselves, lest their hearts be turned to idols.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 17:14-17

14 "When you come to the land which YHWH your Elohim is giving you, and possess it and dwell in it, and say, 'I will set a king over me like all the nations that are around me,'

15 you shall surely set a king over you whom YHWH your Elohim chooses; one from among your brethren you shall set as king over you; you may not set a foreigner over you, who is not your brother.

16 But he shall not multiply horses for himself, nor cause the people to return to Egypt to multiply horses, for YHWH has said to you, 'You shall not return that way again.'

17 Neither shall he multiply wives for himself, lest his heart turn away; nor shall he greatly multiply silver and gold for himself."

Because his heart was to serve his brethren, YHWH ordained that Solomon would be the wisest king ever.

Divre HaYamim Bet (2 Chron) 1:11-12

11 Then Elohim said to Solomon: "Because this was in your heart, and you have not asked riches or wealth or honor or the life of your enemies, nor have you asked long life — but have asked wisdom and knowledge for yourself, that you may judge My people over whom I have made you king —

12 wisdom and knowledge are granted to you; and I will give you riches and wealth and honor, such as none of the kings have had who were before you, nor shall any after you have the like."

However, many commentators note that even though Solomon was the wisest king of all time, he failed to heed YHWH's warning against multiplying wives, which later resulted in the breakup of the kingdom.

Melachim Aleph (1st Kings) 11:1-4

1 But King Solomon loved many foreign women, as well as the daughter of Pharaoh: women of the Moabites, Ammonites, Edomites, Sidonians, and Hittites —

2 from the nations of whom YHWH had said to the children of Israel, "You shall not intermarry with them, nor they with you. Surely they will turn away your hearts after their elohim." Solomon clung to these in love.

3 And he had seven hundred wives, princesses, and three hundred concubines; and his wives turned away his heart.

4 For it was so, when Solomon was old, that his wives turned his heart after other elohim; and his heart was not loyal to YHWH his Elohim, as was the heart of his father David.

But does Solomon's error of following after the false elohim of his wives say anything about King David? David also had multiple wives, as well as multiple

concubines, yet Scripture tells us that King David was a man after YHWH's own heart.

Shemuel Aleph (1st Samuel) 13:14
14 But now your (Shaul's) kingdom shall not continue. (Instead) YHWH has sought for Himself a man after His own heart, and YHWH has commanded him to be commander over His people, because you have not kept what YHWH commanded you."

Further, speaking allegorically, in the parable of the ten virgins, Yeshua tells us that the Bridegroom (which is a prophetic shadow picture of Him at His second coming) will take five allegorical "wives."

Mattityahu (Matthew) 25:1
1 "Then the kingdom of heaven shall be likened to ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the Bridegroom."

In Ezekiel, YHWH also refers to the two houses as two sisters that He took for Himself. The older sister he calls "Oholah" (symbolic of Ephraim), and the younger sister He calls "Oholibah" (symbolic of Judah). YHWH tells us these were two "daughters of one mother."

Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 23:1-4
1 The word of YHWH came again to me, saying:
2 "Son of man, there were two women, the daughters of one mother.
3 They committed harlotry in Egypt, they committed harlotry in their youth;

their breasts were there embraced, their virgin bosom was there pressed.
4 Their names: Oholah the elder and Oholibah her sister; they were Mine, and they bore sons and daughters. As for their names, Samaria is Oholah, and Jerusalem is Oholibah.

However, what is really confusing is how YHWH tells us not to take two sisters together in marriage.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 18:17-18
17 "You shall not uncover the nakedness of a woman and her daughter, nor shall you take her son's daughter or her daughter's daughter, to uncover her nakedness. They are near of kin to her. It is wickedness.
18 Nor shall you take a woman as a rival to her sister, to uncover her nakedness while the other is alive."

The reason Yahweh did not break Torah by taking Ephraim and Judah is that this is all allegory. What we need to understand is the importance of the different roles. The King of Kings (Yeshua) will take five allegorical brides at His second coming, although He was celibate at His first coming (and during His ministry) He encouraged all those who could "accept it" to be celibate as well.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 19:8-12
8 He said to them, "Moshe, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for adultery, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

10 His disciples said to Him, "If such is the case of the man with his wife, it is better not to marry."

11 But He said to them, "All cannot accept this saying, but only those to whom it has been given:

12 For there are eunuchs who were born thus from their mother's womb, and there are eunuchs who were made eunuchs (i.e., castrated) by men, and there are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs (i.e., celibate) for the kingdom of heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it."

Then Shaul (who was also a prophet) tells us that the ideal is to be celibate, if we are called to be so.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 7:1-9

1 Now concerning the things of which you wrote to me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman.

2 Nevertheless, because of (the need to avoid) sexual immorality, let each man (who is not called to celibacy) have his own wife, and let each woman (who is not called to celibacy) have her own husband.

3 Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband.

4 The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband does. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife does.

5 Do not deprive one another except with consent for a time, that you may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again so that Satan does not tempt you because of your lack of self-control.

6 But I say this as a concession, not as a commandment.

7 For I wish that all men were even as I myself (i.e., celibate). But each one has his own gift from Elohim, one in this manner and another in that.

8 But I say to the unmarried and to the widows: It is good for them if they remain even as I am (i.e., celibate);

9 but if they cannot exercise self-control, let them marry; for it is better to marry than to burn.

First we have men such as Elkanah and Kings David and Solomon taking more than one wife, then we have the kings Yeshua and YHWH allegorically taking more than one wife. Yet as prophets, both Yeshua and Shaul (Paul) practiced and preached celibacy.

Most people do not feel called to be celibate; and as we showed in "Abstinence, Celibacy, and Nazirites," while an abstinent person is promised a better reward, the important thing is not abstinence, but filling the call YHWH places on our lives. If we try to be celibate when YHWH wants us to marry, it is wrong, and vice versa. The main thing is to do YHWH's will for us.

As we show in other places, YHWH's will is that we hear and obey His voice.

Shemote (Exodus) 19:5

5 "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine."

Being realistic, if we were to tell people that all they need to do is hear and obey YHWH's voice, things could get messy fast. YHWH does continually try to communicate with us, but demons also vie for our attention, and we also have our own thoughts. It is very easy to mistake our thoughts (or the demons' voices) for YHWH's voice, especially when we want something. This may be one reason why YHWH gives us laws in the Torah, to serve as a "tutor" of sorts. When we are inside of the Torah's legal guideposts, we are probably inside His will.

Galatim (Galatians) 3:21-25

21 Is the Torah then against the promises of Elohim? Certainly not! For if there had been a Torah given which could have given life, truly righteousness would have been by the Torah.

22 But the Scripture has confined all under sin, that the promise by faith in Yeshua Messiah might be given to those who believe.

23 But before faith came, we were kept under guard by the Torah, kept for the faith which would afterward be revealed.

24 Therefore the Torah was our tutor to bring us to Messiah, that we might be justified by faith.

25 But after faith has come, we are no longer under a tutor.

The legal guideposts of this "tutor" are a practical necessity, for a great many who claim to be led by YHWH's Spirit do a great many things that are contrary to YHWH's instructions. First Corinthians 5 cites one example.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 5:1-5

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles — that a man has his father's wife!

2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.

4 In the name of our Adon Yeshua Messiah, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Adon Yeshua Messiah,

5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Adon Yeshua.

So what are this “tutor’s” guideposts with regards to marriage? How many wives does the Torah say a man can have? And does it depend on his office?

The Torah is written on more than one level. The Torah (literally “instructions”) establishes ideal codes of conduct that all of His people should ideally follow, in an ideal world.

For example, in the beginning YHWH originally ordained marriage as a union between one man and just one woman.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 2:21-24

21 And YHWH Elohim caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place.

22 Then the rib which YHWH Elohim had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

23 And Adam said: "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. She shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man."

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

Most people desire to marry in ratios of one-to-one, and this makes perfect sense. The birth ratio of males to females is about one-to-one; had YHWH wanted the average man to take more than one wife, He would have had to make the birth ratio of women to men much higher. Additionally, we might note that when verse 24 tells us a man shall cleave to his wife, it uses the singular (cling to his wife), rather than the plural (cling to his

wives). This gives us some insight as to what pattern YHWH originally established.

However, some wealthy men in ancient Israel took more than one wife; and sometimes the wife even initiated it. For example, when Sarai (Sarah) had not born children to Avraham ten years after the promise, she brought her maidservant Hagar to Avraham as a concubine, to bear children for her.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 16:1-5

1 Now Sarai, Avram's wife, had borne him no children. And she had an Egyptian maidservant whose name was Hagar.

2 So Sarai said to Avram, "See now, YHWH has restrained me from bearing children. Please, go in to my maid; perhaps I shall obtain children by her." And Avram heeded the voice of Sarai.

3 Then Sarai, Avram's wife, took Hagar her maid, the Egyptian, and gave her to her husband Avram to be his wife, after Avram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan.

4 So he went in to Hagar, and she conceived. And when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress became despised in her eyes.

5 Then Sarai said to Avram, "My wrong be upon you! I gave my maid into your embrace; and when she saw that she had conceived, I became despised in her eyes. YHWH judge between you and me!"

Although this union did not really turn out well for Israel, YHWH never condemned Sarai for this act.

However, while it may be lawful according to Torah for a man to take a concubine if his wife brings him one, there are also downsides to be aware of. Just the presence of another woman in the household can cause extreme strife and jealousy; and as the head and priest of the household, the man may get blamed, even if all he did was passively accept his wife's offer.

Israel also had two concubines, whom his two wives Leah and Rachel brought him, to bear children for them when they were not fertile. And, as with Avraham, this led to extreme strife and unease in his household.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 30:1-8

1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Ya'akov no children, Rachel envied her sister, and said to Ya'akov, "Give me children, or else I die!"

2 And Ya'akov's anger was aroused against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of Elohim, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

3 So she said, "Here is my maid Bilhah; go in to her, and she will bear a child on my knees, that I also may have children by her."

4 Then she gave him Bilhah her maid as wife, and Ya'akov went in to her.

5 And Bilhah conceived and bore Ya'akov a son.

6 Then Rachel said, "Elohim has judged my case; and He has also heard my voice and given me a son." Therefore she called his name Dan.

7 And Rachel's maid Bilhah conceived again and bore Ya'akov a second son.

8 Then Rachel said, "With great wrestlings I have wrestled with my sister, and indeed I have prevailed." So she called his name Naphtali.

It is entirely normal for a woman to want her husband's undivided attention. While a man might enjoy the idea of having multiple women compete for his attention, it does not usually lead to a happy, shalom filled home. Further, it begs the question of how loving an attitude a man really has when he wants his wives to compete over him. It seems to reflect an attitude of "being served" on his part, rather than serving and loving his wife.

However, it does happen that women sometimes gladly become second wives. The case of King David gives us one clear illustration of this. After King Shaul forced David into hiding, King Shaul took his daughter Michal back from David, and gave her to Palti ben Laish. While David was still in hiding, a rich herdsman named Nabal roundly insulted David, and David set out to kill him. However, Nabal's wife Abigail intervened, talking David out of avenging himself. Shortly after that, when YHWH took Nabal's life, David sent to take Abigail as his second wife.

Shemuel Aleph (1st Samuel) 25:39-44

39 So when David heard that Nabal was dead, he said, "Blessed be YHWH, who has pleaded the cause of my reproach from the hand of Nabal, and has kept His servant from evil! For YHWH has returned the wickedness of Nabal on his own head." And David sent and

proposed to Abigail, to take her as his wife.

40 When the servants of David had come to Abigail at Carmel, they spoke to her saying, "David sent us to you, to ask you to become his wife."

41 Then she arose, bowed her face to the earth, and said, "Here is your maidservant, a servant to wash the feet of the servants of my adon."

42 So Abigail rose in haste and rode on a donkey, attended by five of her maidens; and she followed the messengers of David, and became his wife.

43 David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel, and so both of them were his wives.

44 But Shaul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

Although Scripture does not tell us the circumstances, verse 43 tells us that in addition to Abigail, David also took Ahinoam of Jezreel. And, as we saw before, David also took more wives and concubines.

Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 5:13

13 And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron. Also more sons and daughters were born to David.

Scripture tells us that King David was a righteous man after YHWH's own heart; and as much as some might not like it, Scripture does not speak negatively of King David's decision to maintain a harem. However, what

Scripture does speak negatively of is King David's murder of Uriah the Hittite, so as to steal his wife.

Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 11:2-5

2 Then it happened one evening that David arose from his bed and walked on the roof of the king's house. And from the roof he saw a woman bathing, and the woman was very beautiful to behold.

3 So David sent and inquired about the woman. And someone said, "Is this not Bat Sheva (Bathsheba), the daughter of Eliam, the wife of Uriah the Hittite?"

4 Then David sent messengers, and took her; and she came to him, and he lay with her, for she was cleansed from her impurity; and she returned to her house.

5 And the woman conceived; so she sent and told David, and said, "I am with child."

First David sought to get Uriah to lay with Bat Sheva (Bathsheba), in order to cover up his adultery. Then when Uriah would not, David conspired to have him killed.

Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 11:14-17

14 In the morning it happened that David wrote a letter to Joab and sent it by the hand of Uriah.

15 And he wrote in the letter, saying, "Set Uriah in the forefront of the hottest battle, and retreat from him, that he may be struck down and die."

**16 So it was, while Joab besieged the city, that he assigned Uriah to a place where he knew there were valiant men.
17 Then the men of the city came out and fought with Joab. And some of the people of the servants of David fell; and Uriah the Hittite died also.**

After Uriah was dead, David took Bat Sheva to himself.

**Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 11:26-27
26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.
27 And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased YHWH.**

David's motivation in sleeping with Bat Sheva was lust. However, David's motivation in marrying Bat Sheva and also Abigail may have been to provide for them, since their husbands were dead. In Tanach ("Old" Testament) times there were no secular social programs. Only the third tithe existed to support those whose families did not care for them when they grew old.

It is also important to realize that men typically die younger than women. The major factor then was typically war, but also disease and exposure to the elements. This created a relative surplus of women in society. Someone had to provide for them, lest they starve. If a woman was still young enough to bear children or work, a man might find it desirable to take her as a second wife; otherwise she often had no other recourse than to draw third tithe money.

**TimaTheus Aleph (1st Timothy) 5:3-16
3 Honor widows who are really widows.
4 But if any widow has children or grandchildren, let them first learn to show piety at home and to repay their parents; for this is good and acceptable before Elohim.
5 Now she who is really a widow, and left alone, trusts in Elohim and continues in supplications and prayers night and day.
6 But she who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.
7 And these things command, that they may be blameless.
8 But if anyone does not provide for his own, and especially for those of his household, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.
9 Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man,
10 well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work.
11 But refuse the younger widows; for when they have begun to grow wanton against Messiah they desire to marry,
12 having condemnation because they have cast off their first faith.
13 And besides they learn to be idle, wandering about from house to house,**

and not only idle but also gossips and busybodies, saying things which they ought not.

14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

15 For some have already turned aside after Satan.

16 If any believing man or woman has widows, let them relieve them, and do not let the assembly be burdened, that it may relieve those who are really widows.

YHWH does not tell us to implement secular programs such as Social Security; He only instructs us about the third tithe. Given that men will probably continue to die younger than women, and given that there will likely be families who fail to provide for their parents, in the millennial kingdom there will likely continue to be women who would be much better off as a second wife, than as a widow on third tithe support. Additionally, in Middle Eastern culture a woman is generally thought to need a man to protect her from bandits, marauders, and abuse by other men. Since Abigail was rich, wise, and beautiful, David offered to take her into his house; he also offered to marry Bat Sheva, since he had murdered her husband, and since she was carrying his child. In both of these cases, with their husbands being dead, it may have seemed obvious that these women would never become anyone else's first wife; therefore, rather than remain widows, they gladly took the offer of marriage, and became "second wives" to the king of Israel.

However, while it is possible that all of the women David took as wives and concubines were previously widowed (and in need of support), this was not likely the case. David was a relatively powerful and rich king, and it seems more than likely that many of the wives and concubines he took were virgins, who entered into marriage with King David for reasons the Scriptures do not record. David may even have taken some of them for the purposes of strategic alliance, whether to strengthen his political position within Israel or to solidify relationships with other nations. All these were part of the reality of the kingship at that time.

Polygamy is taking more than one spouse (male or female), while polygyny is taking more than one wife. When we live in the land of Israel and the government does not forbid it, polygyny is lawful. However, while it may be lawful, the bigger question is whether or not it profits such that we should practice it ourselves.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 6:12
All things are lawful for me, but all things are not helpful. All things are lawful for me, but I will not be brought under the power of any.

Polygyny is only acceptable if all parties agree to it before it takes place, whether that agreement is explicit (and direct) or just simply understood because of the culture. In the examples we saw above with Sarai, Leah, and Rachel, it was the wives who brought the concubines to their husbands, to bear children when they could not. Thus, because the wives initiated the polygyny, they agreed to it de facto; for that reason it was lawful.

In contrast, King David never asked his first wife Michal for permission to take either Abigail or Ahinoam. He could not have done so, since they were not in contact at that time. However, it is also unlikely that David needed to ask Michal for permission to take other wives, since in Middle Eastern culture it was generally understood that a man who could afford multiple wives was free to take them. Nonetheless, had Michal entered into marriage with the understanding that she would be David's only wife, he would have needed her prior consent. This is because marriage is a covenant agreement, and parties to a covenant are not free to alter the terms of the covenant after it has been established, unless all parties want the change.

If a woman enters into a marriage with the impression that their relationship will be monogamous, then the husband is not free to take other wives without her prior permission. Should the husband take a new wife (or concubine) anyway, then he has violated the terms of the covenant, which makes him an adulterer. According to the principles of Torah, both he and his new wife are liable to be stoned to death.

While many women are against polygyny, some see an advantage in it. In the cases of Sarai, Leah, and Rachel (above), it may have seemed better to them to bring concubines to their husbands than to see them sorrowful at not having an heir. Sometimes women no longer desire sex with their husbands, so they find the introduction of a second wife a relief. Still others feel it would be better to be a "second wife" to a rich and powerful man (such as a king or a corporate head) than to have exclusive access to a less powerful (or less wealthy) man. Other women cite yet more reasons.

Whatever reasons women might have for desiring to be part of a polygynous marriage, there is one time when the Torah requires a man to take on a wife, regardless of whether or not he already has one, or even wants one. This is when brothers dwell together, and one of the brothers dies without a son to carry on his name. When this happens, YHWH expects the surviving brother to marry the deceased man's wife, and raise up a son to carry on his name. The surviving brother can decline to do this, but then he has to go through a ceremony whereby he is publicly humiliated for refusing to perform his duty to YHWH, to family, and to society.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:5-10

5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

6 And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel.

7 But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel; he will not perform the duty of my husband's brother.'

8 Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But if he stands firm and says, 'I do not want to take her,'

9 then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say, 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house.'
10 And his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed.'

In the West this is called levirate marriage, from the Latin word *levir*, meaning “brother-in-law.” In Hebrew it is called *yibbum* (“yee-boom”), which is taken from the Hebrew word for brother-in-law, *yee-bamah* (יבמה). In addition to raising up a son to carry on the dead brother’s name, *yibbum* also serves to provide for the dead brother’s spouse. Since there are no secular programs such as Welfare in YHWH’s world, this keeps her from having to draw the third tithe, or becoming a second wife to some unknown person outside the immediate family (who may or may not treat her well). Since *yibbum* is commanded in the Torah, it overrides any monogamy agreement a couple might or might not have.

The principle is that not only does YHWH want us to have strong families, but that He wants us to take care of our spiritual family as well. This may be the main reason He gives no provision for social programs outside of the family unit (except for the third tithe, which is intended solely as a safety net for those whose families refuse to take care of them).

Yet whatever reasons a woman might have for wanting to enter into a multiple wife situation, concubinage is something else. Concubinage is essentially a type of slavery. While concubinage and slavery might both

seem barbaric today, if we will study this matter out prayerfully, we may realize why YHWH speaks of them.

Let us realize that YHWH essentially has two sets of standards with regards to slavery. While He forbids us to take other Hebrew believers into hard slavery (per se), He does permit us to take slaves of other nations, particularly if it will help convert both them and their children to the faith in the long run.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 25:42-46

42 For they are My servants, whom I brought out of the land of Egypt; they shall not be sold as slaves.

43 You shall not rule over him with rigor, but you shall fear your Elohim.

44 And as for your male and female slaves whom you may have — from the nations that are around you, from them you may buy male and female slaves.

45 Moreover you may buy the children of the strangers who dwell among you, and their families who are with you, which they beget in your land; and they shall become your property.

46 And you may take them as an inheritance for your children after you, to inherit them as a possession; they shall be your permanent slaves. But regarding your brethren, the children of Israel, you shall not rule over one another with rigor.

When the children of Israel settled the land of Canaan, they were not able to drive all of the other nations out, so they settled in and amongst them. The children of

Israel later became stronger, and put the Canaanites to forced labor.

Yehoshua (Joshua) 17:12-13

12 Yet the children of Manasseh could not drive out the inhabitants of those cities, but the Canaanites were determined to dwell in that land.

13 And it happened, when the children of Israel grew strong, that they put the Canaanites to forced labor, but did not utterly drive them out.

In addition to putting the Canaanites to forced labor, the children of Israel also forced the Canaanites to pay tribute.

Shophetim (Judges) 1:33

33 Nor did Naphtali drive out the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh or the inhabitants of Beth Anath; but they dwelt among the Canaanites, the inhabitants of the land. Nevertheless the inhabitants of Beth Shemesh and Beth Anath were put under tribute to them.

One thing we need to remember is that in Hebraic thought, our nationality is not determined by our ethnic heritage, but by our faith. This is why those who adopt the faith of Avraham are referred to as “children of Avraham,” because in Scripture one’s nationality is determined by one’s religious practice.

Romim (Romans) 9:6-9

6 But it is not that the word of Elohim has taken no effect. For they are not all Israel who are of Israel,

7 nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham; but, "In Isaac your seed shall be called."

8 That is, those who are the children of the flesh, these are not the children of Elohim; but the children of the promise are counted as the seed.

9 For this is the word of promise: "At this time I will come and Sarah shall have a son."

As we explain in *Nazarene Israel*, this often overlooked difference is also why the Renewed Covenant (“New” Testament) refers to those who were genetically Jewish, but who did not cling to the Hebrew ways, as “Greeks.” It is not that their genetics were Greek, or that they descended from the Greeks in any way. Rather, it was that their worship practices and thought patterns were influenced by Greek culture.

Ma’asei (Acts) 6:1

1 Now in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a complaint against the Hebrews by the Hellenists (KJV: Grecians), because their widows were neglected in the daily distribution.

In *Nazarene Israel* we explain that “Hellenists” and “Greeks” appear all through the Good News and in Acts chapter 6, yet the first true non-Jew to be brought to the faith was Cornelius, in Acts chapter 10.

Ma’asei (Acts) 10:1-2

1 There was a certain man in Caesarea called Cornelius, a centurion of what was called the Italian Regiment, 2 a devout man and one who feared Elohim with all his household, who gave alms generously to the people, and prayed to Elohim always.

While it may offend Christian sensibilities, the truth is that YHWH is an imperialist, and He expects us to expand and further His kingdom by all available means. We are to treat all those who hold to the same religion as brothers, since Israel is a family; yet those who do not hold to the same belief are essentially considered as fodder, at least until the moment they convert.

A concubine can be a righteous wife taken from a non-Hebrew people who are subjugated to the Hebrews, whether by hard bondage or by tribute. While she may not have the same legal rights in a Hebraic court of law as an Israelite wife, her husband is nonetheless expected to treat her with dignity (like a wife).

In Hebrew and in Aramaic the word for concubine is *pilgash* (פִּלְגֶשֶׁת), coming from the four letter root of פלגש. Four letter roots are rare both in Hebrew and in Aramaic, and no one is really sure of the origins of this word; however, it is phonetically similar to the Aramaic word *palges* (פלגס), which refers to a young adult who is not yet mature. Others have hypothesized that it is a contraction of פלג אשה, meaning “half a wife,” or “a partial wife.” This is an apt description of a concubine’s legal status, which is less than that of a full wife. For example, while the penalty for lying with another man’s wife is death, the penalty for sleeping with a concubine who was betrothed to another man is only a scourging, because she is “not free.”

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 19:20

20 “Whoever lies carnally with a woman who is betrothed to a man as a concubine, and who has not at all been redeemed nor given her freedom, for this there shall be scourging; but they shall not be put to death, because she was not free.”

Nonetheless, when a man takes a slave as a wife, he is commanded to love her as he loves himself.

Shemote (Exodus) 21:7-11

7 "And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave (i.e., concubine), she shall not go out as the male slaves do.

8 If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her.

9 And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters.

10 If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights.

11 And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without (paying) money.”

Marital relationships are first and foremost about love, and love is to transform all other relationships. Even if a man purchases a concubine with money, she is not to work in the fields as the male slaves do. Rather, while

she is certainly to be productive, she is also to be a wife. Her husband is to care for her and love her all of her days. If he treats her as a slave, YHWH considers that he has “dealt deceitfully” with her in marriage. She is liable to go free, while her father is liable to keep all her bride price. In other words, if he does not truly care for her, and love her, YHWH says her concubinage is to be annulled without any penalty to her or her family, because marriage is supposed to be about love.

Perhaps one of the reasons concubinage is considered with such revulsion in American Christian society is that historically the Christians did it wrong. For example, it was common for American Christian slave holders in the South to have marital relations with their female slaves, yet the children of their union were raised as slaves, and both mother and child worked the fields. This was in direct violation of Exodus 21:7 (above), and it showed nothing of the spirit of love that is to define all marital relationships. Further, once these American slaves converted to Christianity, their indenture should have technically been terminated in the year of Jubilee, which calls for the release of all Hebrews.

It may be that YHWH’s true purpose in allowing Israel to take concubines is to help those who are taken as slaves out of the other nations convert to the true faith. However, even if that is so, we should also point out that YHWH is not really in favor of slavery, or the establishment of any yoke other than His. In many places YHWH speaks against slavery of all forms.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 58:6
6 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen: to loose the bonds of wickedness, to undo the heavy burdens, to let the

oppressed go free, and that you break every yoke?"

Yet the fact remains that Kings David and Solomon both took concubines, and they were not necessarily taken as slaves from other nations. Sometimes it could happen that a concubine was simply someone from within Israel with a much lower social status, taken as a wife. The purpose of taking her as a “slave” instead of as a full wife was simply that she came from a much lower background, and could not bring as much financial gain to the relationship as a “normal” wife.

As we saw earlier, the four main offices in Israel are

1. The king (i.e., government)
2. The priest (i.e., spiritual leadership)
3. The prophet (often a Nazirite), and some say
4. The judge (both prophet and king)

When we look at the king, priest, prophet, and judge, we can see that they are called to play different roles. The rules that apply to one office do not necessarily apply to the others.

For example, it is lawful for those in the kingship to take more than one wife (unless their marital vows specified otherwise), and kings often took more than one wife.

Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 5:13
13 And David took more concubines and wives from Jerusalem, after he had come from Hebron. Also more sons and daughters were born to David.

In contrast, the Levites were typically monogamous, and the high priest would be disqualified from office if he had not taken a virgin for a wife.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 21:14

14 “A widow or a divorced woman or a defiled woman or a harlot — these he shall not marry; but he shall take a virgin of his own people as wife.”

Whereas those in the kingship might take other wives, the purpose and function of the priesthood is to teach YHWH's ideals to His people. Perhaps this is why the apostle Shaul tells us that those in the priesthood roles of congregational elder and servant are to take exactly one wife, in accordance with the Edenic ideal.

TimaTheus Aleph (1st Timothy) 3:1-13

1 This is a faithful saying: If a man desires the position of an elder ('bishop'), he desires a good work.

2 An elder ('bishop') then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach;

3 not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous;

4 one who rules his own house well, having his children in submission with all reverence

5 (for if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the assembly of Elohim?);

6 not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as the devil.

7 Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

8 Likewise servants ('deacons') must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, 9 holding the mystery of the faith with a pure conscience.

10 But let these also first be tested; then let them serve as servants, being found blameless.

11 Likewise, their wives must be reverent, not slanderers, temperate, faithful in all things.

12 Let servants ('deacons') be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well.

13 For those who have served well as servants obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Messiah Yeshua.

In Aramaic the word for “of one” is *d'khada* (ܕܚܕܐ). This indicates a singular (just one wife). This word is phonetically related to the Hebrew word for one, which is *echad* (אחד). While one can argue that this word means “unity” (as in “a unity of wives,” in context it does not work.

In Greek the phrase for “the husband of one wife” is *mias gunaikos andra* (μίας γυναικὸς ἄνδρα). Again this indicates a singular usage. *Strong's Concordance* defines the Greek word *μίας* as meaning “one” or “first.”

NT:3391 *mia* (mee'-ah); irregular feminine of NT:1520; one or first:

Looking up the reference to NT:1520, we find it also means “one.”

NT:1520 heis (hice); (including the neuter [etc.] hen); a primary numeral; one:

What Shaul means, then, is that an elder or a servant in the assembly must be the husband of exactly one wife. Therefore, while polygynists are not restricted from the kingship (government), and while celibates (such as Nazirites) may serve in prophetic, teaching, judgment, or apostolic roles (as did Shaul), what the vast majority of people need in the assemblies is shepherding from someone who has set a good example by successfully implemented the Edenic ideal of a one man and one woman union. For this reason, local assembly leadership roles should be filled by monogamous husbands who have successfully led their families in the way of YHWH and His Torah.

Sometimes women feel threatened by the presence of polygynists in the congregation, however, this is unnecessary. Just because there may be polygynists in the assembly does not mean that the Edenic ideal has changed from loving, dedicated, monogamous marital unions; nor does it mean that all husbands will seek additional wives. However, if there are people like King David, King Solomon, and Elkanah in Scripture then there should be a place for them today, just as there should also be a place for celibates, due to the historical record of Yeshua, Shaul, and Yochanan HaMatbil (John the Immerser).

Seeing as YHWH and Yeshua speak allegorically (in prophecy and in parable) of taking more than one wife

when they are in their kingship roles, we cannot in all good conscience condemn the likes of Avraham or King David for taking multiple wives and concubines. How can we condemn the practices of the patriarchs, when they were so much greater than we are? As long as polygynists do not try to lead our assemblies (but stick to business and government), they should feel welcome amongst us, that is, if they are not disobeying the laws of the lands in which they live.

At the time of this writing, Ephraim is in the dispersion. As we explain in “About Submission to Government” and “Rebellion and the U.S. Constitution” (*in Nazarene Scripture Studies, Volume One*) Kepha (Peter) tells us to submit ourselves to every ordinance of man for YHWH’s sake, and to honor and obey the sovereign (i.e., our government leaders).

Kepha Aleph (1st Peter) 2:13-17

13 Therefore submit yourselves to every ordinance of man for YHWH’s sake, whether to the king as supreme, 14 or to governors, as to those who are sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and for the praise of those who do good.

15 For this is the will of Elohim, that by doing good you may put to silence the ignorance of foolish men —

16 as free, yet not using liberty as a cloak for vice, but as bondservants of Elohim.

17 Honor all people. Love the brotherhood. Fear Elohim. Honor the king.

In verse 15, Kepha tells us that to obey the government is to do good, and that by obeying the government, we put to silence the ignorance of foolish men.

Shaul also tells us, in the plainest of terms, to submit to our governments, as the governments over us have been appointed by Elohim.

Romim (Romans) 13:1-7

1 Let every soul be subject to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from Elohim, and the authorities that exist are appointed by Elohim.

2 Therefore whoever resists the authority resists the ordinance of Elohim, and those who resist will bring judgment on themselves.

3 For rulers are not a terror to good works, but to evil. Do you want to be unafraid of the authority? Do what is good, and you will have praise from the same.

4 For he is Elohim's minister to you for good. But if you do evil, be afraid; for he does not bear the sword in vain; for he is Elohim's minister, an avenger to execute wrath on him who practices evil.

5 Therefore you must be subject, not only because of wrath but also for conscience' sake.

6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for they are Elohim's ministers attending continually to this very thing.

7 Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes are due, customs

to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor.

Then in 1 Timothy 2, Shaul tells us to pray for those whom Yahweh has placed in authority over us. If something is wrong with our government, we are simply to pray that YHWH would heal our nation.

TimaTheus Aleph (1st Timothy) 2:1-4

1 Therefore I exhort first of all that supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks be made for all men,

2 for kings and all who are in authority, that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all righteousness and reverence.

3 For 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.

It is not uncommon for believers to try to get around the need to submit to government (especially in the areas of taxes, drug use, and anti-polygamy laws) by pointing out that the apostles did not agree to stop witnessing their faith when the Sanhedrin told them to do so.

Ma'asei (Acts) 4:19-20

19 But Kepha (Peter) and Yochanan (John) answered and said to them, "Whether it is right in the sight of Elohim to listen to you more than to Elohim, you judge.

20 For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard."

The difference here is that the basis of Yochanan and Kepha's protest was not that they were being denied the opportunity to take multiple wives, but that they were being denied the opportunity to witness their faith (which we are commanded to do). We never read about anyone in the Renewed Covenant taking multiple wives, nor is it commanded. It is not that polygyny never took place in Renewed Covenant times, but Yeshua and Shaul both promote either celibacy or the Edenic ideal of lifelong, loving monogamy (depending on how YHWH leads us).

Yet, what if YHWH should lead a brother (and particularly a business or government head) to take a second wife? Or what if YHWH should lead a sister to want to become one? Those who practice polygyny must still make a lifelong commitment, and make a vow before Elohim to ensure that all of their children are provided for within the context of a loving, believing family that is dedicated to serving Him.

The world gives its approval to extramarital sex, live-in girlfriends, serial marriages, and raising children out of wedlock. None of these are lawful, for none of these teach children to worship Elohim. As much as we may not like to admit it, when it is done right, according to YHWH's Torah, polygyny does teach children to worship Elohim. Even concubinage, when it is done right, helps to build YHWH's kingdom.

While polygyny may not be the Edenic ideal, may not be acceptable practice for spiritual leaders, and would not be practiced by a prophet or Nazirite, who among us is qualified to judge his brother or sister for doing as our forefathers have done before us, so long as they raise their children to worship Elohim, and do not transgress the laws of the lands in which they live? And how can

we judge anyone else for doing what YHWH says is lawful for them to do?

Romim (Romans) 14:4

4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for Elohim is able to make him stand.

How can we know what YHWH has laid on anyone else's heart? Let us leave judgment in the hands of our good heavenly Father, who knows just what trials and lessons each of us needs to learn in order to serve and please Him.

In Yeshua's name, amein.

Yahweh's Heart in Marriage

In this study we will see that Yahweh defines divorce much differently than we do in the West (circa 2013 CE). For example, in Jeremiah 3:8, Yahweh said He divorced Ephraim, and “put her away”—yet in verse 14 He said He is still “married” to her. What this shows us that Yahweh does not believe His divorce terminated His marriage to Ephraim. Rather, Yahweh's divorce was only a temporary disciplinary measure intended to correct His adulterous wife—and He continued to seek her out, in order to woo her back to Him.

Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 3:1-14

1 "They say, 'If a man divorces his wife, and she goes from him and becomes another man's, may he return to her again?' Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; yet return to Me," says Yahweh.

2 "Lift up your eyes to the desolate heights and see: Where have you not lain with men? By the road you have sat for them like an Arabian in the wilderness; and you have polluted the land with your harlotries and your wickedness.

3 Therefore the showers have been withheld, and there has been no latter rain. You have had a harlot's forehead; You refuse to be ashamed.

4 Will you not from this time cry to Me, 'My Father, You are the guide of my youth?

5 Will He remain angry forever? Will He keep it to the end?' Behold, you have spoken and done evil things, as you were able."

6 Yahweh said also to me in the days of Josiah the king: "Have you seen what backsliding

Israel has done? She has gone up on every high mountain and under every green tree, and there played the harlot.

7 And I said, after she had done all these things, 'Return to Me.' But she did not return. And her treacherous sister Judah saw it.

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

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

10 And yet for all this her treacherous sister Judah has not turned to Me with her whole heart, but in pretense," says Yahweh.

11 Then Yahweh said to me, "Backsliding Israel has shown herself more righteous than treacherous Judah.

12 Go and proclaim these words toward the north, and say: 'Return, backsliding Israel,' says Yahweh; 'I will not cause My anger to fall on you. For I am merciful,' says Yahweh; 'I will not remain angry forever.

13 Only acknowledge your iniquity, that you have transgressed against Yahweh your Elohim, and have scattered your charms to alien deities under every green tree, and you have not obeyed My voice,' says Yahweh.

14 "Return, O backsliding children," says Yahweh; "for I am married to you. I will take you, one from a city and two from a family, and I will bring you to Zion."

Since Yahweh would not contradict His own Torah, His request that Ephraim return to Him cannot conflict with

Deuteronomy 24, which says that a man may divorce his wife if he first writes her a certificate of divorce (called a “sefer k’ritute”, סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוּת), and sends her out of his house (וְשִׁלְחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ).

<p>Deuteronomy 24:1-4 1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some (sexual) uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, 2 when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife, 3 if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife, 4 then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before YHWH, and you</p>	<p>(1) כִּי יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה וּבָעָלָהּ וְהָיָה אִם לֹא תִמְצָא חֵן בְּעֵינָיו כִּי מְצָא בָּהּ עֲרוּת דָּבָר וְכָתַב לָהּ סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוּת וְנָתַן בְּיָדָהּ וְשִׁלְחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ : (2) וַיִּצְאָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ וְהִלְכָה וְהָיְתָה לְאִישׁ אֲחֵר : (3) וּשְׂנֵאָהּ הָאִישׁ הָאֲחֵרוֹן וְכָתַב לָהּ סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוּת וְנָתַן בְּיָדָהּ וְשִׁלְחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ אוֹ כִּי יָמוּת הָאִישׁ הָאֲחֵרוֹן אֲשֶׁר לָקַחָהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה : (4) לֹא יוּכַל בְּעָלָהּ הָרִאשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר שִׁלְחָהּ לָשׁוּב לְקַחְתָּהּ לְהָיוֹת לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר הִטְמָאָהּ כִּי תוֹעֵבָה הוּא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה וְלֹא</p>
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<p>shall not bring sin on the land which YHWH your Elohim is giving you as an inheritance.”</p>	<p>תַּחֲטִיֵּא אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה</p>
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The purpose of giving her a divorce certificate is not to be rid of her forever—for that would be contrary to Yahweh’s example. If a man divorces his wife, she should not remarry—she should repent, and turn back to Him. However, if she does decide to do the wrong thing, and she remarries, she can never return to her former husband, for when she forms a new marriage covenant, it voids out her prior marriage(s) forever.

In verse 1, the Hebrew for uncleanness is *ervat* (עֲרוּת), which refers to baring the pudenda (external genitals).

OT:6172 `ervah (er-vaw'); from OT:6168; nudity, literally (especially the pudenda) or figuratively (disgrace, blemish):
KJV - nakedness, shame, unclean (-ness).

When we look up the reference in *Strong’s Hebrew Concordance*, OT:6168 refers to a woman making herself bare (i.e., exposing her genitals). In context it refers to a wife who is “getting naked” with someone other than her husband.

OT:6168 `arah (aw-raw'); a primitive root; to be (causatively, make) bare; hence, to empty, pour out, demolish:
KJV - leave destitute, discover, empty, make naked, pour (out), rase, spreadself, uncover.

Although Ephraim was adulterous, because she never remarried, she can return to Yahweh without breaking either the letter or the spirit of Deuteronomy 24 (above).

One thing we need to know is that because Yahweh made men and women different, He made the rules for men and women different. While lifetime monogamy is the marital ideal, Scripture allows men to take more than one wife, even though a woman is never allowed to have more than one husband. In fact, in certain situations Yahweh even commands men to take a wife (as a duty), whether he is already married or not.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 25:5-6

5 "If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family; her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her.

6 And it shall be that the firstborn son which she bears will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel."

The reverse, however, is not true. A woman can never have more than one husband—and as we will see, in the land of Israel under a Torah government, in order for her to remarry at all she must first be released by her husband, or any new marriage she enters into is adulterous (because she is already married). One proof of this is found in the story of Herodias, who divorced her husband Phillip in order to marry King Herod. Josephus tells us that she took it upon herself to “confound the laws of our country” by initiating the divorce herself.

Herodias took upon her to confound the laws of our country, and divorced herself from her husband while he was alive, and was married to Herod Antipas [Whiston translation]

In more detail, King Herod had a half-brother named Philip, who's wife's name was Herodias. Herod fell in lust with Herodias, and he wooed her, talking her into leaving Philip, and marrying him—so she did. Their marriage was adulterous right from the start because Philip had not released her, and women do not have the authority in Scripture to initiate divorce themselves. The narrative is thick, but Josephus talks about their marriage in *Antiquities of the Jews*, 18:5:1.

[Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 18:5:1]

1. About this time Aretas (the king of Arabia Petres) and Herod (the Great) had a quarrel on the account following: Herod the tetrarch had, married the daughter of Aretas, and had lived with her a great while; but when he was once at Rome, he lodged with Herod (i.e., Philip), who was his (half) brother indeed, but not by the same mother; for this Herod (i.e., Philip) was the son of the high priest Sireoh's daughter. However, he fell in love with Herodias, this last Herod's (i.e., Philip's) wife, who was the daughter of Aristobulus their brother, and the sister of Agrippa the Great. This man (Herod the Great) ventured to talk to her about a marriage between them; which address, when she admitted, an agreement was made for her to change her habitation, and come to him as soon as he should return from Rome....

This is likely why Yochanan HaMatbil (John the Baptist) said it was not lawful for Herod to have her.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 14:3-4

3 For Herod had laid hold of Yochanan and bound him, and put him in prison for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife.

4 Because Yochanan had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her."

Romans 7:2-3 speaks to this same principle. Shaul tells us that a woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives, and is not released until he dies. In verse 3 he tells us that if she marries another man (while her husband is alive) she will be called an adulteress.

Romim (Romans) 7:2-4

2 For the woman who has a husband is bound by the Torah to her husband as long as he lives. But if the husband dies, she is released from the Torah of her husband.

3 So then if, while her husband lives, she marries another man, she will be called an adulteress; but if her husband dies, she is free from that Torah, so that she is no adulteress, though she has married another man.

Shaul is summarizing the Torah here, but if we go back to Deuteronomy 24, Yahweh tells us that a woman who has been given a bill of divorcement hypothetically *can* remarry—it is just that it is best if she does not. However, if her husband does *not* give her a bill of divorce in keeping with Deuteronomy 24 (*should only* mean she has committed some sexually immoral act), then she may not remarry at all. This is also why it would have been adulterous for Pharaoh to marry Sarai (Sarah).

B'reisheet (Genesis) 12:17-19

17 But Yahweh plagued Pharaoh and his house with great plagues because of Sarai, Avram's wife.

18 And Pharaoh called Avram and said, "What is this you have done to me? Why did you not tell me that she was your wife?"

19 Why did you say, 'She is my sister'? I might have taken her as my wife. Now therefore, here is your wife; take her and go your way."

David's wife Michal was not sexually immoral against him, and David never divorced her. However, Michal's father King Shaul was trying to kill David. Had he been successful, Michal would have been released from her marriage to David, which may be why King Shaul gave Michal to Paltiel.

Shemuel Aleph (1st Samuel) 25:44

44 But Shaul had given Michal his daughter, David's wife, to Palti the son of Laish, who was from Gallim.

However, King Shaul did not succeed in killing David. Therefore David was right to demand that Michal be taken back from Paltiel without a divorce certificate—because the marriage between Michal and Paltiel had been adulterous right from the start.

Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 3:14-15

14 So David sent messengers to Ishbosheth, Saul's son, saying, "Give me my wife Michal, whom I betrothed to myself for a hundred foreskins of the Philistines."

15 And Ishbosheth sent and took her from her husband, from Paltiel the son of Laish.

Yahweh thinks of marriage as a lifelong covenant—and unless her husband dies, Yahweh wants women to marry only once, and stay married for life.

We are called to a spiritual walk, and the focus is not to be on living our lives in the world, but upon serving Him in the Spirit. Shaul tells us that a man who finds himself “loosed from” his wife should ideally not remarry, but refocus himself completely on Yahweh. However, Shaul says if he does remarry, he has not sinned—and a virgin or a widow who marries has not sinned. That is because marriage is a noble institution, if we use it to serve Yahweh in the Spirit.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 7:27-31

27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

28 But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.

29 But this I say, brethren, the time is short, so that from now on even those who have wives should be as though they had none,

30 those who weep as though they did not weep, those who rejoice as though they did not rejoice, those who buy as though they did not possess,

31 and those who use this world as not misusing it. For the form of this world is passing away.

Shaul tells us that (unless she is giving herself to Yahweh in celibacy), widows who are of childbearing age should remarry, and bear children unto Yahweh.

TimaTheus Aleph (1st Timothy) 5:14

14 Therefore I desire that the younger widows marry, bear children, manage the house, give no opportunity to the adversary to speak reproachfully.

However, those who are put away for sexual immorality are not free to remarry. If they do remarry, then they can never go back to their first husband.

Yeshua tells us that it is adultery for a man to marry a woman who has been put away for sexual immorality (because she is still married).

Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:31-32

31 "Furthermore it has been said, 'Whoever divorces his wife, let him give her a certificate of divorce.'

32 But I say to you that whoever divorces his wife for any reason except sexual immorality causes her to commit adultery; and whoever marries a woman who is divorced commits adultery."

The reason it is adulterous is that it breaks an existing marital covenant.

Now in order to fully understand the drama that was going on in the first century, we need to know that there are two main schools of thought in rabbinical Judaism. One is called Beit Shammai, and the other is called Beit Hillel. Beit Shammai (the house of Shammai) teaches that marriage is a sacred institution, and that divorce is only justified when there is a very serious breach of the marital covenant (such as adultery).

The second school of thought is Beit Hillel (the house of Hillel). Beit Hillel teaches that a man can divorce his wife for literally just about any reason. According to Beit Hillel, a man can divorce his wife if she displeases him in any way, as if she was his “property.” This reduces marriage to a simple financial deal.

In old times, when women had dowries, if the man divorced his wife, Beit Hillel would tell him simply to “refund” the dowry, and that was it. No matter how old she was, and how many children she had borne him, he just had to put a piece of paper into her hand, send her and her children away, and then he was done with the financial transaction forever. This school of thought is grotesquely evil, yet it dominates the rabbinic world today, both within Orthodox and Messianic worship. Not only that, it prevails in most secular court systems. Today the dowry has been replaced by alimony and child support, but any state that allows for a “no-fault” divorce is essentially in the Beit Hillel camp. But what is so shocking is how many Messianic leaders teach this very thing, even though we will see how it directly contradicts Yeshua’s teachings.

Beit Hillel teaches that a man can divorce his wife if she spoils his food, fails to cover her head in public, speaks critically of his mother, or displeases him in any way. Rabbi Akiva even went so far as to say that a man could divorce his wife if he found someone else more attractive. In short, Beit Hillel teaches that a man can divorce and remarry for literally just about any reason.

[Talmud Tractate Gittin 90a]

MISHNAH. BETH SHAMMAI SAY: A MAN SHOULD NOT DIVORCE HIS WIFE UNLESS HE HAS FOUND HER GUILTY OF SOME UNSEEMLY CONDUCT, AS IT SAYS, BECAUSE

HE HATH FOUND SOME UNSEEMLY THING [1] IN HER.

[2] BETH HILLEL, HOWEVER, SAY [THAT HE MAY DIVORCE HER] EVEN IF SHE HAS MERELY SPOILT HIS FOOD, [3] SINCE IT SAYS, [4] BECAUSE HE HATH FOUND SOME UNSEEMLY THING IN HER.

[5] R. AKIBA SAYS, [HE MAY DIVORCE HER] EVEN IF HE FINDS ANOTHER WOMAN MORE BEAUTIFUL THAN SHE IS, AS IT SAYS, IT COMETH TO PASS, IF SHE FIND NO FAVOUR IN HIS EYES. [6]

In Matthew 19 (below), the Pharisees came to Yeshua and asked him if it was alright to put one’s wife away “for just any reason.” In verse 3 where it says they were “testing” Yeshua, they probably wanted to see if they could get him to condemn King Herod’s marriage of Herodias, so that King Herod would imprison or kill Him (right along with Yochanan HaMatbil).

Mattityahu (Matthew) 19:3-9

3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'

5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?

6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what Elohim has joined together, let not man separate."

7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moshe command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

8 He said to them, "Moshe, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

It is not that Yeshua sided with Beit Shammai in the matter of divorce and adultery. Rather, it is that Beit Shammai agreed with Scripture (in this particular case).

Yahweh told Hoshea (Hosea) to take a harlot for a wife (symbolic of Ephraim). This was so His people could see the kind of love and dedication He has toward us, even though we are unfaithful to Him.

Hoshea (Hosea) 1:2

2 When Yahweh began to speak by Hoshea, Yahweh said to Hoshea: "Go, take yourself a wife of harlotry And children of harlotry, For the land has committed great harlotry By departing from Yahweh."

Even though Hoshea's wife Gomer continued to stray, Hoshea stayed faithful to her. When she sold herself, he even sought her out, and paid the price to redeem her. All of this was to show the kind of faithfulness and undying love that Yahweh and Yeshua have toward us.

Hoshea (Hosea) 3:1-5

1 Then Yahweh said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of Yahweh for the children of Israel, who look to

other gods and love the raisin cakes of the pagans."

2 So I bought her for myself for fifteen shekels of silver, and one and one-half homers of barley.

3 And I said to her, "You shall stay with me many days; you shall not play the harlot, nor shall you have a man — so, too, will I be toward you."

4 For the children of Israel shall abide many days without king or prince, without sacrifice or sacred pillar, without ephod or teraphim.

5 Afterward the children of Israel shall return and seek Yahweh their Elohim and David their king. They shall fear Yahweh and His goodness in the latter days."

Scripture does not tell us that Hoshea wrote Gomer a certificate of divorce. We do not know why, but perhaps because he knew from the start that he was marrying a whore, it seemed pointless. Alternately, perhaps he knew that his job was to be as patient with Gomer as he possibly could, to show how patient Yahweh is with us. Yet no matter why Hoshea never wrote Gomer a certificate of divorce, if Yahweh gives us an example of staying faithful to His bride even when she strays, shouldn't we seek to emulate His example?

Yahweh's heart is not to divorce our wives, and send them away when they stray. Rather, Yahweh's heart is that when we take a wife, we have taken a wife for life. We are to pursue her, and try to win her back, even if she continues to commit harlotry. We are not to "stand on our rights," give her a certificate of divorce, and send her away—we are supposed to accept what Yahweh gives us, and pray for our spouse forever.

The Torah gives us a collection of laws, statutes, and judgments that Yahweh expects us to live by, in order to refine ourselves into a bride worthy of Him. However, it would be a mistake to think of the Torah as nothing more than a set of laws that we can use as a checklist for righteous living, because the Torah is so much more than that. If we do not approach the Torah as a reflection of Yahweh's heart, we miss a lot, because we fail to grasp the extent of Yahweh's love, His mercy, and His sense of self-sacrifice.

Yahweh's Torah (instructions) can be subdivided into statutes, ordinances, judgments, etc.

Melachim Bet (2nd Kings) 17:37

37 "And the statutes, the ordinances, the law (i.e., rules) and the commandment which He wrote for you, you shall be careful to observe forever; you shall not fear other gods."

Just like in human society, statutes and ordinances are for normal, everyday situations. For example, we might have "no dumping" statutes, and ordinances that tell us what we can and cannot do. However, His "judgments" tell us what to do when things have gone wrong. When the situation is all messed up, and the normal statutes, ordinances, laws, and decrees cannot be applied as they were intended, now the only solution is for a judge (and in this case, Yahweh) to step in and make a determination as to how to minimize the damage. If we revisit Deuteronomy, the woman has been put away for adultery, but rather than coming back to her man, she has gone ahead and remarried (although she should not have done that). We know that this is the case because, as we saw earlier, the word for "uncleanness" in verse 1 refers to sexual uncleanness (i.e., adultery).

Deuteronomy 24:1-4
 1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some (sexual) uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,
 2 when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife,
 3 if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife,
 4 then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before YHWH, and you shall not bring sin on the land which YHWH your Elohim is giving you as an inheritance."

(1) כִּי יִקַּח אִישׁ אִשָּׁה וּבְעָלָהּ | וְהָיָה אִם לֹא תִמְצָא חֵן בְּעֵינָיו כִּי מִצָּא בָּהּ עֲרוּת דָּבָר וְכָתַב לָהּ סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוֹת וְנָתַן בְּיָדָהּ וְשָׁלַחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ :
 (2) וַיֵּצֵאָה מִבֵּיתוֹ | וְהָלְכָה וְהָיְתָה לְאִישׁ אֲחֵר :
 (3) וּשְׁנֵאָה הָאִישׁ הָאֲחֵרוֹן וְכָתַב לָהּ סֵפֶר כְּרִיתוֹת וְנָתַן בְּיָדָהּ וְשָׁלַחָהּ מִבֵּיתוֹ | אוֹ כִּי יָמוּת הָאִישׁ הָאֲחֵרוֹן אֲשֶׁר לָקַחָהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה :
 (4) לֹא יוּכַל בְּעָלָהּ הָרִאשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר שָׁלַחָהּ לָשׁוּב לְקַחְתָּהּ לְהִיּוֹת לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה אַחֲרֵי אֲשֶׁר הִטְמֵאָה כִּי תוֹעֵבָה הוּא לִפְנֵי יְהוָה | וְלֹא תַחֲטִיֵּא אֶת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר יְהוָה אֱלֹהֶיךָ נָתַן לְךָ נַחֲלָה

Now to understand Yahweh's heart, in any army, new recruits go to basic training, to learn what the rules are. This is similar to how Yahweh "laid down the law" in Leviticus 20:10, establishing the penalty for adultery, which is death by stoning.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 20:10

10 "The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death."

However, because we all sin, we all need Yahweh's mercy—therefore Yahweh gave us Deuteronomy 24, which shows us how we can correct an adulterous wife, by putting her away. In a sense this is better than stoning, because it shows more mercy. Deuteronomy 24 is a *judgment* because it shows us the best solution for a bad situation. It also gives us further direction if our wayward bride complicates matters by marrying someone else, rather than returning to her man.

While Yahweh has impeccably high standards, and while He sets the penalty for breaking a marriage vow at death, He also wants His bride to be compassionate. This kind of compassion is why Yosef (Joseph) the half-father of Yeshua was called "righteous" (or "just") when he decided to put his betrothed away (rather than stone her), when he learned that she was already pregnant.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 1:19-21

19 Then Yoseph her husband, being a just ("righteous") man, and not wanting to make her a public example (by having her stoned), was minded to put her away secretly.

In this case, because they had not already married, Yoseph was going to put Miriam (Mary) away forever. This was lawful because although Yoseph and Miriam were betrothed, they had not yet consummated the marriage. What this shows is that while all marriages are inviolable covenants, they also follow the same rules as contract law, which requires an offer, and then acceptance, and then an exchange of "consideration" of some kind. In this case the offer was to marry for life, the acceptance was just that, and the consideration was the consummation (i.e., the first sexual act). Since the marriage had not yet been consummated, there had been no exchange of consideration, and therefore they were not yet in covenant. It was perfectly lawful for Yosef to back out of the deal on the basis that things were not as Yoseph had been led to believe.

A contract can have any terms that all parties agree to, and it can last for any length of time they agree to. However, covenants go one step beyond this, in that covenants are for life. Because marriage is a covenant, Yeshua tells us that marriage lasts for life.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 19:3-9

3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'

5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?

6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what Elohim has joined together, let not man separate."

Marriage is not established by just any sexual act, but rather by offer, acceptance, and consummation (or what lawyers call “consideration”). Once these three things occur, the terms of the contract are binding. For example, the offer King Shaul gave David for the hand of his daughter Michal was one hundred foreskins of the Philistines (Palestinians), which David paid.

Shemuel Aleph (1st Samuel) 18:25-27

25 Then Shaul said, "Thus you shall say to David: 'The king does not desire any dowry but one hundred foreskins of the Philistines, to take vengeance on the king's enemies.'" But Saul thought to make David fall by the hand of the Philistines.

26 So when his servants told David these words, it pleased David well to become the king's son-in-law. Now the days had not expired;

27 therefore David arose and went, he and his men, and killed two hundred men of the Philistines. And David brought their foreskins, and they gave them in full count to the king, that he might become the king's son-in-law. Then Shaul gave him Michal his daughter as a wife.

After the Protestant Reformation, western society lost all sense of the sanctity of marriage. Marriage is a set-apart institution. Once we take a wife, it is our job to love her, just as much as Messiah loves us.

Ephesim (Ephesians) 5:25-33

25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Messiah also loved the assembly and gave Himself for her,

26 that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word,

27 that He might present her to Himself a glorious assembly, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be set apart and without blemish.

28 So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself.

29 For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Master does the assembly.

30 For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones.

31 "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh."

32 This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Messiah and the assembly.

33 Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

The western misconception that divorce is permanent redefines the terms of the covenant. It fails to capture the essence of the term “wedding,” which calls for a man and his wife to become one single flesh.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 2:24

24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.

When we redefine marriage as lasting less than life, we are essentially asserting that our own authority is greater than Yahweh's. Not only is it wrong, it is effectively rebellion against Elohim's law.

But what happens when things go *really* wrong? And what happens when we do not live in the land of Israel, and the Torah is not our constitution? In order to know how we can apply the Torah in these kinds of situations, it will be necessary for us to understand Yahweh's heart. Then we can understand what principles to apply in the kind of "train wreck" situations in which so many of our people live today.

Corporate Responsibility: Foundation of Torah

Corporate responsibility is an essential part of keeping the Torah. In Yahweh's eyes, if the men are not willing to implement justice corporately, then they are not keeping Torah—and they are just kidding themselves if they say they are, because they are not.

One of the reasons Yahweh gives the power and authority to the men is that He holds them responsible. They are to use their strength to make sure that His instructions are carried out, and that justice prevails. They are to make sure that each man's wife is taken care of in the same manner that they would like their own daughters to be treated.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 22:13-19

13 "If any man takes a wife, and goes in to her, and detests her,

14 and charges her with shameful conduct, and brings a bad name on her, and says, 'I took this woman, and when I came to her I found she was not a virgin,'

15 then the father and mother of the young woman shall take and bring out the evidence of the young woman's virginity to the elders of the city at the gate.

16 And the young woman's father shall say to the elders, 'I gave my daughter to this man as wife, and he detests her.

17 Now he has charged her with shameful conduct, saying, "I found your daughter was not a virgin," and yet these are the evidences of my daughter's virginity.' And they shall spread the cloth before the elders of the city.

18 Then the elders of that city shall take that man and punish (i.e., beat) him;

19 and they shall fine him one hundred shekels of silver and give them to the father of the young woman, because he has brought a bad name on a virgin of Israel. And she shall be his wife; he cannot divorce her all his days."

In this passage, a hypothetical Israelite man takes an Israelite woman as his wife, and later tries to get out of the marriage by saying she was not a virgin (when she was). In technical terms he is trying to claim that the contract is null and void because the terms and conditions of the contract were not met (i.e., that she was not a virgin). It was lawful for Yosef to back out of his marriage with Miriam when Miriam was pregnant, but in this case, the investigation proves that she was a virgin (i.e., she lived up to her end of the bargain). The solution here is for the men of the town to take the man out and punish him (which is a polite way of saying that they are to beat him within an inch of his life).

Had the woman truly not been a virgin, and the man's heart was hard, it would have been lawful for him either to put her away, or have her stoned. However, since she was proven a virgin, the men of the community have a responsibility to ensure that either he lives up to his end of the agreement (and loves her as he loves himself), or they need to take him outside the camp, and stone him.

The Christian West has a concept of privacy that does not exist in Israel. In order for the Torah to work, people have to hold each other accountable; and in order for people to hold each other accountable, we all need to take responsibility for what others do. The “polite” English saying, “That is none of your business!” does not apply in Israel, because people understand that a little bit of leaven leavens the whole lump, and what one man does affects everyone else in the nation. That is why, in Israel, people make no apologies about sticking their noses deeply into everyone else’s affairs. It is understood that the purpose of being aware of others is not to be malicious or to gossip, but to see to it that if an injustice is done, it is promptly addressed. This is also why Shaul named names when it came not just to giving compliments, but also in pointing out those who were not being brotherly.

TimaTheus Bet (2nd Timothy) 4:14-16

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May Yahweh repay him according to his works.

15 You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.

16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.

[For more information, please see the study, “Lashon Hara: The Evil Tongue.”]

It is ironic that the idea of corporate responsibility is ridiculed in the Messianic movement, because it is part of the Torah. When even just one man sins, Yahweh holds our whole nation accountable, and He punishes all of us. For example, consider what happened at Ai.

Yehoshua (Joshua) 7:1-5

1 But the children of Israel committed a trespass regarding the accursed things, for Achan the son of Carmi, the son of Zabdi, the son of Zerah, of the tribe of Judah, took of the accursed things; so the anger of Yahweh burned against the children of Israel.

2 Now Yehoshua sent men from Jericho to Ai, which is beside Beth Aven, on the east side of Bethel, and spoke to them, saying, "Go up and spy out the country." So the men went up and spied out Ai.

3 And they returned to Yehoshua and said to him, "Do not let all the people go up, but let about two or three thousand men go up and attack Ai. Do not weary all the people there, for the people of Ai are few."

4 So about three thousand men went up there from the people, but they fled before the men of Ai.

5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

Whether we want to admit it or not, we are all subject to collective punishment, and we are all paying a price for others’ sins. There is little we can do about this while we are still in the dispersion. However, when we return back home to the land and we establish a Torah government, we will once again have Yahweh’s Torah as the supreme law of the courts (and the schools and media). At that time we will once again be able to establish a sense of corporate responsibility, so that women and children are no longer abandoned.

I used to wonder why Yahweh created an adversary, when an adversary seeks to destroy us. Then I realized that we can rejoice in the existence of an adversary because his function is really to bring us together, and to unify us. As in sports, when we have an opponent, we have to learn how to work well together. The presence of an enemy forces us to put aside our personal differences, and we all work together as a team. It brings out the best in us.

Our forefathers said, "United we stand, divided we fall," and when I joined the army, our drill instructors would hold the entire unit accountable for anything that went wrong. At first we thought that was unfair, until we realized they were trying to teach us the need to unite as one. They were trying to help us understand that a chain is only as strong as its weakest link, and if even just one man is remiss in his duties, it can spell death or bodily mutilation for the whole. By placing the monkey on our backs, they would get us to order ourselves. This was realistic in every way, because when an enemy attacks, he looks for the weakest link, and by exploiting that weak link he is able to kill or incapacitate many others who are doing their jobs.

Because we men have not done our jobs, and because we men have not treated our women the right way, Satan has been able to convince the women that it is not safe to submit to male headship. This has helped lead to such evils as "no-fault divorce" and the general destruction of male headship in the Christian world. Because we are subject to collective punishment, and because we all pay a price when others sin, these evils will be with us until we come together as one, and show the women that we will not allow our brothers to abandon them.

Exception to the Rules: Marriages to Unbelievers

In Scripture, purity is essential. We have a requirement to set apart (or keep pure) anything that belongs to Yahweh. We are to keep our bodies, our marriages, our families, our assemblies, His temple, and our form of worship pure. This rule holds true no matter where we are, but the closer we physically come to the Temple Mount, the more urgency this principle takes on.

Yahweh tells us that when we live in the land, we are not to enter into any covenant with those who do not believe on Him, lest Yahweh's wrath be aroused against us, and He destroys us suddenly.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 7:1-4

1 "When Yahweh your Elohim brings you into the land which you go to possess, and has cast out many nations before you, the Hittites and the Girgashites and the Amorites and the Canaanites and the Perizzites and the Hivites and the Jebusites, seven nations greater and mightier than you,

2 and when Yahweh your Elohim delivers them over to you, you shall conquer them and utterly destroy them. You shall make no covenant with them nor show mercy to them.

3 Nor shall you make marriages with them. You shall not give your daughter to their son, nor take their daughter for your son.

4 For they will turn your sons away from following Me, to serve other elohim; so the anger of Yahweh will be aroused against you and destroy you suddenly."

As emotionally difficult as it may seem, we may not be married to a nonbeliever when we live in His land. When Yahweh makes it possible for us to return home, and we go back home, then either our nonbelieving spouse needs to convert, or we need to put our nonbelieving spouse away. These are the only two options. This is why, when the children of Israel were returning from Babylon, Ezra correctly told the people to send away any wives and children who worshipped foreign elohim (and who refused to convert).

Ezra 10:2-3

2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our Elohim, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this.

3 Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our Elohim to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our Elohim; and let it be done according to the Torah."

Obviously, whether we live in the land of Israel or not, we should take care not to enter into marriage with unbelievers, because that is to be unequally yoked.

Qorintim Bet (2nd Corinthians) 6:14-17

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Messiah with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of Elohim with idols? For you are the temple of the living Elohim. As Elohim has said: "I will dwell in them

And walk among them.

**I will be their Elohim,
And they shall be My people."**

17 Therefore,

**"Come out from among them
And be separate, says Yahweh."**

Unequal yokings happen all the time. It also happens that two unbelievers get married and one of them later gets saved (or one of them finds Hebrew roots). What do we do in these cases? Shaul's advice is that when we are in the dispersion we should not divorce, but that each one should remain in the calling in which he is called. That is, we should remain as we are. If the unbeliever chooses to depart, then we do not need to wait for him or her to return (because our original requirement is not to be unequally yoked). However, unless it is a question of moving to the land, we are not supposed to be the ones to leave. Rather, we should seek every opportunity to be a good witness for Yahweh and Yeshua.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 7:10-16

10 Now to the married I command, yet not I but Yahweh: A wife is not to depart from her husband.

11 But even if she does depart, let her remain unmarried or be reconciled to her husband. And a husband is not to divorce his wife.

12 But to the rest I, not Yahweh, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.

13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are set apart.

15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But Elohim has called us to peace.

16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

The rules for the dispersion are different than the rules for the land because the requirement to keep the land from being defiled does not come into play. There is no urgency to divorce because there is no defilement of Yahweh's land. Therefore in cases like this, it is Shaul's opinion that unless there is some compelling reason to do otherwise, as long as we are in the dispersion we should remain as we are.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 7:26-28

26 I suppose therefore that this is good because of the present distress — that it is good for a man to remain as he is:

27 Are you bound to a wife? Do not seek to be loosed. Are you loosed from a wife? Do not seek a wife.

28 But even if you do marry, you have not sinned; and if a virgin marries, she has not sinned. Nevertheless such will have trouble in the flesh, but I would spare you.

There are, however, cases in which there is probably a compelling reason either to divorce or legally separate.

For example, if your wife joins Al Qaeda and starts shouting "Death to the infidels!" while sharpening her butcher knife (Elohim forbid), it may be necessary to seek legal separation or divorce.

In real life, if your husband begins sodomizing your children (Elohim forbid), that is a compelling reason to seek legal separation or divorce, because in the land of Israel under a Torah government such a crime would be cause for death by stoning, which would release the woman from the marriage. We cannot apply Torah justice while we are in the dispersion, so the principle is that we should do the best that we can for the health, safety, and welfare of the children. In the dispersion that probably means legal separation or divorce.

Right Rulings: Concubines and Slaves

Hopefully Israel will not see any more concubines or slaves, but because it will help to give clarity, let us look at the legal rights of concubines and slaves here. [We discuss concubines and slaves more generally in the study "Polygyny, Concubines, and Kingship."]

Under most normal circumstances, when dealing with Israelites who have full rights as citizens, marriage is supposed to last forever. However, in the case of slaves and concubines this was not always the case because not all parties entering into the contract had full legal ownership of themselves (therefore they were not able to enter into legal contracts).

In general, Yahweh loves freedom and redemption; He hates slavery. He tells us that He wants us to "break off every yoke."

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 58:6

**6 "Is this not the fast that I have chosen:
To loose the bonds of wickedness,
To undo the heavy burdens,
To let the oppressed go free,
And that you break every yoke?"**

Yahweh is idealistic, but He is also realistic. He knew that no matter how perfect an example He set, sometimes His people's hearts would be hard, and they would choose to take concubines or slaves. For this reason He gives us certain judgments and right rulings with regards to these awkward, awful situations.

If a man became a slave when he already had a wife, then his wife was supposed to go out with him at the end of his service because his covenant with her existed prior to coming into slavery. However, if his master gave him a wife after he entered into slavery (and they had children together), then she and her children were not to go out with him at the end of his service. For one thing, the marriage may not have been entered into on a free will basis (which is a necessary condition of covenanting). For another thing, as a slave he did not have full legal rights to himself, therefore he was not able to pledge himself in a covenant.

Shemote (Exodus) 21:1-11

1 "Now these are the judgments which you shall set before them:

2 If you buy a Hebrew servant, he shall serve six years; and in the seventh he shall go out free and pay nothing.

3 If he comes in by himself, he shall go out by himself; if he comes in married, then his wife shall go out with him.

4 If his master has given him a wife, and she has borne him sons or daughters, the wife and

her children shall be her master's, and he shall go out by himself.

5 But if the servant plainly says, 'I love my master, my wife, and my children; I will not go out free,'

6 then his master shall bring him to the judges. He shall also bring him to the door, or to the doorpost, and his master shall pierce his ear with an awl; and he shall serve him forever.

If the man loved his wife and children, he had the option of becoming his master's slave forever. Other than that, he had to leave his wife and children behind.

Female slaves were to be treated differently. They did not have the right to go out at the end of six years as the male slaves did. Perhaps it is because a woman was thought to need some kind of a covering, and her father had transferred that duty to her master. The exact meaning of this passage is disputed, but in this case it seems likely that the daughter was sold as a concubine (i.e., as a wife without full legal rights).

7 "And if a man sells his daughter to be a female slave, she shall not go out (at the end of six years) as the male slaves do.

8 If she does not please her master, who has betrothed her to himself, then he shall let her be redeemed. He shall have no right to sell her to a foreign people, since he has dealt deceitfully with her.

9 And if he has betrothed her to his son, he shall deal with her according to the custom of daughters.

10 If he takes another wife, he shall not diminish her food, her clothing, and her marriage rights.

11 And if he does not do these three for her, then she shall go out free, without paying money."

Historically, a poor man might sell his daughter as a concubine to a rich man. Because she was technically a slave, she did not have full legal rights to treatment as a wife under the Torah, and her master could send her away for reasons other than sexual immorality. However, if he did so, her father was not obligated to repay the bride price. Further, if the rich man took another wife and then did not give her adequate food and clothing, and/or did not treat her as a wife should be treated (with love), then she was allowed to go free, and her father would not have to repay the bride price.

Another woman who had less than full legal protection under the covenant was Hagar.

B'reisheet (Genesis) 21:9-12

9 And Sarah saw the son of Hagar the Egyptian, whom she had borne to Avraham, scoffing.

10 Therefore she said to Avraham, "Cast out this bondwoman and her son; for the son of this bondwoman shall not be heir with my son, namely with Yitzhak."

11 And the matter was very displeasing in Avraham's sight because of his son.

12 But Elohim said to Avraham, "Do not let it be displeasing in your sight because of the lad or because of your bondwoman. Whatever Sarah has said to you, listen to her voice; for in Yitzhak your seed shall be called."

This passage shows us a deep insight into Yahweh's heart. Hagar was a bondwoman. She was never Avraham's wife, but only served as a surrogate mother

for Sarah. Although Yahweh hates slavery and He hates sending away, this passage shows us that He hates slavery more. Yahweh told Avraham to listen to Sarah's voice, and to send Hagar and Ishmael away. This was not only because Yahweh had a plan to make Ishmael into a great nation, but also because it would mean freedom for Hagar and Ishmael.

Where Are We Now?

It is shocking to realize how many Messianics believe we can divorce our wives "for just any reason."

Mattityahu (Matthew) 19:3

3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

Yahweh tells us that He hates divorce. It covers His altar with weeping because it creates so many victims. How can anyone not intuitively recognize this fact?

Malachi 2:13-16

13 And this is the second thing you do: you cover the altar of Yahweh with tears, with weeping and crying; so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.

14 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because YHWH has been witness between you and the wife of your youth (i.e., your first wife), with whom you have dealt treacherously. Yet she is your companion and your wife by covenant.

15 But did He not make them one, having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one? He seeks righteous offspring. Therefore take heed to

your spirit, and let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 "For YHWH Elohim of Israel says that He hates divorce, for it covers one's garment with violence," says YHWH of hosts. "Therefore take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously."

Just because we keep the Sabbath and festival days, we are not permitted to abandon our wives and children. That would be legalistic hypocrisy. How could Yahweh ever be pleased with that?

The Messianic movement today is filled with the exact same kind of hypocrisy Yahweh said that He hates. It wearies Him that we would pretend to be so righteous simply because we keep Sabbaths, new moons, and festival days, when our “garments are covered with violence” and our “hands are full of blood” at having put our brothers and sisters away wrongly.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 1:13-15

13 Bring no more futile sacrifices; incense is an abomination to Me. The New Moons, the Sabbaths, and the calling of assemblies — I cannot endure iniquity and the sacred meeting.

14 Your New Moons and your appointed feasts My soul hates; they are a trouble to Me, I am weary of bearing them.

15 When you spread out your hands, I will hide My eyes from you. Even though you make many prayers, I will not hear. Your hands are full of blood.

Two thousand years after Yeshua's sacrifice, we His people (who claim to be filled with His Spirit) still practice the same kind of “easy divorce” that Yeshua decried in

the first century. We still adhere to Beit Hillel. How will we escape His chastisement?

We don't know what happened to Gomer, but we know what will happen with Ephraim. Yahweh will bring her back home to the land of Israel in spite of herself, and then she will look upon herself and be ashamed. Her evil heart of stone will be turned into a heart of flesh. Then she will love her spouse as she loves herself.

Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 36:24-32

24 For I will take you from among the nations, gather you out of all countries, and bring you into your own land.

25 Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols.

26 I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh.

27 I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will keep My judgments and do them.

28 Then you shall dwell in the land that I gave to your fathers; you shall be My people, and I will be your Elohim.

29 I will deliver you from all your uncleannesses. I will call for the grain and multiply it, and bring no famine upon you.

30 And I will multiply the fruit of your trees and the increase of your fields, so that you need never again bear the reproach of famine among the nations.

31 Then you will remember your evil ways and your deeds that were not good; and you will loathe yourselves in your own sight, for your iniquities and your abominations.

32 Not for your sake do I do this," says YHWH Elohim, "let it be known to you. Be ashamed and confounded for your own ways, O house of Israel!"

More than just knowing Torah, we need to live Torah. We need to develop YHWH's heart. We need to put aside our own selfish lusts and desires, so we can put others first. Without this, there is no Torah.

Help us to know our sins, Father. And then please help us repent of them, that we might be conformed to the image of Your Son. Please help us to have Your heart, that we may serve You all our days.

In Yeshua's name, amein.

About Forgiveness

Our religion is also a spiritual path. In addition to the physical rites and rituals YHWH tells us to perform, He also wants us to refine ourselves spiritually. One of the ways He wants us to purify ourselves is by learning to forgive all those who have ever done us any wrong.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 6:14-15

14 "For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

15 But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses."

Forgiveness is extremely difficult for humans, perhaps even impossible in our flesh. Forgiveness takes real humility, which is the realization of how flawed we truly are. Without realizing how imperfect we are it is not really possible to forgive our neighbor, for we end up judging his faults, and overlooking our own.

Luqa (Luke) 6:37-38

37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

As our fathers say, one of the hardest things about any business is minding our own. Since the natural use of the eye is to look outward, and to spot flaws in others, we have a difficult time learning to refocus our critical eyes on ourselves. If we want mercy and graciousness shown to us in the judgment, we have to extend this same kind of mercy and graciousness to others here and now.

Yaakov (James) 2:12-13

12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the law of liberty.

13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment.

While Yeshua tells us that there are times for righteous judgment (e.g., John 7:24), mercy generally triumphs over judgment because we humans are not always capable of the same impartiality YHWH has, in that we are not detached. When caught up in disputes with our brothers, our natural human tendency is to ignore our own flaws and failings, and focus harshly on theirs.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 7:3-5

3 "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?

4 Or how can you say to your brother, 'Let me remove the speck from your eye'; but look, a plank is in your own eye!

5 Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."

When we have been hurt, our natural tendency is to want to strike back in vengeance. While it can be exceedingly difficult, we must not take revenge on our brethren in the heat of the moment.

Romim (Romans) 12:18-21

19 Beloved, do not avenge yourselves, but rather give place to wrath; for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says YHWH.

20 Therefore:

"If your enemy is hungry, feed him;

If he is thirsty, give him a drink;

For in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head."

21 Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good.

While there are times for the nation of Israel to fight against its mortal enemies, whenever a fellow Israelite wrongs us, we must remember that YHWH reserves vengeance unto Himself.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 32:35

35 Vengeance is Mine,

and recompense;

Their foot shall slip in due time;

For the day of their calamity is at hand,

And the things to come hasten upon them.'

Because YHWH's Spirit dwells in us, whenever anyone does evil to us, they are essentially doing it to Him; and since He controls the universe, they must repent, or someday their foot will slip. And yet we are to pray for them, that they may repent and be forgiven.

Luqa (Luke) 23:34

34 Then Yeshua said, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do."

Typically speaking, those who do evil do not usually realize that what they are doing is evil. Even witches and Satanists do not always understand that what they are doing is ultimately wrong, or else they would not do it. If Yeshua can ask His Father to forgive those who put Him to death in a cruel and merciless way, then how can we not forgive those who have done evil to us, perhaps not realizing that what they are doing is truly wrong?

The Torah tells us that judges and judicial authorities are to punish an eye for eye and tooth for tooth; yet why is this not the same rule we should apply in our own lives? Simply, while hard justice is necessary at the societal level, it is superb spiritual refinement for us to extend forgiveness to brothers who have done us evil.

Luqa (Luke) 6:27-36

27 "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

29 To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

30 Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.

31 And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

It may seem unfair to have to forgive those who we know have done us wrong on purpose, but Yeshua tells us that it is all the more important. Anyone can be nice to those who are nice to them; that is nothing special. What sets one apart from the crowd is to treat all men with mercy, even when they do not return it.

32 "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.

35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High. For He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful."

But how can we forgive those who have purposefully misused us? Most of us can think of something that was done, either to us or to someone we love, where the perpetrator acted with malice, premeditation, or total inconsideration for others as human beings. Perhaps we were lied to, stolen from, raped, molested, or betrayed. How can we forgive them?

In the study "About Predestination" (which is part of *Nazarene Scripture Studies, Volume 1*), we saw that YHWH is so fully in charge of the world that nothing at

all happens without His approval. In situations where either we or our nation are suffering evils done to us by another, it can be easy to get all wrapped up in the exigencies of the moment, and forget that YHWH is the one allowing Satan to do it to us, so as to turn us all back to Him.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 9:12-13

12 The Syrians before and the Philistines behind; and they shall devour Israel with an open mouth. For all this His anger is not turned away, but His hand is stretched out still.

13 For the people do not turn to Him who strikes them, nor do they seek YHWH of hosts.

YHWH is completely in charge. The reason He allows evil to happen to us is usually to stop our complacency and draw us closer to Him, so we will go back to seeking His face.

Divre HaYamim Bet (2 Chron.) 7:13-14

13 When I shut up heaven and there is no rain, or command the locusts to devour the land, or send pestilence among My people,

14 if My people who are called by My name will humble themselves, and pray and seek My face, and turn from their wicked ways, then I will hear from heaven, and will forgive their sin and heal their land.

Whenever a brother does something bad to us, rather than hold a grudge, we need to forgive our brother and pray to YHWH. Similarly, if we are seeking YHWH, but

then remember that one of our brothers holds something against us, we need to do all we can to be reconciled with our brother; only then will YHWH accept our gift.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:23-24

23 "Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, 24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

Yeshua tells us that if we do not forgive our brothers, YHWH will not forgive us for our sins.

Marqaus (Mark) 11:25-26

25 "And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. 26 But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses."

If we do all that we can to make things right and our brother still does not forgive us, then at least for the time being, that is no longer our issue. However, if we want our sins forgiven, it ought to be clear that our top priority is to make things right with our brothers, and to forgive others for what they have done to us.

How important is it to forgive our brothers, and not hate them? John tells us that whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and he does not have eternal life dwelling in him.

Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 3:14-15

14 We know that we have passed from death to life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love his brother abides in death.

15 Whoever hates his brother is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life abiding in him.

Yeshua died to take our punishment, so that we might be forgiven. No matter what happens to us, Yeshua expects us to learn to walk just as He walked, forgiving others for what they did to Him. If we are unwilling or unable to do that, then it should be clear that we do not have His Spirit within us, but some other spirit; and we need to seek His face through fasting and prayer.

Tehillim (Psalms) 51:6

6 Behold, You desire truth in the inward parts, and in the hidden part You will make me to know wisdom.

Denial is not forgiveness, and neither is justifying the other person's behavior, or explaining it away. If you are aware that someone did you evil, whether they did it consciously or subconsciously, trying to deny that the evil took place will only stand in the way of the healing that needs to take place. YHWH is not pleased if we only pretend to forgive.

Because YHWH is pure Spirit, nothing is hidden from His sight. He knows what our brothers have done to us, as well as what we did to bring the evil down on ourselves. Quite often we can be eager to deny that we had any part in the evil that came upon us, but even Iyov (Job) had things to learn from his trials, though at first he

seemed completely righteous in his own eyes, and his actions had seemingly been flawless.

Iyov (Job) 32:1-2

1 So these three men ceased answering Iyov, because he was righteous in his own eyes.

2 Then the wrath of Elihu, the son of Barachel the Buzite, of the family of Ram, was aroused against Iyov; his wrath was aroused because he justified himself rather than Elohim.

YHWH knows what He wants to teach us by allowing the adversary to bring us to harm. Therefore we should not be surprised that YHWH loves both us and those who have sinned against us. We should also not be surprised that He wants us to pray not for revenge, but that our brother repents and is restored to favor.

Iyov (Job) 42:8

8 Now therefore, take for yourselves seven bulls and seven rams, go to My servant Iyov, and offer up for yourselves a burnt offering; and My servant Iyov shall pray for you. For I will accept him, lest I deal with you according to your folly; because you have not spoken of Me what is right, as My servant Iyov has."

When talking about forgiveness, it is important that we differentiate between our domestic enemies in Israel and the mortal enemies of Israel; for while YHWH does not usually ask that we pray for the latter, He definitely wants us to pray for the former.

While the dream that YHWH will take revenge upon those within Israel who have done us harm might seem sweet and savory, it is an evil desire that Satan takes great delight in; and we need to pray that it be taken from our hearts, for YHWH takes no delight in the death of the wicked. The only thing YHWH delights in is that the sinners should turn from their ways and seek Him.

Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 33:11

11 "Say to them: 'As I live,' says YHWH Elohim, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but that the wicked turn from his way and live. Turn, turn from your evil ways! For why should you die, O House of Israel?'"

A newborn baby thinks of itself as the center of the world; likewise, when we first get saved we can think of ourselves as the center of YHWH's world. We might believe that we are the only ones YHWH cares for, and we might forget that what YHWH really wants is for us to pray for all of our brothers.

Shemuel Aleph (1st Samuel) 12:23

23 "Moreover, as for me, far be it from me that I should sin against YHWH in ceasing to pray for you; but I will teach you the good and the right way."

We can fool ourselves in our hearts, justifying our irrational hatreds for those who have done us harm, yet this is not pleasing to YHWH. Justified or not, he who hates his brother abides in darkness.

Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 2:9-11

9 He who says he is in the light, and hates his brother, is in darkness until now.

10 He who loves his brother abides in the light, and there is no cause for stumbling in him.

11 But he who hates his brother is in darkness and walks in darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes.

YHWH looks upon us as children who need to undergo many experiences and trials in order to reach spiritual maturity. Just as no parent would be pleased with the death of a child who had turned to the wrong way, so too YHWH is grieved when one of His children goes astray. In our anger over being wronged, we can easily forget that even if YHWH is not happy with the way the offending party is behaving, He still loves him just as much as He loves us.

Luqa (Luke) 17:3-4

3 "Take heed to yourselves: If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.

4 And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day returns to you, saying, 'I repent,' you shall forgive him."

The desire to see YHWH take gratuitous revenge on our behalf is common, but evil. The important thing is to bear firmly in mind that we ourselves are flawed, and that we depend daily upon YHWH to forgive our sins. Without such forgiveness in each moment, we cannot hope to see the kingdom.

Ephesians 4:26-27

**26 "Be angry, and do not sin." Do not let the sun go down on your wrath,
27 nor give place to the devil.**

The most important thing to remember in all of this is that our flesh is evil; therefore it is impossible for us to forgive.

Luqa (Luke) 5:20-24

**20 When He saw their faith, He said to him, "Man, your sins are forgiven you."
21 And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, "Who is this who speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins but Elohim alone?"
22 But when Yeshua perceived their thoughts, He answered and said to them, "Why are you reasoning in your hearts?
23 Which is easier, to say, 'Your sins are forgiven you,' or to say, 'Rise up and walk'?
24 But that you may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" -- He said to the man who was paralyzed, "I say to you, arise, take up your bed, and go to your house."**

The scribes and the Pharisees had it right: only YHWH Elohim has the power to forgive sins. The reason that Yeshua was able to forgive sins was that He had the Spirit of Elohim within Him.

Without the Spirit of Elohim in us, we are unable to forgive sins; and whenever we are unable to forgive

what our brother has done to us, we know that we do not have the Spirit of Elohim within us.

YHWH desires that all might be saved and draw closer unto Him. If we ever find ourselves praying against another brother or a sister, seeking revenge or that YHWH take revenge for us, we need to stop and pray, for when we are without forgiveness, we are not inside the kingdom.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 18:21-35

**21 Then Kepha came to Him and said, "Adon, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"
22 Yeshua said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."**

Since we all err in many things, it is not for us to judge our brothers. We are to confront them in patience and love whenever they do things that are hurtful, but apart from making decisions as to whether or not we can allow them into our fellowships, we are not to judge or hold grudges. If YHWH forgives us for all of the evil we have done (for which His only Son had to die), then certainly we can forgive others whatever debts they owe us.

**23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.
24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.
25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold,**

with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'

29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.

33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'

34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

And what if our brother does not apologize? There are two separate levels of forgiveness. The first level we must come to on our own, whether or not we ever receive an apology, simply so that our heart does not abide in the darkness of grudges, hatred, and death. The second level merely determines whether or not we can safely fellowship with him any longer.

Whether we ever receive an apology from our brother or not, we need to be the repentant servant who takes compassion on his fellow servants, forgiving them all they owe.

Lashon Hara: The Evil Tongue

Traditional Judaism teaches a doctrine against *lashon hara* (“La-shone Ha-rah”), or the “evil tongue.” As we will see, if this doctrine is applied in a spirit of love, it can be very good. However, if it is applied in some other spirit, it can be very destructive.

Lashon hara (לשון הרע) was originally intended as a decree against gossip. It is based on Leviticus 19:15 and 16 which tells us not to bear tales or take a stand against the life of our neighbor.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 19:16

16 “You shall not go about as a talebearer among your people; nor shall you take a stand against the life of your neighbor: I am YHWH.”

Additionally, the ninth commandment tells us not to bear false witness against our neighbors.

Shemote (Exodus) 20:16

16 “You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.”

That it is listed as one of the Ten Commandments shows us how strongly YHWH feels about false witnesses. However, the Jewish doctrine against lashon hara goes even further: It tells us that we should not even speak disparagingly against our neighbors. This idea is derived from how Miriam was punished for speaking disparagingly against Moshe (Moses).

Bemidbar (Numbers) 12:1-2

1 Then Miriam and Aharon spoke against Moshe because of the Cushite woman whom he had married; for he had married a Cushite woman.

2 So they said, “Has YHWH indeed spoken only through Moshe? Has He not spoken through us also?” And YHWH heard it.

What Miriam said was essentially true: YHWH had not only spoken through Moshe, but had also spoken through others in the congregation of Israel. However, since Miriam’s speech was not constructive, but disparaging and divisive, YHWH considered it “evil.”

While both Miriam and Aharon were present, Miriam is mentioned first in the narrative. Since Miriam was the one punished, some scholars believe she was the one who initiated the slander. Whatever the case, Miriam’s punishment for speaking against the earthly leader of the nation of Israel was to be afflicted with *tzaraas* (“leprosy”) for seven days.

Bemidbar (Numbers) 12:9-11

10 And when the cloud departed from above the tabernacle, suddenly Miriam became leprous, as white as snow. Then Aharon turned toward Miriam, and there she was, a leper.

Whether in speech, writing, or other forms (such as electronic), Judaism teaches that any communication is almost always “evil” if it meets the following four criteria:

1. It says something negative about a person or party

2. It is something not previously known to the public
3. It is not seriously intended to correct or improve a negative situation
4. It is true

If all four of these criteria are met, the communication is almost certainly lashon hara. However, Judaism also teaches a fifth stipulation: that such communication may even be compulsory if one is aware of the possibility of future harm coming to another person. In those cases, one is ethically required to warn the other person, to keep him from coming to harm. As we will see, this is the key to understanding how the doctrine of lashon hara applies to the Renewed Covenant ("New Testament").

Traditional Judaism considers lashon hara to be one of the most serious of all sins. Traditional Judaism also tells us not to confuse lashon hara with *motzei shem ra* (pure slander), which is speaking derisive things which are not true. As the rabbis reason, if speaking that which is true (but is negative, divisive, and/or derisive) is one of the worst of all sins, then how much more severe is the sin of fabricating a complete and total lie against another human being?

Some believing scholars question whether the doctrine of lashon hara is accurate, or whether it applies in a Renewed Covenant context. These scholars point out that if the four (or five) guidelines were applied in their strictest sense, then the apostle Shaul (Paul), Yeshua, and perhaps even YHWH could be condemned for evil speech. However, while none of the apostles were perfect, we know that Yeshua and YHWH are perfect, so let us look at these cases in more detail.

Timoteos Bet (2nd Timothy) 4:14-16

14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May YHWH repay him according to his works.

15 You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.

16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.

In his writings, the apostle Shaul names names. Some commentators suggest that the only way Shaul could have spoken legitimately against Alexander would be if a *beit din* (court) had ruled against Alexander, in Shaul's favor. These tell us that then (and only then) would Shaul be justified in speaking such a true statement that was negative towards Alexander.

While the context of this passage does seem to allow for the possibility that there was a court hearing, this is not proven. It also seems unreasonable that the only reason Shaul could be allowed to communicate the truth to Timothy was that a court had previously ruled in Shaul's favor. Shaul's purpose in writing Timothy was clearly to warn him (and those he shepherded) in order to keep them from coming to harm. This is clearly in keeping with the fifth stipulation, that the speaker is ethically required to pass along information he believes might save others from coming to harm.

The rabbis might consider this statement by Yeshua to be lashon hara.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 15:13-14
13 But He answered and said, "Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted.

14 Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch.”

According to the strict rules of interpretation, Yeshua’s remarks could be considered lashon hara because

1. He says something negative about a person or party
2. He is saying something not previously known to the public
3. He is not directing His attempt to correct the rabbi’s behavior to them
4. His statements are (by definition) true

However, the fifth stipulation also comes into play here. Yeshua is attempting to warn His disciples not to be like the scribes or the Pharisees, in order to keep them from future judgment (i.e., in order to keep them from harm). The reason Yeshua speaks in such a pungent manner may be in order to drive the point home in a way that will stick, therefore Yeshua’s remarks do not qualify as lashon hara.

Here is another statement by Yeshua that traditional Judaism would likely classify as lashon hara.

Yochanan (John) 8:44-47

44 You are of your father the devil, and the desires of your father you want to do. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own resources, for he is a liar and the father of it.

45 But because I tell the truth, you do not believe Me.

46 Which of you convicts Me of sin? And if I tell the truth, why do you not believe Me?

47 He who is of Elohim hears Elohim’s words; therefore you do not hear, because you are not of Elohim.”

Notice that

1. Yeshua is saying something negative about a person or party
2. He is saying something not previously known to the public (i.e., not common knowledge)
3. His statements are (by definition) true
4. He is directing His attempt to correct or improve the rabbi’s behavior to them

Rather than hold secret grudges, Judaism expects people to speak up for what is right. This national ethic of “clearing the air” may derive from Leviticus 19:17 and 18, which commands us to “surely” rebuke our neighbors, so that we bear no sin (i.e., hold no grudges) because of them.

<p>Leviticus 19:17-18 17 'You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, and not bear sin because of him. 18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the</p>	<p>(17) לֹא תִשְׁנֵא אֶת אָחִיךָ בְּלִבְבְּךָ הוֹכַח תּוֹכִיחַ אֶת עַמִּיתְךָ וְלֹא תִשָּׂא עָלָיו חֵטְא : (18) לֹא תִקֵּם וְלֹא תִטֹּר אֶת בְּנֵי עַמֶּךָ</p>
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children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am YHWH.	וְאַהֲבַתְּ לְרֵעֶךָ כְּמוֹדְךָ אֲנִי יְהוָה
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This passage is especially revealing for westerners, because the King James Version gives us a faulty rendering of this passage, and this legacy lives on in western thought and codes of ethics.

Leviticus 19:17-18 (KJV)

17 Thou shalt not hate thy brother in thine heart: thou shalt in any wise rebuke thy neighbor, and not suffer sin upon him.

18 Thou shalt not avenge, nor bear any grudge against the children of thy people, but thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself: I am [YHWH].

The rendering in the King James Version seems to suggest that we should never rebuke our neighbor, for that would “suffer sin upon him.” However, this reading is the opposite of what the Hebrew really says. In Hebrew the commandment is to “surely” rebuke our neighbor, based on the doubling of the root word *yakach* (הִוְכַח תּוֹכִיחַ). Whenever a root word is doubled or repeated, it becomes an imperative.

The Hebrew of this passage is also interesting to analyze in the context of Hebrew block logic. Block logic tells us that when YHWH places what seem like disparate thoughts together (as in Leviticus 19:17 and 18), these thoughts are related to each other, even if the connection is not easy for the casual reader to identify. When we apply block logic to Leviticus 19:17 and 18, it

seems that YHWH’s meaning is that in order to truly love our neighbor as we love ourselves, we must “surely” reprove our neighbors, so that they can learn and improve. If we do not reprove them, how can they learn what is wrong; and if they do not know that anything is wrong, how can they improve? Also, whether or not the other party hears us, once we have “gotten things off of our chest” and have “cleared the air,” we do not have to “bear sin.”

Block logic seems to imply that if we love someone, we will do what we can to help them improve; and this seems to be exactly what Yeshua was doing in John 8:44-47 (above). By “surely” reproving the Pharisees, Yeshua had witnessed to them; therefore He had done His part in giving them the option to change.

YHWH speaks of the importance of this same kind of witnessing through His prophet Ezekiel. By speaking the truth in love, we deliver our own souls.

Yehezqel (Ezekiel) 3:17-19

17 "Son of man, I have made you a watchman for the House of Israel; therefore hear a word from My mouth, and give them warning from Me:

18 When I say to the wicked, 'You shall surely die,' and you give him no warning, nor speak to warn the wicked from his wicked way, to save his life, that same wicked man shall die in his iniquity; but his blood I will require at your hand.

19 Yet, if you warn the wicked, and he does not turn from his wickedness, nor from his wicked way, he shall die in his

iniquity; but you have delivered your soul.”

The key here, however, is to speak the truth in true and unfeigned love, rather than anger, condemnation, judgment, or whatever other emotion. While YHWH asks us to stand up and speak out for what is right, we must always remember that the goal is not to criticize, castigate, or judge anyone. Rather, we must keep firmly in mind that the goal is for the body of Messiah to learn how to edify itself in love.

Ephesim (Ephesians) 4:11-16

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers,

12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the Body of Messiah,

13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of Elohim, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Messiah;

14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting,

15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head — Messiah —

16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its

share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Lest we underestimate the importance of helping the body learn how to edify itself in love, let us consider Yeshua's instructions in Matthew 5:21-26, where He tells us that if we have done something to offend our brothers, or if we are unforgiving and are not reconciled with them, YHWH does not accept our offerings.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:21-26

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

22 But I say to you that whoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment. And whoever says to his brother, 'Raca (I spit on you)!' shall be in danger of the council. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be in danger of hell fire.

23 Therefore if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you,

24 leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift.

25 Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison.

26 Assuredly, I say to you, you will by no means get out of there till you have paid the last coin.”

Anger, hostility, or hot emotions in delivering a rebuke are the exact opposite of the gentle and peaceful self-controlled character that YHWH wants us to develop. In order to please YHWH, our rebukes need to take the form of lovingly helping a brother solve his problems.

Galatim (Galatians) 6:1-5

1 Brethren, if a man 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.

2 Bear one another's burdens, and so fulfill the Torah of Messiah.

3 For if anyone thinks himself to be something, when he is nothing, he deceives himself.

4 But let each one examine his own work, and then he will have rejoicing in himself alone, and not in another.

5 For each one shall bear his own load.

If we sincerely love our brothers and hope to help them as we would like to be helped, our rebuke must be delivered in kindness and without wrath; for the wrath of man does not produce the kind of brotherly affection that YHWH Elohim desires.

Yaakov (James) 1:19-20

19 So then, my beloved brethren, let every man be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath;

20 for the wrath of man does not produce the righteousness of Elohim.

Can we imagine Yeshua speaking these words in love and pain, desperately trying to warn the brothers that they needed to change their ways, so that they would not face future judgment for believing in their own righteousness?

Mattityahu (Matthew) 23:13-14

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation."

When we are called to deliver a rebuke, generally one of the reasons we are called to deliver it is because we see the other party doing something wrong. In these times, how easy is it for us to feel superior in our flesh? How easy is it for us to feel self-righteous?

Luqa (Luke) 18:9-14

9 Also He spoke this parable to some who trusted in themselves that they were righteous, and despised others:

10 "Two men went up to the Temple to pray, one a Pharisee and the other a tax collector.

11 The Pharisee stood and prayed thus with himself, 'Elohim, I thank You that I am not like other men — extortioners, unjust, adulterers, or even as this tax collector.

12 I fast twice a week; I give tithes of all that I possess.'

13 And the tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise his eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'Elohim, be merciful to me a sinner !'

14 I tell you, this man went down to his house justified rather than the other; for everyone who exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted."

Shaul tells us that if we want the peace of Elohim to be with us, then without foolishness of any kind, we need to make a conscious effort to focus on the positive, rather than the negative.

Philippim (Philippians) 4:8-9

8 Finally, brethren, whatever things are true, whatever things are noble, whatever things are just, whatever things are pure, whatever things are lovely, whatever things are of good report, if there is any virtue and if there is anything praiseworthy — meditate on these things.

9 The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me, these do, and the Elohim of peace will be with you.

To focus on the good is to choose life; this will help us in every aspect of life, particularly when applied to our communications with others. Yaakov (Jacob) beautifully underscores the importance of speaking gently and peacefully, and focusing on speaking only good.

Yaakov (James) 3:1-13

1 My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.

2 For we all stumble in many things. If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a perfect man, able also to bridle the whole body.

3 Indeed, we put bits in horses' mouths that they may obey us, and we turn their whole body.

4 Look also at ships: although they are so large and are driven by fierce winds, they are turned by a very small rudder wherever the pilot desires.

5 Even so the tongue is a little member and boasts great things. See how great a forest a little fire kindles!

6 And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity. The tongue is so set among our members that it defiles the whole body, and sets on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire by hell.

7 For every kind of beast and bird, of reptile and creature of the sea, is tamed and has been tamed by mankind.

8 But no man can tame the tongue. It is an unruly evil, full of deadly poison.

9 With it we bless our Elohim and Father, and with it we curse men, who have been made in the similitude of Elohim.

10 Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so.

11 Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?

12 Can a fig tree, my brethren, bear olives, or a grapevine bear figs? Thus no spring yields both salt water and fresh.

13 Who is wise and understanding among you? Let him show by good conduct that his works are done in the meekness of wisdom.

Wisdom is evidenced by her meekness. Therefore, when a man's speech or behavior is not meek, is he filled with the spirit of wisdom at that moment?

Lest we think that Yaakov's call for meek, humble, and positive speech at all times is too much, let us consider Yeshua's words.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 12:35-37

35 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth good things, and an evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth evil things.

36 But I say to you that for every idle word men may speak, they will give account of it in the day of judgment.

37 For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned."

The things that come out of our mouths indicate what is in our hearts.

YHWH shows us that in order to genuinely love our brother and help him improve, we need to put our

emotions aside and speak to him in love, just as we would hope to be spoken to.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 7:12

12 Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Torah and the Prophets.

It is extremely difficult when the person we are speaking to does not hear our words. It can be a real patience builder to remember that only YHWH can convict, particularly if the issue is a "hot" one for us, has caused either us or those we love to stumble in the past, or is actively hurting those we love. Once we have done our best job of delivering the message in love, we must let go of the outcome and place the results on YHWH's altar.

Romim (Romans) 14:4

4 Who are you to judge another's servant? To his own master he stands or falls. Indeed, he will be made to stand, for Elohim is able to make him stand.

Indeed, we must be extremely cautious when something "pushes our hot buttons," for this indicates that we may have a similar or related flaw.

Romim (Romans) 2:1

1 Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things.

Yeshua tells us that we are to judge with righteous judgment, so we know that it is possible for us to judge (if only another man's fruits). However, when we find ourselves getting angry or emotionally upset, we need to stop and remember that we are no more than messengers for YHWH. Our message must be delivered in all meekness and kindness, if it is to have the maximum effect; and we must be sure that we do not speak ill of our brother.

Yaakov (James) 4:11-12

11 Do not speak evil of one another, brethren. He who speaks evil of a brother and judges his brother, speaks evil of the Torah and judges the Torah. But if you judge the Torah, you are not a doer of the Torah, but a judge.

12 There is one Torahgiver who is able to save and to destroy. Who are you to judge another?

As the proverb of our fathers says, "A man convinced against his will is a man of the same opinion still, and a woman even more so." One of the greatest of all sins is to think we are without sin; so if our brother does not hear our rebuke, rather than get into judgment, we need to get on our face and pray for our brother whom we love.

Consider the righteousness of David.

Tehillim (Psalms) 35:11-14

11 Fierce witnesses rise up. They ask me things that I do not know.

12 They reward me evil for good, to the sorrow of my soul.

13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth; I humbled myself with fasting, and my prayer would return to my own heart.

14 I paced about as though he were my friend or brother. I bowed down heavily, as one who mourns for his mother.

David also modeled self-restraint, keeping his tongue from saying anything at all, so long as his emotions were still hot inside of him.

Tehillim (Psalms) 39:1-3

1 I said, "I will guard my ways, lest I sin with my tongue; I will restrain my mouth with a muzzle, while the wicked are before me."

2 I was mute with silence, I held my peace even from good; and my sorrow was stirred up.

3 My heart was hot within me. While I was musing, the fire burned. Then (afterwards) I spoke with my tongue.

It can be a real challenge to hold our tongue while in the face of provocation. Yet YHWH refines His people in the crucible, and asking us to hold our tongues is one of His means of doing so.

Consider also the righteousness of Abigail, who only spoke negatively about her husband Nabal in order to keep David from avenging himself (thereby saving Nabal's life).

Shemuel Aleph (1st Samuel) 25:32-33

32 Then David said to Abigail: "Blessed is YHWH Elohim of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me!

33 And blessed is your advice and blessed are you, because you have kept me this day from coming to bloodshed and from avenging myself with my own hand."

One of the keys to holding one's tongue is to know what our responsibilities are, and where they end, so that once we have witnessed to our brothers in love, we can pray, trusting that YHWH controls all things within His universe. This makes it easier to remember that apart from loving and serving Him, our job is to love our brothers at all times.

Luqa (Luke) 6:27-38

27 "But I say to you who hear: Love your enemies, do good to those who hate you,

28 bless those who curse you, and pray for those who spitefully use you.

29 To him who strikes you on the one cheek, offer the other also. And from him who takes away your cloak, do not withhold your tunic either.

30 Give to everyone who asks of you. And from him who takes away your goods do not ask them back.

31 And just as you want men to do to you, you also do to them likewise.

32 "But if you love those who love you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners love those who love them.

33 And if you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same.

34 And if you lend to those from whom you hope to receive back, what credit is that to you? For even sinners lend to sinners to receive as much back.

35 But love your enemies, do good, and lend, hoping for nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High, for He is kind to the unthankful and evil.

36 Therefore be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful.

37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

Consider YHWH's unlimited power over the universe. Whatever measure we use when forming our opinions of others, this is the measure that YHWH will use when He judges us. Thus, without being foolish, if we are merciful and charitable when forming our opinions of others, YHWH will be merciful and charitable when forming His opinion of us.

Yaakov (James) 2:12-13

12 So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the Torah of liberty.

13 For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. (Yet) Mercy triumphs over judgment.

In what way does mercy triumph over judgment?

If we can spot the flaws in others, do we believe that we are completely without sin? Do we believe that our day to day actions are entirely righteous? Or are we willing to admit that perhaps we might have flaws we are blind to? And if so, then is it possible that others are blind to some of their flaws as well, and that it is only YHWH who has the power to convict?

The doctrine of lashon hara gives us specific guidelines of how to behave. May we model it for our brothers, so that even in the heat of the moment we will work out our salvation in fear and trembling.

***Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:48
48 Therefore be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect.***

The Matthew 18 Process

In the “Lashon Hara” study we saw that YHWH wants our speech to edify, unify, and build up our brethren. If our speech does not actively help bring our brothers and sisters into a deeper relationship with each other and into a closer walk with Him, then something is wrong, and we need to pray for more wisdom.

As a general rule, our speech should always glorify the Intercessor of the saints, rather than the Accuser (or Accuser) of the brethren. However, as we saw in the study on lashon hara, there are times when we are ethically required to say negative things. For example, if we know that someone is a predator, or is selfish, we are ethically required to warn our brothers.

***TimaTheus Bet (2nd Timothy) 4:14-16
14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm. May YHWH repay him according to his works.
15 You also must beware of him, for he has greatly resisted our words.
16 At my first defense no one stood with me, but all forsook me. May it not be charged against them.***

Warning someone so that they will not come to harm is the only legitimate reason for speaking negatively about a brother to a third party. Notice that this principle also applies when speaking to a brother’s face; the only reason to speak negatively to him is to help save him from coming to harm.

Yeshua spoke lovingly, yet acidly, to the Pharisees in order to wake them up, so as to keep them from coming to harm on the Day of Judgment.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 23:13-14

13 "But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men; for you neither go in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in.

14 Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you devour widows' houses, and for a pretense make long prayers. Therefore you will receive greater condemnation."

Yeshua's words do not qualify as evil speech because not only were His words spoken in love, they were also seriously intended to help. It is this attitude of loving and seeking to help others which is our first key to understanding the Matthew 18 process.

In an ideal world we would only ever have to speak positive and uplifting things. However, because the world is imperfect, YHWH permits us to say negative things, but only in the course of righting a wrong. Similarly, while YHWH ideally wants His people all to get along in perfect peace and harmony, some brothers and sisters are not safe to take into fellowship. Sadly, some of our believing brethren behave in ways that are inconsiderate, rude, hurtful, and even harmful to others. Yeshua gives us a means of discreetly correcting those who are humble and willing to change, and a powerful peer pressure mechanism to encourage the hardened either to reform or be barred from fellowship.

The Matthew 18 process is extremely powerful, and should only be used with the utmost of care. We need to remember that the goal is not to punish, but only to help a sinning brother repent. Ideally, we need to rejoice when this process succeeds, and to mourn when it does not.

Before we discuss the specifics of Matthew 18, let us first discuss the system of justice described in the Torah. Sometimes it is said that the Tanach ("Old Covenant") gives us a "masculine" view of the covenant which focuses on specifics and details, whereas the Brit Chadasha ("Renewed Covenant") gives us perhaps a more "feminine" view that explains the spiritual aspects of righteousness. First the Torah lays out a system of justice we are to follow whenever we live in the land, then Matthew 18 shows us principles of justice we can use even when we do not have a temple. However, the Matthew 18 process will still apply even after we come back to the land of Israel, because the principles always apply.

The Torah emphasizes the need to purge the camp of those who do not obey YHWH, by stoning.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:7

7 "If a man is found kidnapping any of his brethren of the children of Israel, and mistreats him or sells him, then that kidnapper shall die; and you shall put away the evil from among you."

However, notice that in order to qualify for the death penalty, the infraction has to be very serious. One reason adultery may qualify is that it breaks down the family unit, which is the basic building block of society.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 22:23-24

23 "If a young woman who is a virgin is betrothed to a husband, and a man finds her in the city and lies with her, 24 then you shall bring them both out to the gate of that city, and you shall stone them to death with stones, the young woman because she did not cry out in the city, and the man because he humbled his neighbor's wife; so you shall put away the evil from among you."

Before we go further, let us note that the story of the woman caught in adultery (John 7:53-8:11) does not appear in any of the four oldest Greek manuscripts, or in the Aramaic Peshitta or the Old Syriac. For this and several other reasons, many scholars believe John 7:53-8:11 was added later. This is important because the presence or absence of this passage can radically alter our vision of who Yeshua is, and how He wants us to behave.

Christianity alleges that the story of the woman caught in adultery proves that Yeshua taught a new and different Torah; but when we understand that this passage was a later addition, we can see that the Matthew 18 process is really the same system of justice as laid out in the Torah, just transferred to the Melchizedekian Order (which does not need a physical temple in which to operate). Thus the two systems are really just two different faces of the same system of justice that YHWH wants us to keep. Both of these systems apply when we live in the land and have a standing temple, while the latter can still function even in its absence because it focuses on principle, rather than on specifics.

The Torah specifies that we are to take all issues of justice before the priests and/or the judges who are appointed (or anointed) to serve in those days.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:15-21

15 "One witness shall not rise against a man concerning any iniquity or any sin that he commits; by the mouth of two or three witnesses the matter shall be established.

16 If a false witness rises against any man to testify against him of wrongdoing,

17 then both men in the controversy shall stand before YHWH, before the priests and (or) the judges who serve in those days.

18 And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother,

19 then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you.

20 And those who remain shall hear and fear, and hereafter they shall not again commit such evil among you.

21 Your eye shall not pity: life shall be for life, eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot."

However, since YHWH knew that His disciples would be expelled from the land, and that they would not keep Torah while out in the nations, another means had to be given for establishing justice within the body.

Matthew 18 describes more than just the principles of justice. It also explains the correct attitude we are to seek, so that we do not come into judgment before our good heavenly Father.

Before the great adult competition for power, status, money, and sex begins, a child's chief concern is an innocent desire for friendship. Children need a safe, stable environment in which to learn and grow. It is precisely this environment that must be first established and then safeguarded within the borders of Israel (in the land) or, in the least, within the confines of fellowship (in the dispersion).

Mattityahu (Matthew) 18:1-35

1 At that time the disciples came to Yeshua saying, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?"

2 Then Yeshua called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them,

3 and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven.

4 Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

Before puberty children are generally humble before adults, and they do not typically compete against them. While brethren might compete in an economic sense, we must avoid interpersonal competition between brothers. We should humble ourselves, and focus upon hearing and obeying YHWH's voice, so as to work out our own salvation in fear and trembling.

One major goal of life is to be refined in the fire, so as to become more pleasing and pure before YHWH. Because of this, offenses and challenges must surely come. However, woe to us if those challenges or offenses come through us, for YHWH does not leave unpunished those who cause others to stumble.

5 Whoever receives one little child like this in My name receives Me.

6 "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in Me to sin, it would be better for him if a millstone were hung around his neck, and he were drowned in the depth of the sea.

7 Woe to the world because of offenses! For offenses must come, but woe to that man by whom the offense comes!

8 "If your hand or foot causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet, to be cast into the everlasting fire.

9 And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you. It is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire.

Yeshua asks us to lay down our lives for His sake. In order to do this, we need to die completely to the lusts of our eyes, the lusts of our flesh, and the pride of our lives (which includes competition). It does no good to claim the blood of Yeshua unless we are willing to die to our ego, and whatever problems our ego might have.

10 "Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones, for I say to you that in heaven their messengers always see the face of My Father who is in heaven.

11 For the Son of Man has come to save that which was lost.

12 "What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying?

13 And if he should find it, assuredly, I say to you, he rejoices more over that sheep than over the ninety-nine that did not go astray.

14 Even so it is not the will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish.

We are not to despise even one of the “least” of us. When one of our brothers strays into sin, our Good Shepherd searches for him until he is found; and then He rejoices greatly. Our heavenly Father has more concern in that moment for the one who is lost than for the one who is not lost. We see the same thing in the parable of the prodigal son, where the father’s concern is more toward the backslidden son (Ephraim) than to the faithful one (Judah). The reason all these things are connected to the Matthew 18 process is that Yeshua then says, “Moreover....”

15 "Moreover if your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother.

16 But if he will not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established.'

17 And if he refuses to hear them, tell it to the assembly. But if he refuses even to hear the assembly, let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector.

Notice:

1. If you know your brother has sinned,
2. Go speak to him humbly, and in private.
3. If he humbles himself and hears you, then you and your brother can be restored to fellowship without any lashon hara, and no one’s reputation (or name) has been tarnished. (This is the ideal.)
4. If your brother does not humble himself, and he does not yet hear you, then you are to take one or two or more who can explain to him from Scripture why what he did was wrong. Ideally these should be elders in the assembly, but not for authority’s sake. Those who have been in the word longer should (at least hypothetically) be calmer, more mature, and better able to help all parties arrive at an understanding of what Scripture says, in a completely Berean fashion. The idea is to establish YHWH’s righteousness, rather than any man’s authority.
5. If the accused believes he has done nothing wrong, it is vital that he has the opportunity to defend himself. Thus the idea here is not one of “ganging up” on the accused party, or “outvoting” him in any way, but one of brothers getting together to study the Scriptures, so as to see what YHWH’s word tells us to do.

6. If the accused still does not humble himself, but refuses to hear YHWH's word, then for his sake (and in the name of fellowship) the matter needs to be brought before the people. In a smaller assembly, all of the people might actually meet, while in larger assemblies Judah traditionally convenes a formal *beit din* (court). No matter which means is used, it needs to be accessible to all of the people, as the emphasis is never on the imposition of authority structures, but on discussing what YHWH wants in calmness and in love. The issues need to be brought to light, so they can become subject to scrutiny from the people. If there is anything that the sinner does not want made public, then he needs to make amends before things are made public, and his reputation (or his name) is tarnished. If the sin is serious enough (such as child abuse, adultery, or some other evil), then the people can make a decision as to whether they feel they should remain in fellowship with him.

One reason this process is best handled by mature elders in the assembly is that it takes maturity to handle confrontation without allowing it to degenerate into open conflict (which Satan loves). Another reason is that while YHWH ideally wants His people to keep all of His Torah, the Torah is written at more than one level. Since none of us are perfect, and since the Ruach HaQodesh (Holy Spirit) is the only One given the power to convict, the decision as to whether the assembly should turn out any given individual needs to be overseen by those with the necessary maturity to recognize that the focus cannot be on snooping out every sin of others, but upon bringing the relevant facts to light, so the body can make an informed decision by YHWH's word.

Just as every sin does not warrant death by stoning, every matter does not call for disfellowshipping. The line can be very difficult to determine, especially when dealing with Ephraimites in the dispersion. Whereas matters were clear-cut in the wilderness of Sinai, until all twelve tribes are safely back in the land and our children are once again raised with Torah in the schools, it would be counterproductive in many cases to apply such a flat standard of obedience. As we discuss in *Nazarene Israel*, converts to the faith can enter the assemblies by agreeing to abstain from idolatry, adultery, blood, and strangled (or unclean) meats; and if this is where the apostles set the standard (in Acts 15), we must not set any other standard for fellowship, for to do so would be to reject those that YHWH has called.

As we discuss elsewhere, Acts 6:1-6 and other passages show us that there must be higher standards for leaders and teachers. There is disagreement as to where those standards should ideally be set; but no matter where one sets those standards, because no two people agree exactly on how to interpret each and every point of Scripture, it logically follows that some matters are not worth breaking fellowship over. Unless there is some tolerance, there will be no fellowship, no unity, no assembly, and nobody within the body.

Ephesim (Ephesians) 4:1-6

***1, therefore, the prisoner of YHWH,
beseech you to walk worthy of the
calling with which you were called,
2 with all lowliness and gentleness,
with longsuffering, bearing with one
another in love,
3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the
Spirit in the bond of peace.***

**4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling;
5 one Adon, one faith, one immersion;
6 one Elohim and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.**

Since YHWH leads and guides each of us differently, and because shunning from the body is essentially the spiritual equivalent of death by stoning, the standard for disfellowship has to be set at death penalty offenses. For example, fraud, adultery, murder, rape, lying, theft, abduction, and the like are all serious ethical issues, and they indicate a lack of concern for others, which is a wrong spirit. Adultery shows a lack of regard for one's spouse, one's children, and for society in general. Those who commit such moral and spiritual crimes must repent of them, or else it is not safe for us to let them into our assemblies.

In contrast, whether or not a returning Ephraimite obeys the commandment to wear tzitzit, rests completely from doing business on the Sabbath, or refrains from smoking does not directly impact anyone else. While it can be argued that such a lack of fear and obedience puts his salvation in serious jeopardy, and that we should not want our children growing up around those who lack fear and obedience, there have to be some forms of toleration made, or else one's children will grow up with no fellowship at all (and will have only the outside world to turn to). Therefore some form of delicate balance must be achieved; and this delicate balance point is normally best established by respected elders in the assembly, who have more life experience, and more time in the word.

Because each and every person is different, and the situation in each assembly is different, what all of this boils down to is simply whether the parties involved are hurting (or influencing) anyone more than themselves.

So long as we remain in the dispersion, we have no control over our legal and/or judicial systems. While we are not allowed to apply the punishment prescribed in Torah, we must not allow sexual predators, murderers, drug dealers, unrepentant adulterers, rapists, liars, and the like into our fellowships. People become like those they socialize with, and the assembly is supposed to be a "safe zone" that is set apart from all of these kinds of ills. Therefore, for the good of all parties concerned, we must put those practicing these sins outside.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Cor.) 5:1-5

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles — that a man has his father's wife!

2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.

4 In the name of our Adon Yeshua HaMashiach, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Adon Yeshua HaMashiach,

5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit

may be saved in the day of the Adon Yeshua.

In this situation Shaul wrote to the assembly directly, perhaps performing the duties of a prophet, calling the people into repentance for allowing wanton sin. While Shaul did not follow the specific procedure, going first to the man in private, and then taking more witnesses, his letter still fulfills the spirit of Matthew 18, which tells us that somehow or other, the people must be sure to take steps to put sin outside the set-apart place, or else the faith stands for nothing.

18 "Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.

19 "Again I say to you that if two of you agree on earth concerning anything that they ask, it will be done for them by My Father in heaven.

20 For where two or three are gathered together in My name, I am there in the midst of them."

As we explain in *Nazarene Israel*, the actual language in the Greek reads differently than it does in most of the mainstream versions. It tells us that what the apostles bound or loosed would already have been bound or loosed in heaven.

The idea is not that human authorities have the right to bind whatever they wish, far from it. Rather, respected elders in the word should be listening attentively in the Spirit for His voice, so that they can bind or loose what YHWH is telling them to bind or loose, just like a judge, such as Samuel, would have done in ancient times.

Notice also that verse 19 tells us that there needs to be at least two or more judges, as practiced in the Jewish beit din. Thus it is as the Torah says; those who are brought before the priests and/or the judges that are in those days shall obey what the priests and/or the judges have to say, for they are not to speak their own words. Rather, they are very carefully and fearfully to speak only what they hear from YHWH.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 19:17-19

17 "then both men in the controversy shall stand before YHWH, before the priests and (or) the judges who serve in those days.

18 And the judges shall make careful inquiry, and indeed, if the witness is a false witness, who has testified falsely against his brother,

19 then you shall do to him as he thought to have done to his brother; so you shall put away the evil from among you."

The idea behind having at least two or (preferably) three judges is to help remove any inherent prejudice or emotion that might be present if there was only one. Even with the best of intentions and the best of desires to serve YHWH, none of His servants is worthy to make rulings on his own.

Notice that the standards for disfellowshipping are high. While it might be wise to question whether or not a man should teach if his marriage is on the rocks and his children all fall out of the faith, this should never be considered as grounds for disfellowship. While a man

with difficulties at home perhaps should not teach, he is probably all the more in need of fellowship and help.

21 Then Kepha came to Him and said, "Adon, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?"

22 Yeshua said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven."

We all err in many things, and it is not for us to judge our brothers. It is true that we are to confront them in love whenever they do things that are hurtful, but apart from making decisions as to whether or not we can safely allow them into our fellowships, we are not to judge; and neither are we to hold grudges. If YHWH forgives us for all of the evil we have done (for which His Son had to die), then certainly we can forgive others whatever debts they owe us.

23 Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants.

24 And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents.

25 But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.

26 The servant therefore fell down before him, saying, 'Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

27 Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.

28 "But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, 'Pay me what you owe!'"

29 So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, 'Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.'

30 And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt.

31 So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.

32 Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, 'You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me.'

33 Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?'

34 And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.

35 "So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you, from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses."

Yeshua tells us to put unrepentant sinners out of the assembly. However, even when people lie to us, cheat us, steal from us, murder, commit adultery, or worse, once there is sincere repentance, we must let them back into the fellowship, lest they be swallowed up in grief at being shunned; for it is not good for men to be alone.

Qorintim Bet (2 Cor.) 2:4-11

5 But if anyone has caused grief, he has not grieved me, but all of you to some extent — not to be too severe.

6 This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man,

7 so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow.

8 Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him.

9 For to this end I also wrote, that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things.

10 Now whom you forgive anything, I also forgive. For if indeed I have forgiven anything, I have forgiven that one for your sakes in the presence of Messiah,

11 lest Satan should take advantage of us; for we are not ignorant of his devices.

If we punish beyond the minimums needed to bring the sinner to repentance, then we have gone beyond intervention, and are essentially exacting revenge.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 32:35

**35 Vengeance is Mine,
and recompense;
Their foot shall slip in due time;
For the day of their calamity is at hand,
And the things to come hasten upon
them.'**

While we are never to be doormats, YHWH also tells us not to take revenge, or bear any grudge. Instead, we are to forgive our brothers their offenses towards us, rising above the hurt and the pain, just as Yeshua did.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 19:17-18

17 "You shall not hate your brother in your heart. You shall surely rebuke your neighbor, (so as not to) bear sin because of him.

18 You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the children of your people, but you shall love your neighbor as yourself: I am YHWH."

When dealing with our brothers, even when evil has been done to us, it is imperative that we look for the good, and stay focused on the positive. Because we realize that we ourselves are not perfect, we must err on the side of love and generosity; for with the same measure we use, so shall it be measured back to us.

Luqa (Luke) 6:37-38

37 "Judge not, and you shall not be judged. Condemn not, and you shall not be condemned. Forgive, and you will be forgiven.

38 Give, and it will be given to you: good measure, pressed down, shaken together, and running over will be put into your bosom. For with the same measure that you use, it will be measured back to you."

If we will establish and maintain YHWH's standards for fellowship, our families and children will have a safe and comfortable environment in which to learn and grow.

While we must put out those who prey upon others, and who cause problems within the fellowship, judgment is not ours, and neither is revenge. We need to trust that YHWH our Elohim is in perfect and complete control of the universe, and that when it is His time, He will cause sinners to repent and turn back to Him.

Yeshua tells us that the first and greatest commandment is to love YHWH with all of our being; and the second is to love our neighbors as we love ourselves. The first is much easier than the second, for YHWH is always fair and kind with us, while our brothers, being imperfect, are not always so

It is very difficult to establish and then firmly maintain YHWH's standards in love. This challenge alone is worthy to refine us in the fire, and make us purer and more pleasing to Him.

Adultery and Matthew 18

Yeshua tells us that He did not come to do away with even the least part of the Torah (the Laws of Moses). Rather, He says that whoever teaches against even the least of the commandments will be least in the kingdom of heaven; and that those who do and teach the whole Torah will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 5:17-21

17 "Do not think that I came to destroy the Torah or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill.

18 For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the Torah till all is fulfilled.

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

20 For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."

The Torah says that when we hear of sexually immoral conduct within the body, we should go to the judges and officers who exist in those days, for them to make an inquiry. Even though it cannot be carried out in the dispersion, the penalty for sexual immorality is always death. Here are some examples.

Vayiqra (Leviticus) 20:10-23

10 'The man who commits adultery with another man's wife, he who commits adultery with his neighbor's wife, the adulterer and the adulteress, shall surely be put to death.

11 The man who lies with his father's wife has uncovered his father's nakedness; both of them shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

12 If a man lies with his daughter-in-law, both of them shall surely be put to death. They have committed perversion. Their blood shall be upon them.

13 If a man lies with a male as he lies with a woman, both of them have committed an abomination. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood shall be upon them.

14 If a man marries a woman and her mother, it is wickedness. They shall be burned with fire, both he and they, that there may be no wickedness among you.

15 If a man mates with an animal, he shall surely be put to death, and you shall kill the animal.

16 If a woman approaches any animal and mates with it, you shall kill the woman and the animal. They shall surely be put to death. Their blood is upon them.

17 'If a man takes his sister, his father's daughter or his mother's daughter, and sees her nakedness and she sees his nakedness, it is a wicked thing. And they shall be cut off in the sight of their people. He has uncovered his sister's nakedness. He shall bear his guilt.

18 If a man lies with a woman during her sickness and uncovers her nakedness, he has exposed her flow, and she has uncovered the flow of her blood. Both of them shall be cut off from their people.

19 'You shall not uncover the nakedness of your mother's sister nor of your father's sister, for that would uncover his near of kin. They shall bear their guilt.

20 If a man lies with his uncle's wife, he has uncovered his uncle's nakedness. They shall bear their sin; they shall die childless.

21 If a man takes his brother's wife, it is an unclean thing. He has uncovered his brother's nakedness. They shall be childless.

22 'You shall therefore keep all My statutes and all My judgments, and perform them, that the land where I am bringing you to dwell may not vomit you out.

23 And you shall not walk in the statutes of the nation which I am casting out before you; for they commit all these things, and therefore I abhor them."

In verses 22 and 23 (above), YHWH tells us that He abhors sexual immorality. He also tells us to keep all of His statutes and judgments (and perform them), so that the land of Israel will not vomit us out. Does this mean that we can safely do these things outside the land?

Before we answer that question, let us take a look at the story of Achan and the battle for Ai. In the days of Joshua the son of Nun, a man named Achan decided to ignore YHWH's commandments. However, thirty-six men of the people fell in battle, as a punishment on the nation as a whole.

Yehoshua (Joshua) 7:5

5 And the men of Ai struck down about thirty-six men, for they chased them from before the gate as far as Shebarim, and struck them down on the descent; therefore the hearts of the people melted and became like water.

After the defeat Yehoshua fell on his face and asked YHWH why they had lost the battle. YHWH told him the punishment was because of the sin of one man.

Yehoshua (Joshua) 7:20-26

20 And Achan answered Yehoshua and said, "Indeed I have sinned against YHWH Elohim of Israel, and this is what I have done:

21 When I saw among the spoils a beautiful Babylonian garment, two hundred shekels of silver, and a wedge of gold weighing fifty shekels, I coveted them and took them. And there they are, hidden in the earth in the midst of my tent, with the silver under it."

22 So Yehoshua sent messengers, and they ran to the tent; and there it was, hidden in his tent, with the silver under it.

23 And they took them from the midst of the tent, brought them to Yehoshua and to all the children of Israel, and laid them out before YHWH.

24 Then Yehoshua, and all Israel with him, took Achan the son of Zerah, the silver, the garment, the wedge of gold, his sons, his daughters, his oxen, his donkeys, his sheep, his tent, and all that he had, and they brought them to the Valley of Achor.

25 And Yehoshua said, "Why have you troubled us? YHWH will trouble you this day." So all Israel stoned him with stones; and they burned them with fire after they had stoned them with stones.

26 Then they raised over him a great heap of stones, still there to this day. So YHWH turned from the fierceness of His anger. Therefore the name of that place has been called the Valley of Achor to this day.

The story of Achan and the conquest of Ai show us that there is such a thing as corporate punishment for the nation. YHWH is serious about us putting the evil out of our midst, and, one way or another, YHWH will have a camp that is set-apart. Is it not easier to just comply?

In contrast, many Christians believe that it is "not our business" whether or not anyone else commits sexual sin. This idea seems to be supported by the story of the adulterous woman in John 8, but this story is a later addition to the text.

Yochanan (John) 8:3-11

3 Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst,

4 they said to Him, "Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. 5 Now Moshe, in the Torah, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?"

6 This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Yeshua stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

7 So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, "He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first."

8 And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground.

9 Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Yeshua was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

10 When Yeshua had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, "Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?"

11 She said, "No one, Adon." And Yeshua said to her, "Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more."

The story of the adulterous woman (John 8:1-11) does not exist in any of the four oldest Greek manuscripts, or in the Aramaic Peshitta. It is clearly in violation of the principle that we are not to add to Scripture.

Mishle (Proverbs) 30:5-6

5 Every word of Elohim is pure; He is a shield to those who put their trust in Him.

6 Do not add to His words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar.

It is ironic that mainstream Christian doctrine tells us not to judge those who are inside the assembly, for the apostle Shaul told the Corinthians the exact opposite. He told the Corinthians not to just put a sexual sinner outside the assembly, but to "deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Adon Yeshua."

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 5

1 It is actually reported that there is sexual immorality among you, and such sexual immorality as is not even named among the Gentiles — that a man has his father's wife!

2 And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he who has done this deed might be taken away from among you.

3 For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has so done this deed.

4 In the name of our Adon Yeshua Messiah, when you are gathered together, along with my spirit, with the power of our Adon Yeshua Messiah,

5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Adon Yeshua.

The Corinthians may have been hesitant to put the sinner outside the camp, perhaps glorying in their love, patience, and tolerance. However, Shaul reminded them that we need to put sinners outside the camp, not just because of corporate punishment (such as at Ai), but also because we become like those we fellowship with. In verse 6 (below) Shaul tells us that "a little leaven leavens the whole lump."

6 Your glorying is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump?

7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Messiah, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

8 Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

Next, Shaul tells us that we are not to judge those who are outside of our assemblies (for Elohim judges them), yet we are responsible to judge those who are inside. Just as at Ai, we are responsible to enforce justice in our own ranks; and just because we cannot enforce justice in another people, does not mean Elohim will relieve us of responsibility for doing justice in our own.

9 I wrote to you in my epistle not to keep company with sexually immoral people.

10 Yet I certainly did not mean with the sexually immoral people of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or idolaters, since then you would need to go out of the world.

11 But now I have written to you not to keep company with anyone named a brother, who is sexually immoral, or covetous, or an idolater, or a reviler, or a drunkard, or an extortioner — not even to eat with such a person.

12 For what have I to do with judging those also who are outside? Do you not judge those who are inside?

13 But those who are outside Elohim judges. Therefore "put away from yourselves the evil person."

Just as at Ai, the assembly must be kept pure or the people will fall. This is why we must put away from ourselves the evil persons.

As we explain in *Nazarene Israel*, the apostles realized that it was not advantageous to follow the rabbinical gentile conversion process when bringing those whom YHWH had already filled with His Spirit back to Torah. Rather, the returning Ephraimites simply needed to abstain from four things Yahweh considers “abominations.” If they would agree to keep themselves from these four abominable acts, the returning gentile Ephraimites could come into the assemblies each week (where they would learn the rest of the Torah slowly, over time). The four abominations the apostles said that the new converts needed to keep themselves from were idolatry, sexual immorality, strangled meats, and blood.

Ma’asei (Acts) 15:19-21

19 Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are (re-)turning to Elohim,

20 but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood.

21 For Moshe has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath."

There is much we can say about the requirements to abstain from idolatry, strangled meats, and blood, but it will have to wait for another time. Our focus here is to define what the apostles meant by “sexual immorality.” We have already seen some of the things that YHWH prohibits in the Torah, and those definitions have never changed. However, Yeshua Elohim also gives us a definition, which we need to discuss in some detail.

As we explain in "Yahweh's Heart in Marriage," Yeshua tells us that if a man divorces his wife for any reason, other than sexual immorality, he is guilty of adultery (and therefore, by Acts 15, he cannot enter into the assembly). Let us read verse 9 carefully.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 19:3-10

3 The Pharisees also came to Him, testing Him, and saying to Him, "Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for just any reason?"

4 And He answered and said to them, "Have you not read that He who made them at the beginning 'made them male and female,'

5 and said, 'For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh'?

6 So then, they are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what Elohim has joined together, let not man separate."

7 They said to Him, "Why then did Moshe command to give a certificate of divorce, and to put her away?"

8 He said to them, "Moshe, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

9 And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

A woman's world is oriented around her marriage. By unlawfully putting her away, it can destroy both her and her children's worlds.

Elohim is serious about marriage because its purpose is to provide for children. Children do not typically do well if both parents do not dedicate themselves to the marriage. It often happens that children without two parent homes fall into cycles of violence for several generations, which is the consequence of generational sin (reference Exodus 20:5). YHWH says that He "hates" divorce, because it "covers one's garment with violence."

Malachi 2:13-16

13 And this is the second thing you do: You cover the altar of YHWH with tears, With weeping and crying, so He does not regard the offering anymore, nor receive it with goodwill from your hands.

14 Yet you say, "For what reason?" Because YHWH has been witness Between you and the wife of your youth, With whom you have dealt treacherously; Yet she is your companion And your wife by covenant.

15 But did He not make them one, Having a remnant of the Spirit? And why one?

He seeks righteous offspring. Therefore take heed to your spirit, And let none deal treacherously with the wife of his youth.

16 "For YHWH Elohim of Israel says That He hates divorce, For it covers one's garment with violence," Says YHWH of hosts.

"Therefore take heed to your spirit, That you do not deal treacherously."

The Christian doctrine that there is nothing beyond “simple love” ignores the fact that love is operationally defined not by one’s feelings, but by one’s actions.

Yochanan (John) 14:15

15 "If you love Me, (then) keep My commandments."

If we ignore the requirements for sexual morality in Torah then we are failing to love YHWH and Yeshua, and we are also ignoring the fact that divorce causes real world damage. If we are willing to wrong a sister and her children (whom we have seen), how can we say that we love Elohim (whom we have not seen)?

Yochanan Aleph (1st John) 4:20-5:1

20 If someone says, "I love Elohim," but hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, how can he love Elohim whom he has not seen?

21 And this commandment we have from Him: that he who loves Elohim must love his brother also.

Even so, there are times for divorce. When Judah came back to the land in the days of Ezra, they had to put their pagan (idolatrous) wives and children away because idolatry is forbidden in the assembly.

Ezra 10:2-4

2 And Shechaniah the son of Jehiel, one of the sons of Elam, spoke up and said to Ezra, "We have trespassed against our Elohim, and have taken pagan wives from the peoples of the land; yet now there is hope in Israel in spite of this.

3 Now therefore, let us make a covenant with our Elohim to put away all these wives and those who have been born to them, according to the advice of my master and of those who tremble at the commandment of our Elohim; and let it be done according to the Torah.

4 Arise, for this matter is your responsibility. We also are with you. Be of good courage, and do it."

We may not defile anything that belongs to YHWH: we may not defile our assemblies, the camp, the land, or our marriages. Everything belonging to YHWH is to be wholly set apart unto Him, and all idol worship, adultery, and lawlessness has to stay (or be put) on the outside.

This same principle also applies to marriages in the dispersion. Shaul tells us not to be unequally yoked together with unbelievers, for our bodies are presently the temple of the living Elohim. Therefore yoking with unbelievers defiles His temple (i.e., our bodies).

Qorintim Bet (2nd Corinthians) 6:14-18

14 Do not be unequally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with Torahlessness? And what communion has light with darkness?

15 And what accord has Messiah with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever?

16 And what agreement has the temple of Elohim with idols? For you are the temple of the living Elohim. As Elohim has said:

**"I will dwell in them
And walk among them.
I will be their Elohim,**

And they shall be My people."

17 Therefore

***"Come out from among them
And be separate, says YHWH.
Do not touch what is unclean,
And I will receive you."***

***18 'I will be a Father to you,
And you shall be My sons and daughters,
Says YHWH El Shaddai."***

However, Shaul also tells us that we should not hasten to get a divorce, for YHWH may yet use us to bring our spouse (and/or our children) to salvation. Shaul tells us that, in his opinion, as long as our spouse is willing to dwell, we should dwell (and be a witness unto them).

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 7:12-17

12 But to the rest I, not YHWH, say: If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her.

13 And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him.

14 For the unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is set apart by the husband; otherwise your children would be unclean, but now they are set apart.

15 But if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases. But Elohim has called us to peace.

16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

We are all required to further the Great Commission any way we can. While we take up collections to send apostles, missionaries, and evangelists to other places, those who are called to remain in their same towns need to do all they can to witness in their local area. If part of this ministration is to their wife and children, then so much the better, and let each one remain in the calling in which he was called.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 7:20

20 Let each one remain in the same calling in which he was called.

Let us be clear that there is a difference between an idolater and a brother or sister who may not be as devout as he or she should be. In Ezra's time the men put away all of their pagan wives and children who worshipped other elohim (and who would not convert to the worship of YHWH). The reason Yeshua did not have to mention these things in Matthew 19 is that it was understood that idolatry and adultery were not allowed in the land.

So how do we apply this information? Let us look at a few different case studies, starting with the infamous example of King David and Uriah the Hittite.

2 Samuel 11:26-27

26 When the wife of Uriah heard that Uriah her husband was dead, she mourned for her husband.

27 And when her mourning was over, David sent and brought her to his house, and she became his wife and bore him a son. But the thing that David had done displeased YHWH.

In order to cover up the fact that he had gotten Bat Sheva (Bathsheba) pregnant, David had caused her husband Uriah the Hittite to be killed. Yet even though Bat Sheva had mourned, David had not yet repented of his sins. Because YHWH loved David, YHWH had to bring David to repentance, so he could continue to be part of the nation of Israel.

Shemuel Bet (2nd Samuel) 12:7-13

7 Then Nathan said to David, "You are the man! Thus says YHWH Elohim of Israel: 'I anointed you king over Israel, and I delivered you from the hand of Shaul.

8 I gave you your master's house and your master's wives into your keeping, and gave you the house of Israel and Judah. And if that had been too little, I also would have given you much more!

9 Why have you despised the commandment of YHWH, to do evil in His sight? You have killed Uriah the Hittite with the sword; you have taken his wife to be your wife, and have killed him with the sword of the people of Ammon.

10 Now therefore, the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me, and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife.'

11 Thus says YHWH: 'Behold, I will raise up adversity against you from your own house; and I will take your wives before your eyes and give them to your neighbor, and he shall lie with your wives in the sight of this sun.

12 For you did it secretly, but I will do this thing before all Israel, before the sun.'"

The principle is simple: All those who practice idolatry or adultery, or consume strangled meats or blood, may not come into the congregation or into the land of Israel. Rather, the nation must be kept free from the leavening effects of sin. Because YHWH loved David, He was willing to do whatever it took to help him become clean. Shaul used this same principle when he said that the adulterer in Corinth should be put outside of the assembly until he repented. So long as the Corinthian man's spirit was eventually saved, it mattered little what happened to his body.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 5:5

5 deliver such a one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Adon Yeshua.

Yeshua speaks of this same principle, letting us know that the body is merely a vessel for the spirit; and that whether we are rich or poor matters little, so long as we do what it takes to remain in YHWH's favor.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 16:26-28

26 "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?"

Let us take a hypothetical example of a man who says he believes on Yeshua and keeps Torah. His wife has not committed any adultery, yet he divorces her and marries another woman. While the courts of many nations would recognize the divorce as being legal, it is not lawful according to Torah, and this man should not be allowed into the assemblies, because he is committing adultery.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 19:9

9 "And I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

The man and his first wife have a covenant relationship before YHWH Elohim. YHWH expects our covenants to be fulfilled, and He is not concerned with our convenience. Rather, He is concerned that we learn to keep our vows. The only thing that should keep this kind of a reunion from taking place is if she then goes and marries another man.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 24:1-5

**1 "When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some uncleanness in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house,
2 when she has departed from his house, and goes and becomes another man's wife,
3 if the latter husband detests her and writes her a certificate of divorce, puts it in her hand, and sends her out of his house, or if the latter husband dies who took her as his wife,
4 then her former husband who divorced her must not take her back to be his wife after she has been defiled; for that is an abomination before YHWH, and you shall not bring sin on the land which YHWH your Elohim is giving you as an inheritance.**

As we explain in "Yahweh's Heart in Marriage," the word "uncleanness" in verse 1 is the word *ervah* (ערוה), and it refers to a sexual uncleanness.

**OT:6172 ervah (er-vaw'); from OT:6168; nudity, literally (especially the pudenda) or figuratively (disgrace, blemish):
KJV - nakedness, shame, unclean (-ness).**

YHWH has laws, statutes, judgments, and right-rulings. While ideal situations are governed by laws or statutes, in Deuteronomy 24:1-4, something has gone wrong. The situation is now all messed up, and we need to apply YHWH's judgments or right-rulings, which tell us how to make the best of a bad situation. This is the same kind of situation that Yoseph (Joseph) found himself in, when he learned that Miriam (Mary) was pregnant.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 1:18-19

18 Now the birth of Yeshua Messiah was as follows: After His mother Miriam was betrothed to Yoseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Ruach HaQodesh.

19 Then Yoseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly.

Yoseph thought he had found a matter of sexual uncleanness in Miriam. Rather than make her a public example (by having her stoned), he decided to put her away quietly in accordance with Deuteronomy 24:1-4. This was more compassionate than stoning, and this compassion may be what got Yoseph labeled as "a just man."

Setting aside the example of Yoseph and Miriam, once a woman is put away for a matter of uncleanness and she then goes and becomes another man's, she may not return to her former husband, for that would be to defile the land. Nonetheless, this is what the prophet Hosea was told to do with Gomer.

Hoshea (Hosea) 3:1

1 Then YHWH said to me, "Go again, love a woman who is loved by a lover and is committing adultery, just like the love of YHWH for the children of Israel, who look to other elohim and love the raisin cakes of the pagans."

It is also what YHWH does with the house of Ephraim.

Yirmeyahu (Jeremiah) 3:1

3 "They say, 'If a man divorces his wife, And she goes from him And becomes another man's, May he return to her again?' Would not that land be greatly polluted? But you have played the harlot with many lovers; Yet return to Me," says YHWH.

The ideal is that we are supposed to stay with the woman that YHWH puts us with, and it is only if our hearts are hard that we are allowed to divorce.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 19:8-9

8 He said to them, "Moshe, because of the hardness of your hearts, permitted you to divorce your wives, but from the beginning it was not so.

9 But I say to you, whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery."

There are many complicating factors, and it is difficult to address them all in print. Congregational leaders are encouraged to contact us for guidance in specific cases.

There are more scenarios with regards to adultery than will fit in this book, but what really matters most is how we can set things right. Many of us come from less than ideal pasts, and the main question that we should ask is "What should we do now?"

Repentance is the main thing that YHWH wants to see before He will forgive our sins, but repentance means more than just saying, "I am sorry." Repentance means doing all that we can to fully restore our relationships with YHWH and His other children.

While the word *shalom* means "peace," it refers to a peace that is born of an absence of any issues. It refers to a true state of rest, where all issues between brothers and sisters in Israel have been thoroughly and completely settled. This is what Shaul alludes to in Romans 12:18.

Romim (Romans) 12:18

18 If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live at Shalom with all men.

How many of us attempt to enter into the Sabbath with wrongful divorces or broken relationships that are not fully restored?

YHWH is big and strong. If we sin against Him, He is not mocked. He will bring our sin back to us and throw it in our face, causing us to repent, or be cut off from the nation. How many of us have been cut off from the nation by our failure to set past relationships right, yet we do not even realize it?

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 7:9-11

9 "Therefore know that YHWH your Elohim, He is Elohim, the faithful Elohim who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments;

10 and He repays those who hate Him to their face, to destroy them. He will not be slack with him who hates Him; He will repay him to his face.

11 Therefore you shall keep the commandment, the statutes, and the judgments which I command you today, to observe them."

YHWH tells us to take care of widows and orphans.

Yeshayahu (Isaiah) 1:17

***17 "Learn to do good;
Seek justice,
Rebuke the oppressor;
Defend the fatherless,
Plead for the widow."***

Women who are put away without rightful cause are really widows of a sort, and their children are effectively fatherless. Since YHWH tells us to seek justice, it is our job to rebuke their oppressors, and defend the widows and orphans. But how can we do this, if we are not organized?

The Torah tells us to appoint judges and officers in all of our gates. This is precisely so that we can seek to establish justice in our assemblies, and keep those who refuse to maintain good relationships out.

Devarim (Deuteronomy) 16:18

18 "You shall appoint judges and officers in all your gates, which YHWH your Elohim gives you, according to your tribes, and they shall judge the people with just judgment."

At the end of the day, YHWH's kingdom is His people. If our relationships to others in His body are severed, then Yeshua's body is all cut up inside. How can His body live when it has so many knife wounds?

Shaul pleads with us in the name of our Master Yeshua Messiah, that there be no divisions among us, but that we be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 1:10

10 Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Adon Yeshua Messiah, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

Are we willing to submit to these words? Are we willing to do whatever is in our power to restore relationship with the rest of the children He has chosen? We know that not all of His people will rise to this challenge, but we also know that this is the test, to see who is approved, and who is not.

Qorintim Aleph (1st Corinthians) 11:18-19
18 For first of all, when you come together as an assembly, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it.
19 For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you.

There will always be tares among the wheat, and goats among the sheep; it cannot be helped, for it is all part of the manner in which YHWH refines silver and gold. However, we need to make sure that we are among those who try to do all that we can to live out our lives with our brothers and sisters in the right way, treating others as we would like to be treated.

Mattityahu (Matthew) 7:12
12 “Therefore, whatever you want men to do to you, do also to them, for this is the Torah and the Prophets.”

Congregational servants have a responsibility to care for the flock that is under their care. Not only do they need to make sure that they are not admitting anyone who practices any of the four abominations listed in Acts 15, but they also need to make sure that all those joined to their assembly are submitted to the understanding that Yeshua wants us to build, maintain, and restore broken relationships.

He who has an ear, let him hear.

Tithes, Gifts, and Offerings:

Helping to build YHWH's kingdom is a sacred privilege and a responsibility for all of YHWH's people Israel, and YHWH promises to bless those who cheerfully give to His work (Exodus 25:2). In fact, He tells us to test Him in this (Malachi 3:10).

If you would like to receive your blessing for cheerfully giving back part of what your Creator has given you, you can send it electronically through the website, at www.nazareneisrael.org, or you can send it through the post to:

Nazarene Israel
P.O. Box 2905
Denton, TX 76202
USA

Please know that your tithes, gifts, and offerings will be carefully and fearfully handled for the furtherance of the Great Commission.

May the Name of YHWH be glorified, amein.