

Living The Way: The Path of the Circumcised Heart

When we look at all those who call themselves Christians in the world today and throughout the last 2000 years we see a great contrast not only in doctrine but, from the perspective of many unsaved viewers, we see a great contrast in actions.

We see in some, who are so convinced that Grace is so great, that they can behave in anyway at all and yet still consider themselves 'saved'. We see others who though most sincere in their devotion to our Messiah, become virtual Jews and believe in keeping the feasts in a real literal way and in being circumcised and trying to follow all the Rabbinical ordinances regarding food for example.

So, on the one hand we see many who do not consider their day-to-day actions very important at all with regard to their faith or more obviously, those who see their faith having little relevance to their day to day actions. And on the other hand we see those who appear very legalistic in their daily lives and actions and don't appear to enjoy the freedom and abundant life that our Messiah promised us.

How have we arrived at such a confused and therefore poor witness and what guiding principles if any should be set before us?

Hellenism:

Firstly, as to the how or why, I believe that this is primarily a result of Hellenism. Hellenism is the Greek philosophical mindset. It began to permeate the Hebraic mindset as early as 324 BC with the arrival of Alexander the Great in Israel and made considerable inroads into the fellowship of believers with the actions of Emperor Constantine from 312 AD onwards.

While I do not have the time today to argue for this understanding, I do want to highlight some pointers to it.

Hellenism has introduced many eastern philosophical constructs to the church which most are unaware of. Most of the early (100 AD to 500 AD) Christian 'fathers' were strongly influenced by Plato and Socrates, etc. Concepts such as the immortality of the soul and the separation of the soul, spirit and mind were Greek concepts and not Hebraic understandings. While many Christian scholars today argue for the trichotomous or dichotomous view of man, the Hebrews understood the mind and body to be one unit. They did not separate the mind from the soul and spirit. Thus the Shema of Israel which states in part *"to love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your mind and with all your soul"*, is really just using a form of speech to state the case by repeating the injunction 3 times, NOT to separate these three entities.

I believe that the Hellenising of the scriptures helps explain how Martin Luther could be so anti-Semitic; how he could consider the Letter of James and the Book of Revelations to not be worthy of being part of the Bible (but added as appendices); how Luther, Calvin & Svingli could have people killed in many horrific ways including being burned, drowned and executed because they did not agree with infant baptism!*

Hellenism also led to the concept, which was fostered during the Dark - and Middle Ages, that only learned men were able to interpret the Word of God. This concept, which is rooted in the 'Wisdom Schools' of the Greek philosophers, has wreaked havoc among Christians ever since. The Hellenistic spirit working in such men distorted the teachings of the Bible in a most grievous manner.

The difference between Hellenistic and Hebraic thought is like night and day. Greek thought comes from an abstract perspective that permits everything to be dissected into the most minute details, without the requirement of maintaining a connection between the various parts. In contrast, in Hebrew

* The Protesters by Alan Eyre p 43,52..

thinking everything remains connected; simply, because it holds the view that every action has a consequence.

The Apostle Paul demonstrates this very clearly with his 'body concept' in his first letter to the Corinthian Church. 1 Corinthians 12 is very much an outline of Hebraic thinking, ie. everything has consequences and no-one can claim to be self-sufficient for everyone has needs that can only be filled by someone else. Therefore, interdependency is a biblical, and thus an Hebraic concept. By contrast, Greek thinking will eventually express itself in Darwinianism, ie. the survival of the fittest.

In my view, all Christians should be well informed concerning the influence of Hellenism in Christianity. The issue is, however, a very complex one.

Nevertheless, I want to take a look at some key-factors in this issue:

The plain meaning of the term Hellenism is 'The Way of the Greeks'. But what is this Way of the Greeks? It is the way of Philosophy, or 'the manipulation of society'.

As in many ways Hellenism is in opposition to Hebraic thought, it has resulted in many Christians who may acknowledge with their lips that they are part of the body of the Messiah (Christ), but whose actual lives demonstrate the opposite— in a self-caring and self-serving lifestyle. In their view, the interpretation of the Scriptures is also very much a personal thing— between the Holy Spirit and them!

We need to appreciate that the Bible is a Hebraic book written by 65 Hebrew authors, and Luke, to Hebrews as well as to Gentiles who are adopted into God's chosen race. Luke may even have been a proselytised Jew. At the very least, Luke spent a lot of time in the company of a Pharisee in Paul.

The lens of Hellenism is a most serious and distorting lens.

There are many poor translations evident, especially in the New Covenant writings which have resulted from this Hellenisation. The 1st verse of the 1st book of Matthew is an example where our Saviour is described as Jesus Christ, as if Christ were the surname of Yeshua The Messiah. Even the term Christ is a poor translation for the Hebrew word *Mashiach* meaning 'Anointed One'. We may well ask why the name of the mother of Yeshua was converted from Miriam to Mary when in the OT it was left as Miriam (as in the case of Mose's older sister). Apparently, the name of Yeshua's brother Ya'akov was translated to James so that funding could be extracted from the King James of England to produce the KJV of 1611.

The Language of the NT:

Hebrew and Aramaic were languages of Jews living in Israel in the first century, and it appears that the New Testament was first written in these languages.

A number of noted scholars have argued that at least portions of the New Testament were originally penned in a Semitic tongue. This argument has especially been asserted of the four Gospels, Acts, and Revelation.

For example:

When we turn to the New Testament we find that there are reasons for suspecting a Hebrew or Aramaic original for the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, John and for the apocalypse.

- Hugh J. Schonfield; *An Old Hebrew Text of St. Matthew's Gospel*; 1927; p. vii

It also appears that the evidence is very strong that the Gospel of Matthew was originally written in Hebrew.

All of the "Church Fathers", both East and West, testified to the Semitic origin of at least the Book of Matthew, as the following quotes demonstrate:

Papias (150-170 C.E.)

Matthew composed the words in the Hebrew dialect, and each translated as he was able.

Ireneus (170 C.E.)

Matthew also issued a written Gospel among the Hebrews in their own dialect.

Origen (c. 210 C.E.)

The first [Gospel] is written according to Matthew, the same that was once a tax collector, but afterwards an emissary of Yeshua the Messiah, who having published it for the Jewish believers, wrote it in Hebrew.

Eusebius (c. 315 C.E.)

Matthew also, having first proclaimed the Gospel in Hebrew, when on the point of going also to the other nations, committed it to writing in his native tongue, and thus supplied the want of his presence to them by his writings. Pantaenus... penetrated as far as India, where it is reported that he found the Gospel according to Matthew, which had been delivered before his arrival to some who had the knowledge of Messiah, to whom Bartholomew, one of the emissaries, as it is said, had proclaimed, and left them the writing of Matthew in Hebrew letters.

Epiphanius (370 C.E.)

They [the Nazarenes] have the Gospel according to Matthew quite complete in Hebrew, for this Gospel is certainly still preserved among them as it was first written, in Hebrew letters.

Semitic Idiomatic Expressions

There are close to 28 000 Greek manuscripts or fragments containing all or part of the NT (Messianic Scriptures). The alarming fact is that "every one of these handwritten copies differs from every other one"! This being the case then, which one was the Greek manuscript breathed-out by the Almighty? (If we believe that the original autographs were inerrant and inspired).

For example, in the text of Ephesians 1:18, one Greek manuscript reads, "the eyes of your heart being enlightened", whereas a different Greek manuscript reads, "the eyes of your understanding being enlightened". Now which word represents the actual word which the "Almighty inspired to be written - "heart" or "understanding"?

If the original text was not Greek, but Hebrew or Aramaic, the different Greek readings are easily explained as being translations. In Hebrew idiom the heart is the seat of the mind or thoughts, whereas in Greek idiom (as with English) the heart is the seat of the emotions. Thus one translator rendered the Hebrew word for "heart" by the Greek word for "heart", while the other rendered it by the Greek word for "understanding". Both renderings then are valid; one as a "literal" translation of the Hebrew word (carrying also the danger of being misunderstood as "emotions" by the Greek or English reader); the other as a translation of the Hebrew concept. Thus variant Greek manuscripts may not necessarily be in conflict with one another if we consider them to be translations of an inspired Hebrew or Aramaic original.†

Another evidence for a Semitic background for the New Testament is the abundance of Semitic idiomatic expressions in the New Testament text. Idiomatic expressions are phrases whose literal meanings are nonsense, but which have special meanings in a particular language. For example, the English phrase "in a pickle" has nothing to do with pickles, but means to be in trouble. When translated into Aramaic it is meaningless.

Several Semitic idiomatic expressions appear in the New Testament, the following are only a few:

- "good eye" meaning "generous" and "bad eye" meaning "stingy" (Mt.6:22-23; Lk. 11:34)
- "bind" meaning "prohibit" and "loose" meaning "permit" (Mt. 16:19; 18:18)
- Use of the word "word" to mean "matter" or "thing" (1 Cor. 12:8)

For to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, and to another the word of knowledge according to the same Spirit;

† From Introduction to **The Scriptures 1998** Copyright by the Institute for Scripture Research (ISR)

- Use of the word "Heaven" as a euphemism for "God" (Mt. 5:3; 21:25, Lk. 15:18; Jn. 3:27)

I will mention a couple of examples which highlight the issues that arise from the somewhat poor quality of the Greek translations from the Hebrew or Aramaic originals:

Mt. 26:6 = Mk. 14:3

And when Y'shua was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper,

Lepers were not permitted to live in the city (see Lev. 13:46). Since ancient Hebrew and Aramaic were written without vowels, there was no distinction between the Aramaic words GAR'BA (leper) and GARABA (jar maker or jar merchant). Since in this story a woman pours oil from a jar it is apparent that Simon was most probably a jar merchant or jar maker and not a leper.

Acts 8:26

So he [Phillip] arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship. Acts 8:27 NKJV

The man in Acts 8:27 appears to be a proselyte to Judaism since he seems to be making the Torah-required pilgrimage to Jerusalem (Deut. 16:16). The Torah, however, forbids a eunuch both from becoming a proselyte Jew, and from worshiping at the Temple (Deut. 23:1). This also raises the question of why one would become a eunuch (that is, be castrated) for the sake of the Kingdom of Heaven. After all eunuchs are excluded from the assembly of Israel. (Deut 23:1) The word for "eunuch" in the Aramaic manuscripts of both of these passages is which can mean "eunuch" but can also mean "believer" or "faithful one" as it clearly means here.

Mt. 19:24 = Mk. 10:25 = Lk. 18:25

...it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God.

The word for "camel" in the Aramaic manuscripts is which can mean "camel" but can also refer to a "large rope," which is certainly the meaning here.

Even the original manuscript order had an important significance. It agreed with the precept that the message was to the Jews first and then to the Gentiles. It also agrees with the concept that Ya'akov (James), Kefa (Peter) and Yochanan (John) were emissaries that come BEFORE Paul (Gal. 1:17) and with the concept that Kefa, Ya'akov and Yochanan served as three pillars which lend authority upon which Paul's message was built (Gal. 2:9) and not vice-versa. The reader of the NT was intended to read the "Jewish" epistles FIRST and then to read the Pauline epistles already having understood the Jewish epistles. The NT reader was intended to read Ya'akov's (James') admonition concerning faith and works (Ya'akov 2) as well as Kefa's warnings about Paul being difficult to understand and often twisted (2 Kefa 3:15-16) etc. before ever attempting to understand the writings of Paul.

What about our Messiah's name - Jesus, Yeshua or Yahushua?

It appears the original versions of Hebrews used 'Yahushua', which translated directly into English gives us the name Joshua; whereas the rest of the NT used the shortened form of 'Yeshua'. This Hebrew name means "salvation".

There is no letter J in the Hebrew language and it did not even exist in the English language until the 14th Century. Should we therefore use Joshua or Yeshua rather than the mistranslated Jesus? I leave that to your own determination. At least we can be sure that when we petition Yahweh in the name of our Messiah we can be sure that God knows who we are talking about whether we use Jesus; Yeshua or Yahushua!

Hellenising leads to a spiritualizing of the Holy Scriptures that in turn allows such unhelpful and misleading doctrines like Calvinism's TULIP principles to flourish.

Another example – look at these comments on ‘Irresistible Grace’ (the ‘I’ in TULIP) from Prof John Murray (a Calvinist theologian):

*“The glory of God is nowhere more effulgent than in the face of Jesus Christ. Hence unbelief is **resistance of grace at the zenith of its disclosure and overture.***

*... **The enmity of the human heart is most virulent at the point of the supreme revelation of God’s glory.** “*

Where is there any Biblical support for this notion? To suggest that accepting the Gospel is the hardest thing for mankind to freely choose is to deny the reality of Yeshua’s life. His first public statement was ‘Repent, for the Kingdom of God is near’. If it were so impossible would the greatest teacher who ever lived start with this simple statement and call to turn to God. Surely, he would have developed his case over time before coming to such an impossible request?

Accepting the Messiah is not the difficult part – it is living for our Lord that challenges people because this is where our lives and daily choices are called to account. This is where our free will allows the attractiveness of sin to continue to call us to turn from the Messiah. From Adam & Eve’s example to today this lesson is clear – Adam & Eve knew God- they did not need to accept Him or His Messiah, yet their free will and the attractiveness of rebellion got the better of even them.

Quoting Frank Selch (from “Is There A Need For A Fresh Reformation Of The Church?”):

“Without going into detail here it seems this de-judaising [another term for Helenising] was effected to help remove the Jewishness of the Bible.

- If the Jewish race could be made to disappear, there would be no physical testimony to the Creator God.
- the ‘New-Testament’ could stand as a book of its own.
- the ‘Old Testament’ i.e the Hebrew Bible could be relegated to a museum as a historical record or Allegory.
- Without the Jewish race as a witness, Christianity is free to develop into whatever religion it desires.”

This all leads to embracing a ‘Christ’ of faith who can be whatever we want him to be; not the historical Messiah. Frank would even suggest we would be better to avoid the term ‘Christ’ and use Messiah instead as Messiah still carries a Hebraic underpinning and understanding.

Obedience:

When we accept Yeshua (I will normally use Yeshua rather than Jesus from now on) as our Lord and Saviour, hopefully those who have led us to the Messiah will have taught us something of what it means to be a believer and told us that the Apostle Paul called us to be like him and be “under Christ’s law” (1 Cor 9:21). The apostle John in his first letter also said, referring to Yeshua and our obedience to him:

We know that we have come to know him if we obey his commands. The man who says, “I know him,” but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him (1 John 2:3-4).

John sets up a simple contrast. Those who obey Yeshua’s commands have come to know him. Those who claim to know him but do not obey are liars. Yeshua told us what happens to liars:

“But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars—their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulphur” (Revelation 21:8).

Yeshua himself said to the rich man who asked him what he needed to do to enjoy life in the Coming Age (i.e. eternal life) “...

If you want to enter life, obey the commandments." "Which ones?" the man inquired. Yeshua replied, "Do not murder, do not commit adultery, do not steal, do not give false testimony, honour your father and mother,' and 'love your neighbour as yourself.'" (Matt 19:18-19)

And Yeshua even added that this was not enough! In fact Yeshua intensified the Torah.

Note firstly that the core of the Divine Instructions (Torah) given at Sinai are repeated in Gal 5:19-21

The acts of the sinful nature are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God.

In particular in Matt 5:17-19 he makes it very clear he did not come to abolish God's commandments:

"Do not think that I have come to abolish the (Torah) or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfil them. I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smallest letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the (Torah) until everything is accomplished. Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commands will be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

Yeshua tells us in Matt 5:17 that he came not to remove or abolish the Torah but to complete it. When he said *'You have heard it said... but I say to you ...'* he is not cancelling the Torah but intensifying or enhancing it.

How is it intensified?

Yeshua is declaring here that it is a heart or mind matter not a legalistic matter.

It is not the 'letter of the law' or outward observance that matters but having a mindset on doing the will of the Father.

Note that in Romans 7:4,6 *So, my brothers, you also died to the law through the body of Christ, that you might belong to another, to him who was raised from the dead, in order that we might bear fruit to God. and*

But now, by dying to what once bound us, we have been released from the (legalistic observance of the Torah and Rabbinic) law so that we serve in the new way of the Spirit, and not in the old way of the written code (letter).

Here Paul tells us that when we become part of the body of Yeshua, we die to the law. Yet look at Romans 3:31 *"Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law"*

How can we die to the Law and yet not nullify, it but uphold it?

When our heart is circumcised (remember that the Hebraic use of the word heart means the centre of our thoughts and understanding) we will act with humility and obedience such that we uphold the intent of the law, not the letter of the law.

Yahweh wants a loving submission not an outward appearance of submission (perhaps because of the fear of consequences) with an internally uncircumcised heart. We are released from a legalistic observance of the Torah & Rabbinical law.

Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are

*summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbour. **Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law.** (Romans 13: 8-10)*

I would now like to quote and paraphrase a little from Frank Selch's new book 'The Torah: Divine Instructions or Mosaic Law?'

The 613 instructions of Sinai consist of two parts.

1. *The Ten Words or Commandments and*
2. *The 603 ritual and ceremonial laws.*

The Ten Words clearly stand apart from all the others, and, as the New Covenant writings show, have a global perspective. The purpose of the remaining 603 is to teach Israel in the context of its own time, how to live as a God-based society.

These ordinances or commandments were only partially given as judicial law, however, they do not comprise all of Torah. If, therefore, we were to reject Torah as a whole, we would also deprive ourselves of the only source of knowledge about God who created us. It is from the Torah, i.e. from Genesis to Deuteronomy, that we receive our initial understanding of the HOLY ONE, the ETERNAL CREATOR and His Universal Law. For example, the book of Genesis teaches us that God exists. Exodus speaks to us about His great love and faithfulness to the promises He made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and Israel's salvation of grace, through faith. In the book of Leviticus we learn about the awesomeness of sin and God's Mercy. Without the books of Moses we would know little about God's nature or His attributes, the fall of man and God's plan of redemption. The list is endless! And this is TORAH (**Divine Instruction**); that we may know Him, the Eternal One Who made us— and His ways.

The 613 Commandments (Mitzvoth) of Sinai were never meant as legal articles of salvation for Israel, but as their keepers, and as a blessing and, above all as testimonies to their salvation (c/f.Ps.119:2,14,22,31,36,46, 59, etc. – this Psalm speaks many times about a heart relationship – look it up for homework!).

They were meant as instruments to refine them as the people of God. The Israelites were delivered by the Grace of God from Egypt and chosen by Him as His special people; to be set aside (Hebrew = *qodesh* - made holy) for His purposes, among all the nations. The discipline of Sinai was intended by the Eternal to prepare them for their true King and their mission to and among the Gentiles.

One major error, in correctly representing the mind of Paul, is found in Romans 10:4. Most translations say the following, or very similar:

'...for Christ (Messiah) is the end of the law to righteousness for everyone who believes...'

This verse is read by many to mean that Christ put an end to the law, i.e. the Jewish Torah. (We are now under grace!) But what a contradiction in terms! Yeshua Himself stated emphatically that He had not come to destroy the Torah! Yet, Christians took it upon themselves to do this very thing. As a result, hatred spread from church pulpits and fanatical, misled Christians went and confiscated Torah scrolls and burned them, as well as other sacred Jewish writings, in special bonfires.

Is it so difficult to grasp why Rabbis throughout the centuries called upon their congregations to reject THE WAY - Yeshua, if His followers could treat the Holy Scriptures with such contempt?

However, this is not what Paul had written. The phrase, when interpreted correctly, is clearly a Hebrew one. It summarises the hope of Israelites of many centuries. Therefore, if we were to translate this verse from a Hebrew perspective, it would read thus;

'For Messiah is the GOAL, AIM or PURPOSE of Torah, for righteousness to everyone, who believes...'[‡]
Did not Yeshua Himself speak of the very same thing as He walked with the two disciples on the road to Emmaus; and again just before His Ascension into glory, (c/f Lk.24:26-27,32,44-45)?

The New Covenant is TORAH (ie. Instruction) given on better promises.[§]

When we consider, alongside the above, the statement by Yeshua (Matt. 5:17) that He had come, '....not to ABOLISH THE TORAH, but to fulfil (complete is a better translation)...' we can see light on a statement that is confusing for many.

How did Yeshua fulfil the Law?

One of the most difficult words to define is the Greek word 'plerosai' in Matt. 5:17, which is commonly translated as 'fulfil'. The difficulty arises when we link this word with the word *law*, since the Hebrew word Torah, commonly translated as LAW, does not really mean Law. 'Fulfil' is just one of a number of choices open to the translator from the following, e.g. *to make replete, to make up a deficiency, to furnish, to satisfy, to execute an office, to finish a task, to accomplish, to complete, to perfect.*

As indicated above, and clarified shortly, the Commandments of Sinai were never given as judicial law. They were given so that sin may be identified and human weakness be exposed. The Torah, together with the Prophets and the Writings (Hebrew: T^enach) is an unfinished document. Any serious student of the O.T. will agree with this. In fact, some of the ancient Rabbis stated that, when Messiah comes, He will explain the unclear portions of Torah. It is recorded in John's Gospel that even the Samaritans held such a hope: e.g.

'The woman said to Him (Yeshua), "I know that Messiah is coming; when He comes, He will declare all things to us". (John 4:25)

To this very day, Jewish People all over, can be heard echoing this sentiment.

If then the above is true, then the meaning of the word, which Yeshua used in the Matthew passage, has to be: 'to complete'. In other words, Yeshua, the Messiah of Israel completes God's instructions to the Children of Israel and humanity as a whole.

The Sermon on the Mount is a partial fulfilment of this, where Yeshua reinterprets the Torah!': "You have heard that it was said, ... but I say unto you...."

If then the Torah is God's Revelation to His People concerning His Person, His Nature, His Holiness...

- Without the Torah, we have no way of knowing about the God who created the cosmos and us.
- Without the Torah, we would have no understanding of the ways of God and why our world is in such a mess.

[‡] τέλος (telos) from a primary tello (to set out for a definite point or goal); - the core meaning of telos is end to which all things relate, the aim, purpose. It is worth noting that the NASB, published by Holman Bible Publishers, indicates in the margin of Ro.10:4 that 'goal' is an alternate reading to 'end'. Why is this understanding not incorporated into the text, if not for doctrinal purpose?

[§] David H.Stern, Complete Jewish Bible (Maryland: Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc. 1998) xlii; c/f.Heb.7:11

- Without the COMPLETED TORAH, we would have no way of knowing that the Word became flesh in Messiah Yeshua to complete God's work of Restoration and Redemption for all mankind.
- Without the COMPLETED TORAH (Yeshua), we would have no way out of the mess we have created.

It would therefore be utter nonsense to suggest that the either the Hebrew Scripture or the New Covenant writings could exist - one without the other.

These thoughts are emphasised by Dr. Martin Lloyd-Jones in his commentary on 'The Law', as follows:

*'...there is nothing, which is so wrong and which so denies truth, as anti-nomianism, i.e. the position of those who are so concerned about doctrine (law), that they never trouble themselves about their practices. As long as their minds are clear about doctrine, they don't care how they live. They are the people who think of Salvation only theoretically and never put it into practice...^{1**}*

In other words, they have no HALACHA (Hebrew for way of living)!

HALACHA, meaning: the practical outworking and/or implementation of a (religious) principle, or THE WAY (c/f. Jn.14:6). This importance for the Jewish People of knowing how to walk as such (or live their daily lives) is outlined in a large body of Rabbinic writings called the Shulchan Aruch (literally 'An Ordered Table'). This body of writings has been the practical application, for everyday Jewish life, of the laws and ordinances contained in the Tenach. It is this Halacha, the practical life of the Jewish People, which has kept them a separate people, and thus preserved them from assimilation with other cultures throughout the ages.

To the careful and diligent student of the Scriptures it eventually becomes obvious that God had never intended a legalistic bondage to His Commandments. Although the Israelites tried to follow Torah, they only did so in a legalistic sense and not with their hearts. It is ironic, but the narrative of the Torah shows us, that Moses was keenly aware that they did not live by the Spirit of Torah.

A Matter of the Heart...

The teachings of Moses in Deuteronomy point out that Torah is essentially a thing of the heart. The Torah stands also as a testimony to the wickedness of the human heart. This is confirmed by the prophet Jeremiah nearly a thousand years later; e.g.

'And you shall love the LORD your God with all your HEART and with all your life (Heb. Nephesh -soul) and with all your might. And these things, which I am commanding you today shall be on your HEART... (Deut. 6.:4-6; c/f 10:16)

"Take this Book of the Torah, and put it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God that it may be there as a witness against you; for I know your rebellion and your stiff neck. If today, while I am yet alive with you, you have been rebellious against the LORD, then how much more after my death?" (Deut.31:26-27)

"The heart is deceitful above all things, and desperately wicked; I, the LORD, search the heart..."

Jer.17:9

'But this is the new Covenant which I will make with the house of Israel; after those days', declares the LORD, 'I will put my Torah within them, and on THEIR HEARTS I will write it; and I will be their God and they shall be My People.' *Jer.31:31-33*

^{**} D.Martyn Lloyd Jones, Romans; The Law: Its functions and Limits, p.88.

Despite this however, in all of Israel's history we find in the Scriptural record only a handful of men willing to surrender themselves totally to the Eternal One.

We have been focusing on having a heart for the Eternal One, that is on loving Him. What is love?

'Love is not a feeling of ecstatic pleasure. It is not a high religious rapture. It is an eternal principle, or law, of life. God has not left sinful mortals to work out their own interpretation of love, but has carefully shown what is involved so that only the most obstinate need remain in ignorance.

If you pass light through a spectrum or glass prism, it breaks down into the colours of the rainbow. We then realise that light is the combination of the colours of the rainbow. When love is placed under the prism of God's Word, we may see that it is a combination, or blending, of ten eternal principles. These ten aspects of love are verbalised in the Ten commandments:

1. **LOYALTY.** "No other gods.." God is our Creator and Redeemer. Therefore we should love Him before everything else. He is to be first and last and best in everything. Love is loyal.

2. **FAITHFULNESS.** "No idols..." In forbidding us from worshiping a god of our own making, the LORD says, "I the LORD your God am a jealous God." He is the Husband of His people. Love requires faithfulness in our covenant to love Him with the kind of devotion that belongs to no other. The Bible uses the marriage covenant and relationship to illustrate the kind of faithfulness that love for God requires. The prophets likened Israel's unfaithfulness to the covenant-keeping Yahweh as harlotry and whoredom. Apostasy is spiritual adultery.

3. **REVERENCE.** "Do not take the name of God in vain..." God's name is holy and is to be held in awe and reverence. Reverence is the foundation of all true worship. God cannot do anything with an irreverent man.

4. **HOLINESS.** "Keep the Sabbath holy..." The fourth precept of the Decalogue was given to inculcate and illustrate holiness - wholeness for God, sanctification, separation and dedication to His service. Holiness is not rapture or the exercise of a high degree of religious feelings under extraordinary circumstances. It is doing the will of God, obeying His Word with unquestioning confidence - Love is holy. Just as the Sabbath was set aside, so are God's People meant to be set aside— HOLY.

5. **RESPECT FOR AUTHORITY.** "Honour your father and mother..." The fifth commandment enjoins respect, not only for parents, but for all legitimate authority. Love does not disrespect those over us in authority. Paul warns Timothy, 'This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. for men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy...' 2 Tim.3:1,2.

6. **RESPECT FOR LIFE.** "Do not murder..." like the other commandments, is exceedingly broad. In His Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua showed that He did not come to weaken, much less do away with, the Decalogue, but to show its far-reaching claims. To be angry with a brother without cause or to rail on him is to be in danger of judgment and hell-fire. Love will seek to preserve and promote life, not destroy and kill, even as Yeshua said, "The thief comes to steal, to kill and to destroy: I have come that you may have life, and that you may have it more abundantly." Jn.10:10. Paul also said, "What? don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy spirit, which is in you, which you have of God, and that you are not your own?" 1 Cor.6:19. "If any man defile the temple of God, Him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple you are." 1 Cor.3:17. Multitudes of professed Christians live intemperately, abusing their health and indulge in debilitating habits, not knowing that for all these things God shall bring them into judgment.

7. **PURITY.** “No adultery...” Love is pure. Yeshua warned us that the last days would be marked by the kind of widespread immorality which existed in the time of Noah and Lot. We scarcely need to be reminded that we are living in the midst of an immoral revolution. The church is supposed to be the salt, which preserves society from utter corruption, but what can we expect when professed churches become a cage of every unclean and hateful bird?

8. **HONESTY.** “Don’t steal...” Love is honest, and it always gives good measure, pressed down and running over.

9. **TRUTHFULNESS.** “No false witness...” The Eternal God is a God of truth, and His Spirit is called the Spirit of truth. We are commanded to speak the truth in love (Ephes.4: 1-5).

10. **CONTENTMENT.** “No coveting...” The selfish heart will always covet; but where love is, there will be ‘godliness with contentment.’ This final Commandment is very much the hinge-pin for the preceding nine. If we reflect on the incident reported by Luke concerning the rich ruler (Luke 18:18-23), we find that he kept all of the commandments – except the last, and rather walked away from the kingdom of God, than repent of the sin of coveting.

Here is love. Love is loyal, faithful, reverent and holy. It respects authority and life. It is pure, honest, truthful and contented. The Ten Commandments describe the kind of people God will have in His Kingdom. Everything contrary and rebellious to these eternal principles of a righteous character will be shut out. The nature of sin needs to be clearly defined, and in the Ten Commandments it is presented in such a clear and unambiguous manner that both learned and ignorant may understand. Sin is the transgression of this Torah (1 Jn.3:4 Everyone who sins breaks the law; in fact, sin is lawlessness), and the wages of sin is death (Rom 6:23).

The Eternal One introduced Himself formally to the children of Israel when He gave them the Commandments. He formalizes the fact that it was through His mighty hand that they were set free from the bondage to Pharaoh. The Scriptures tell us that Israel became the ‘wife’ of God at Mount Sinai by promise (‘...**if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people...**’ Exod.19:1-5)^{††} through covenant (Isa. 54:6; Jer.3:20; Ezek.16:32). I firmly believe that it is the love of (for) God, which is the operative here, and the Commandments are in a sense like a marriage contract— emphasised by the Deuteronomic ordinance given on the plain of Moab (Deut. 6:4-6). The Commandments are a checklist for Israel to measure her devotion by. If we then read the Commandments directly from the Hebrew text and with the Deuteronomic text in mind, we might render them as follows; the English rendition of the essence of the actual Hebrew text is in CAPS:

- If (because) you love me, I WILL BE YOUR ONLY GOD;
- If you love me, YOU WILL HAVE NO IDOLS;
- If you love me, YOU WILL NOT DISHONOUR THE NAME OF THE LORD YOUR GOD

^{††} Christian scholars generally regard the Sinaitic Covenant as nothing more than a treaty between two unequal partners. Consequently, according to this view, when Israel failed to keep to the terms of the Covenant, the descendants of Jacob were disenfranchised on the conditions of that covenant— even though they were still God’s people, they had forfeited their rights to the land and adherent promises. This interpretation is embedded in what some call *The Palestinian Covenant* (See *The Covenants* by Kevin Conner & Ken Malmin, (Portland: Bible Temple; 1976) p.52-58). On the surface this view seems to be correct if it based solely on the terms of Sinai and Moab. However, it is important not to disregard the reassurances of God’s everlasting faithfulness toward Israel as a nation (c/f. Jer.30:35-37; Romans Ch 9-11). Probably the most significant and negative outcome of the views referred to above is *Replacement Theology*, which holds that national Israel has been replace by God with *spiritual* Israel, ie. The Church.

- If you love, me you will REMEMBER THE SABBATH;
- If you love me, you will HONOUR YOUR FATHER AND MOTHER;
- *If you love me, YOU WILL NOT MURDER; COMMIT ADULTERY; STEAL; BEAR FALSE WITNESS OR COVET!*"

The relationship between God and Israel was intended to be a love relationship. In turn, this love relationship between God and the sons of Jacob was meant to be such an extraordinary blessing for the nation Israel, that other nations would pale with envy, Deut 4:6-7

But Israel could not see!

This stubbornness caused Moses to cry out to them, that they would "...circumcise (their) hearts and stiffen (their) necks no more!" (Deut.10:16); "...humble their uncircumcised hearts." (Lev.26:41),

The means of relationship between God and man has always been by way of covenant.

Therefore, the question of sacrifice and covenant is one, which must stand central in any Gospel presentation, and Christian/Jewish dialogue, as the challenge of the Messiah's death, and Resurrection, must stand before the entire world, no dialogue can have real profitability unless this question is understood.

Right standing before God through an atoning sacrifice is very much central to the Hebrew Scriptures, alongside the fact that Salvation was ALWAYS by grace alone - through faith. [end quote]

The OT is our teacher:

In Romans 15:4 Paul is referring to the OT when he tells us that the scriptures are there to teach us and direct us. Romans 15:4 *For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope.*

The NT was not completed and compiled at the time he wrote this.

Paul is even clearer in 2 Timothy 3 where he tells us that Timothy had learned the Holy Scriptures from childhood (and therefore Paul was clearly referring only to the OT).

2 Tim 3:14-17 *But as for you, continue in what you have learned and have become convinced of, because you know those from whom you learned it, and **how from infancy you have known the holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work"***

So given the very clear injunction to learn from the Torah are we to obey the Mosaic Covenant?

Consider Acts 15: A conference was held to consider what should be required of the Gentiles in reference to the Mosaic system. Acts 15:5 states that "Some of the Pharisaic party who had become believers came forward and declared, 'Those Gentiles must be circumcised and *told to keep the law of Moses.*'"

James declared the following in verses 28, 29: *"It is the decision of the Holy Spirit, and our decision, to lay no further burden upon you [Gentiles] beyond these essentials: you are to abstain from meat that has been offered to idols, from blood, from anything that has been strangled, and from fornication. If you keep yourselves free from these things you will be doing well."*

It was obvious that these prohibitions were partly in deference to Jewish converts. **Remember, that part of loving your neighbour is trying to avoid offending them.** If Gentiles, in their freedom were to partake in certain foods or in sexual immorality, this would be a bad witness to their Jewish neighbours.

The standard of conduct for Christian believers given by Yeshua in the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5, 6, 7) clearly stated the core beliefs for all converts, whether Jew or Gentile.

The apparent hypocrisy of the Apostle Paul:

Upon his visit to Jerusalem in Acts 21 Paul was confronted with a slanderous twisting of his teachings. He was told "You see, brother, how many thousands of Jews there are who believe, and they are all zealous for the Torah; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise their children nor to walk according to the customs." (Acts 21:20-21)

In order to prove that this was nothing more than slander, Paul takes the nazirite vow and goes to make offerings (sacrifices) at the Temple (Acts 21:22-26 & Num. 6:13-21) demonstrating that he himself kept the Torah (Acts 21:24). Paul did and said many things to prove that he both kept and taught the Torah.

He:

- circumcised Timothy (Acts 16:1-3)

"Paul wanted to take him along on the journey, so he circumcised him because of the Jews who lived in that area, for they all knew that his father was a Greek." Note the reason.

- took the nazirite vow (Acts 18:18; 21:17-26)
- taught and observed the Jewish holy days such as:
 - Passover (Acts 20:6; 1Cor. 5:6-8; 11:17-34)
 - Shavuot (Pentecost) (Acts 20:16; 1Cor. 16:8)
 - fasting on the Day of Atonement -Yom Kippur (Acts 27:9)
- and even performed animal sacrifices in the Temple (Acts 21:17-26/Num. 6:13-21; Acts 24:17-18)

Among his more notable statements on the subject are:

- "Neither against the Jewish Torah, nor against the Temple, nor against Caesar have I offended in anything at all." (Acts 25:8)
- "I have done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers." (Acts 28:17)
- "...the Torah is holy and the commandment is holy and just and good." (Rom. 7:12)
- "Do we then nullify the Torah through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we maintain the Torah." (Rom. 3:31).

And yet in the following scriptures he may appear to be contradicting his Torah observance:

Gal 5:1-6, Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. **Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing.** And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to be justified by law*; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. **For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love.** ... **For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: "You shall love your neighbour as yourself."**

Romans 2:25-27 For circumcision is indeed profitable if you keep the law; but if you are a breaker of the law, your circumcision has become uncircumcision. 26 Therefore, if an uncircumcised man keeps the righteous requirements of the law, **will not his uncircumcision be counted as circumcision?** And will not the physically uncircumcised, if he fulfills the law, judge you who, *even with your written code and circumcision, are a transgressor of the law?*

Romans 2:28-29 A man is not a Jew if he is only one outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a man is a Jew if he is one inwardly; **and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code.** Such a man's praise is not from men, but from God.

So has Paul contradicted his words by his Torah observant actions?

No, he has at all times exhibited love – he has loved his Jewish neighbours and not offended them, even at great cost to himself and despite his freedom from the letter of the law. Paul's meekness; his humility; his obedience and his respect for his fellow Jews is a full expression of his circumcised heart.

While *physical* circumcision was absolutely required of Jew and Gentile within the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:9-14), Yeshua, speaking through Paul, made it clear that circumcision is now to be understood in a non-physical, spiritual sense — of the heart, internally and not externally.

Paul says, *“Remember then your former condition, Gentiles as you were by birth, and ‘the uncircumcised’ as you are called by those who call themselves ‘the circumcised’ because of a physical rite. You were at that time excluded from the community of Israel, strangers to God’s covenants and the promises that go with them. Yours was a world without hope and without God. Once you were far off, but now you are in union with Christ Jesus through the shedding of Christ’s blood. For he himself is our peace. Gentiles and Jews, he has made the two one, and in his own body of flesh and blood has broken down the barrier of enmity which separated them; [how?] for he annulled the law [the Torah] with its rules and regulations, so as to create out of the two a single new humanity in himself [not through Moses or the Levitical priesthood], thereby making peace. This was his purpose, to reconcile the two in a single body to God through the cross, by which he killed the enmity. So he came and proclaimed the good news: peace to you who are far off, and peace to those who are near; through him we both alike have access to the Father in the one spirit”* (Eph. 2:11-18, REB).

Note: Eph 2:15 should read *“And enmity (by his flesh and the Torah, because of commands in his commandments) he abolished....”*. The enmity or hostility/separation spoken of here is that between Jew and Gentile and is present because of the flesh (circumcision vs uncircumcision – the physical difference) and Torah (obedience to God’s commands versus ignorance of God’s commands – the difference in actions).

Thus it is the enmity or separation that is abolished NOT the Torah.

The Temple veil was torn apart and access to God was no longer gained through the Levitical system but through God’s resurrected Son and the New Covenant teachings which he ratified with his death. *“This cup is the New Covenant sealed by my blood”* (Luke 22:20).

Consider the question of being estranged from “God’s covenants and the promises that go with them.” These covenants and promises had been made to Israel through Abraham, Moses and David. A major component of the Mosaic system was of course the priesthood given to Levi.

Hebrews from chapters 6 to 10 focuses on the new Priesthood of our Messiah. Hebrews 8:6 is enlightening: *“But now a more excellent service/ministry has come to pass. How much more prominent, higher in rank, preferable or better is a covenant mediator who on better promises has enacted Torah”* ††

Thus, there are two *different* priesthoods, two different services/ministries involved — one begun through Melchizadek and continued through the Levites and the new one through Yeshua. Thus, when the reference is made in Heb 8:13 to the first ministry vanishing or passing away, the writer of this letter, which was written prior to the destruction of the temple in 70 AD, must be referring to the Oral Law or traditions passing away (these had, of course, been regularly condemned by Yeshua during his public ministry).

†† *Translated by Frank Selch from the Greek NT 4th edition United Bible Societies*

Yeshua, now installed as High Priest, said, *“The time has arrived; the kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe the gospel”* (Mark 1:15). The command to believe and obey the Gospel is quite clear, readily understandable, and available to the entire world. It is accessible to all in its simplicity, unhindered by any set of circumstances, legislative, geographic, or otherwise.

It is a matter of the mind not a matter of physical ordinances.

The rite of circumcision best illustrates the enormous change. Circumcision has not been abolished! But the physical is no longer required. It has given way to the spiritual. **We must still all be circumcised in our hearts.** *“The real Jew is one who is inwardly a Jew, and his circumcision is of the heart, spiritual not literal; he receives his commendation not from men but from God”* (Rom. 2:29).

Here, one of the lynch pins of the Old Covenant requirements is finished, but it has retained its meaning in a fulfilled sense. The Old Testament was, as in so many other cases, a shadow of the substance of the Messiah who has now come. Shadows fail, but the full intention of the command remains.

But you Christians, have you come to Mt. Sinai for your instructions? *“No, you have come to Mt. Zion, the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to myriads of angels, to the full concourse and assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God the judge of all...and to Yeshua the mediator of a new covenant...See that you do not refuse to hear the voice that speaks”* (Heb 12:22-25).

Paul writes about some persistent points of division and disagreement in the Christian church in Romans 14. His inspiration is “the law of concern” for fellow man. The issue is special days of worship and what we may or may not eat.

On the question of varying opinions as to food he concludes, *“Let us therefore cease judging one another, but rather make up our minds to place no stumbling block in a fellow Christian’s way. All that I know of the Lord Yeshua convinces me that **nothing is impure in itself**; only, if anyone considers something impure, then for him it is impure. **If your fellow Christian is outraged by what you eat, then you are no longer guided by love.**(Note again his respect for and love of his neighbour – his desire to offend no-one.) Do not let your eating be the ruin of one for whom Christ died. You must not let what you think good be brought into dispute; for the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but justice, peace and love, inspired by the Holy Spirit”* (Rom. 14:13- 17).

When Paul makes the statement in verse 20, “Do not destroy the work of God for the sake of food. *Everything is pure in itself,*” one must assume that the writer’s use of the word *everything* refers to food, not arsenic or barbed wire! i.e there are still some sensible limits in our freedom.

In Paul’s statement we find no support for enforcing Mosaic food laws. The Apostle recognized that a major problem is created if we require converts to Yeshua from the Gentile world to alter their diet by submitting to Moses. This would be to miss the point of the new international faith, *“for the kingdom of God is not in eating and drinking, but justice, peace and joy inspired by the Holy Spirit”* (Rom. 14:17).

The change from Old Covenant requirements to the New Covenant is radical and dramatic. “Thou shalt not kill” is heightened to “love your enemies.” And we are to set out on the ultimate quest for eternal life in the age to come: *“Seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness”* (Matt. 6:33).

The New Covenant demands a love toward God the Creator and His Son Yeshua who gave his life in sacrifice for our sins under a New Covenant. Yeshua said, *“If you love me keep my commandments.”* We enter rest (not a weekly Sabbath observance) by faith and obedience — a “sabbatism” (Heb. 4:9), not a single Sabbath day.

The writer of Hebrews is quite clear about the two different time frames. In chapters one and two he points to the exalted position given to Yeshua now and in the age to come. Hebrews 2:5: *“For it is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come [the coming New Age] which is our theme.”* And the **subjection of this earth** to man is yet future: *“You put everything in subjection beneath his feet. For in subjecting everything to him, God left nothing that is made to be subject. But in fact we do not yet see everything in subjection to man”* (Heb 2:8).

So how pivotal is The Sermon on the Mount?

The Sermon on the Mount (Matthew 5-7) is primarily focused on our own heart attitude to God.

In this sermon, Yeshua told us to be:

1. 'poor in Spirit' (humility – putting God first Prov 3:34),
2. 'Mourners' – appreciate & love others so that we mourn on losing relationship with them – we will be comforted in the Coming Age to be reunited with our departed brothers and sisters in the Lord,
3. 'Meek' – not pushy, demanding and aggressive but gentle and accepting,
4. 'Pure in heart' – not easily led astray by our lusts,
5. 'Peacemakers' – make the effort to heal rifts; to empathise & restore relationships,
6. 'Salt' – add righteous preservative to a sinful world by our actions,
7. 'Light' – our God-honouring actions are so much a part of us that they shine out for all to see – our faith is evidenced by our 'works' (James 2:18)
8. 'Prayerful' – continue to seek relationship with God and His direction in our lives
9. 'Care for our enemies' – help, support and encourage those who are not our brothers & sisters in the Lord Yeshua
10. 'Be righteous' – obedience to 'Christ's laws' (1 Cor 9:21) in all our actions
11. 'Resist not evil' – accept the persecution we receive from unbelievers and not fight back ...?,
12. etc.

The first five of these clearly relate to attitudes of the heart – while they all involve some form of action and relationship; the first five would seem very difficult to undertake from a legalistic attitude where a person's heart was not fully in synch. The rest are active approaches that it may be possible to undertake without a 'right heart' but generally would be much more difficult for a rebellious heart.

I would now like to look at a few significant issues and how our circumcised heart is called to respond. I would like to start with what I consider the greatest evil of our age, abortion.

An Abortion perspective:

This present evil age is built on a wrong, faulty foundation. It cannot stand. It cannot be fixed! No amount of activism on anyone's part can save or ultimately and permanently change it. Instead, it will be totally torn down and replaced with the coming Kingdom—the kingdom government—of Yahweh, which the Messiah will bring at His Second Coming. Does this mean we therefore do not need to alert the world to the evil of abortion or try to save innocent children from this fate? Should we do no more than announce the good news of the Kingdom of God?

Certainly, to think we can change the world or that God calls us to is clearly wrong. However, like the man walking on the beach throwing the starfish back into the sea; surely we can make a difference to some and in so doing be a light to the world?

Consider these scriptures:

Let us not become weary in doing good, for at the proper time we will reap a harvest if we do not give up. Therefore, as we have opportunity, let us do good to all people, especially to those who belong to the family of believers (Gal. 6:9-10)

If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. (James 2:16-17)

"The LORD said . . . 'Any Israelite or any alien living in Israel who gives any of his children to Molech must be put to death. The people of the community are to stone him. . . . by giving his children to Molech,

he has defiled my sanctuary and profaned my holy name. . . . **If the people of the community close their eyes when that man gives one of his children to Molech . . . I will set my face against that man and his family and will cut off from their people both him and all who follow him . . .**" (Leviticus 20:1-5)

"Do this so that innocent blood will not be shed in your land, which the LORD your God is giving you as your inheritance, and so that you will not be guilty of bloodshed." (Deuteronomy 19:10)

"Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of compassion and the God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves have received from God." (2 Corinthians 1:3-4)

"Defend the cause of the weak and fatherless; maintain the rights of the poor and oppressed. Rescue the weak and needy; deliver them from the hand of the wicked." (Psalm 82:3-4)

"Speak up for those who cannot speak for themselves, for the rights of all who are destitute. Speak up and judge fairly; defend the rights of the poor and needy." (Proverbs 31:8-9)

"Anyone, then, who knows the good he ought to do and doesn't do it, sins." (James 4:17)

Rescue those being led away to death; hold back those staggering toward slaughter. If you say, "But we knew nothing about this," does not he who weighs the heart perceive it? Does not he who guards your life know it? Will he not repay each person according to what he has done? (Proverbs 24: 11-12)

When we look more closely at the Hebrew Bible scripture quoted above and others like them we see that generally they are addressed to the leaders or judges of Israel; that is to God's leaders in a nation founded by God. Perhaps then they need not be applicable to us?

We may say we should mind our own business and vice versa – many Europeans during the 2nd World War believed the Jew-killing was none of their business (you probably know well the story of the church beside the railway line that carried many of these Jews to their deaths?). Many Americans in the 1800's thought slave-holding was none of their business. Many Christians in India thought they should ignore the infanticide and 'sati' (wife-burning) that the Hindu's practiced. In case you weren't aware a man now called 'The Father of Mission' one William Carey was the man most responsible for ending the shocking practices of infanticide and wife-burning that occurred in India. Carey was a man who believed in social activism, even in civil disobedience where he thought it could be effective in doing God's work. Yet we know him today as a great and leading example of evangelism. He preached the gospel but he did much more besides. Carey demonstrated the good Samaritan principle in action – he loved his neighbours; his community in his adopted country India.

Do we fulfil our responsibility to the poor by just not stealing their food or to the unborn by just not killing them ourselves? I would suggest that this is not enough. God says to us as 'third parties' not directly involved in these actions:

**O house of David, this is what the LORD says:
" 'Administer justice every morning;
rescue from the hand of his oppressor
the one who has been robbed,
or my wrath will break out and burn like fire
because of the evil you have done—
burn with no one to quench it. (Jer 21:12)**

Note here that **we** are evil if we don't rescue the innocent!!

You may argue that this consequence is addressed only to God's firstborn and we believers in Yeshua having been grafted into the Good Olive Tree are not equally responsible? Yet if we are grafted in aren't we then part of Israel and haven't we seen that Yeshua has intensified the Torah not removed

it; yes, Yeshua has freed us from bondage to ceremonial and rigid legalistic ordinances but he has not freed our hearts from the Father.

As we grow in love for the Father and His only begotten Son, surely our hearts will grow more in-tune with Yahweh's. Yahweh HATES the shedding of innocent blood – should we stand by and ignore it or pretend it does not matter.

There are many examples in the Bible of men and women who were third parties to evil, yet acted in the will of God in getting involved. For example, Jehosheba who took Joash and hid him so he would not be killed.

Abortion is different from most sins – it is the innocent baby who makes it different. After an abortion the mother can be healed but the baby can't. The death of the baby is final and irreversible for this most innocent one.

Yes, it is true that in the case of pregnancy, the mother has a divinely given responsibility, but I can find no scripture that therefore absolves us of our responsibility to her (in saving her from the consequences of participating in murder), but more significantly our responsibility to **"Rescue those being led away to death"**, that is the unborn child.

"Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come . . . take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me something to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me something to drink, I was a stranger and you invited me in, I needed clothes and you clothed me, I was sick and you looked after me, I was in prison and you came to visit me. . . . I tell you the truth, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did for me.' Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me For I was hungry and you gave me nothing to eat, I was thirsty and you gave me nothing to drink, I was a stranger and you did not invite me in, I needed clothes and you did not clothe me, I was sick and in prison and you did not look after me. . . . I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.'" (Matthew 25:31-46)

I suggest you consider Yeshua's words here in terms of the innocent babe being carried to his/her death – 'I was thirsty' or 'I was being led to slaughter' (from Prov 24)

What about Luke 10:27 "... love your neighbour as yourself." As I have already intimated; Love is something you do; love is action, love is commitment. The Great Commission is not called the greatest commandment. Loving God and loving your neighbour is. How do we love our neighbours – surely trying to save them from slaughter and self harm (within limits of course) is part of that?

God tells us we cannot plead ignorance. We know who the unborn are, and we know (or could if we chose to) how, when and where they are being killed here in Brisbane. Tomorrow!

That society's values have come to a place where child-killing has been legalized and accepted, is hard to believe. That the Christian Church by and large has chosen to ignore this incredible violence in our own backyard is even more so. That statistics suggest that at least 20% of our 'born-again' Christian women sitting in our churches have had abortions is staggeringly hard to comprehend.

That they need to experience the amazing forgiveness and mercy of Yeshua if they have not repented and accepted His Way, His Truth and His Life is beyond question.

Of even greater concern perhaps are those who have had abortions after accepting Yeshua as their Lord and Saviour. Perhaps the church and particularly her preachers, have really failed them in allowing them to remain in such ignorance of God's way, by not speaking out God's word on the sanctity of human life.

I have spoken about our freedom from the Mosaic covenant but that if we have circumcised hearts and have submitted our lives to Yeshua we now live under a new Torah; a new promise, a better

promise but also a more demanding one. Freedom from rigidity, from legalism **but not freedom from caring**; not freedom from loving with the Father's heart His most innocent of those created in His image.

There are though many other evils in the world and many other needs. We are called to care for widows and orphans; we are called to exercise discernment amongst our brethren and exclude from fellowship those involved in sexual immorality (1 Cor 5)

*I have written you in my letter not to associate with sexually immoral people— not at all meaning the people of this world who are immoral, or the greedy and swindlers, or idolaters. In that case you would have to leave this world. But now I am writing you that you must not associate with anyone who calls himself a brother but is **sexually immoral or greedy, an idolater or a slanderer, a drunkard or a swindler**. With such a man do not even eat. What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside? God will judge those outside. "Expel the wicked man from among you." (1 Cor 5:11-13)*

Now given that it is God, not believers, who is to judge unbelievers should we do anything at all to address the evils we see in this present evil ages?

Look at Acts 17:16-17

Now while Paul was waiting for them at Athens, his spirit was being provoked within him as he was observing the city full of idols.

*So he was **reasoning in the synagogue with the Jews and the God-fearing Gentiles, and in the market place every day** with those who happened to be present.*

If we take Paul's example, we are called to try to reason with the world; to educate them; to speak to anyone who will listen.

There are clearly very many issues to speak out against and Yahweh gives each of us different gifts and callings so that we may focus on different aspects and evils as we act as a 'light' for our Lord. [remember, our faith is evidenced by our works].

So do we all need to speak out against abortion? Paul calls us to flee sexual immorality (1 Cor 6:18); to flee idolatry (1 Cor 10:14); to flee false doctrines & the love of money (1 Tim 6); to flee wickedness & the evil desire of youth (2 Tim 2:19-22).

There are many evils to avoid and speak out against. The poet and theologian John Donne said:

*The greatest gift of God, I would think, is the gift of life;
The greatest sin of man, it would seem, is to return that gift ungrateful and unopened.*

The killing and murder of the most innocent who have no voice of their own is surely a sin of the greatest violence. God destroyed all people except Noah's family because the earth was filled with violence.

*Gen 6:12-14 God saw how corrupt the earth had become, for all the people on earth had corrupted their ways. So God said to Noah, "I am going to put an end to all people, **for the earth is filled with violence because of them**. I am surely going to destroy both them and the earth. So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and coat it with pitch inside and out.*

This surely shows the seriousness of this issue!

I believe that regardless of our gifts and passions, we all need to be educated on this issue and investigate ways to contribute in the alerting of this world to this great evil. There are very many ways in which we can all play a part – silence is the one action that we must avoid.

A would like to read a quote from Royce Dunn, Director of the USA's Life Chain organisation: *“Adult America equates terrorism with brutal beheadings and heartless bombings perpetrated by radical Islamists; but if tens of millions of our fellow citizens could speak to us, with their questioning eyes piercing our hard hearts, they would recall fellow Americans who mercilessly suctioned, dismembered, tore, cut, crushed, burned, and starved them to death, while no institution in their culture defended them with serious resolve. Instead,”* said Dunn, *“denial ruled the day. Denial by millions of Americans who advocate abortion but would never say they support the killing of preborn boys and girls. Denial by a citizenry who esteem America for her civility when in fact, notwithstanding our Judeo-Christian heritage, America now ranks among the earth's most violent nations. And denial by an institutional Church that claims to be prolife but has yielded much of its heart and integrity to self-indicting rhetoric, passivity, and hypocrisy.”* Anti-Nazi leader and pastor Dietrich Bonhoeffer noted that *no civil law compels the Church to defend the innocent and helpless, but God's moral law surely does.*

Time permitting, I will come back to this and give you some practical ideas on how you can be involved.

General living:

For a change of pace, let us turn briefly to the simple matters of life – to food, to clothes, to jobs, to day-to-day relationships.

As I have already intimated we need not be concerned about what we eat, except to the degree that it may offend others and therefore be a poor witness. We need not be concerned about what we drink except that we avoid drinking alcohol to excess because Paul clearly tells us that drunkards will not inherit the Kingdom of God. We may wear whatever clothes we like but again, if we are walking in humble obedience to Yeshua we will firstly consider what effect our clothes may have on others. This is naturally, something that woman need to be more concerned about because of the more visual nature of men's desires. It is important to see that the responsibility for what a believer wears rests with that believer not the church or the church elders. We are all answerable to God for our own actions – certainly, our brothers and sisters but seek to guide us towards wise choices provided it is loving and gentle guidance not forceful and lacking meekness.

Similarly, our speech, our choice of words is most important but is ours to freely choose. In fact Yeshua told us to take much greater care with what comes out of our mouth than what goes into it, as it comes from our heart and can cause great damage.

Marriage & Adultery??

I do not have time or space here to speak on this very challenging issue, except to highlight for you that it is more difficult to know the mind of God on this issue than you might think – there is no question that God hates divorce and yet he asked a number of Hebrew men to divorce their foreign wives (see the last chapter of Ezra). It appears that Yeshua only sanctioned divorce if adultery had occurred and yet the word he used (in greek – ‘porneia’ does not mean adultery as we would understand it – the Greeks have another word for the usual situation of marital unfaithfulness). I would be happy to address this issue in another session if you are interested in hearing my understanding on scripture on this matter which I have studied in considerable depth over the last 3+ years.

Many of the problems we have in determining how to walk the narrow path can be traced back to the Hellenizing of scripture. For example the Hebraic understanding of marriage is very simple. A man and a woman are essentially married to each other when they are betrothed or engaged, but they become ‘one flesh’ when they have sexual relations. Look at the first clear biblical example of how two people become married in the Hebrew Bible – look at the story of Isaac and Rebecca. They ‘married’ each other by entering Sarah's tent and having sexual intercourse.

If this simple yet very significant act in God's eyes is how we get married how many do you know in your family that have 'married' someone whom they no longer know, yet have not sort God's forgiveness for their 'divorcing' this person and sought God's help in severing this bond of becoming 'one flesh', this spiritual bond. As they are not 'one flesh' in a physical, literal sense; and because Paul made it clear that sexual sin is very significant because all other sins are 'outside' of the body; it would appear reasonable to believe that sexual union creates some form of spiritual bonding and thus needs our Lord's help to release this spiritual bonding.

Conclusion:

In this session, I have tried to show the biblical evidence for the call to live THE WAY; to have 'circumcised hearts'; this call by Yeshua is a call to a heart and mind obedience to God's and the Messiah's commandments, not an adherence to the 'letter of the law' but to the 'spirit of the Torah'.

I have touched on the practical out-workings of a circumcised heart – how we are to be free from doting i's and crossing t's but called to a more intense and deeper obedience, an act of love, an act of commitment to the revelation of Yeshua.

Yeshua calls each of us to walk the narrow path as we best see fit; but our best is only acceptable when our heart and mind are turned to God; when we continually seek the instructions God has given us in His Holy Scriptures. When we do this; we will still make mistakes and at times take steps down the path away from our God; but the moment we sense our error we will repent and turn back because, as Yeshua said 'Repent for the Kingdom of God is near'. May we all be found worthy at the return of our Messiah to take part in the Marriage Supper of the Lamb and to enter into the life in the Coming Age.

Paul Herring 29th September 2006

References:

'*Torah: Mosaic Law or Divine Instructions?*' By Frank Selch

'*Christians and the Law (Torah)*' By Charles Hunting

Appendix:

[1] Hebrew names:

Jesus	Joshua /Yeshua /Yahushua
Mary	Miriam
Joseph	Yoseif
John	Yochanau
James	Ya'akov
Peter	Shim'on Kefa (surname)
Jude/Judas	Y'hudah
Paul	Sha'ul
Mathew	Mattityahu

[2] THE ORIGINAL LANGUAGE OF NEW TESTAMENT

The original language of the “New Testament” like that of the Tanak (the “Old Testament”) was Hebrew and Aramaic. The following is just some of the evidence to support this fact. The in depth reader may wish to consult a more detailed treatment of this issue in the ebook *Hebrew/Aramaic New Testament Textual Criticism* at <http://www.nazarene.net/textcrit.htm>

Language of First Century Israel

The Middle East, through all of its political turmoil, has in fact been dominated by a single master from the earliest ages until the present day. The Semitic tongue has dominated the Middle East from ancient times, until the modern day. Aramaic dominated the three great Empires, Assyrian, Babylonian, and Persian. It endured until the seventh century, when under the Islamic nation it was displaced by a cognate Semitic language, Arabic. Even today some few Syrians, Assyrians and Chaldeans speak Aramaic as their native tongue, including three villages north of Damascus.¹ The Jewish people, through all of their persecutions, sufferings and wanderings have never lost sight of their Semitic heritage, nor their Semitic tongue. Hebrew, a Semitic tongue closely related to Aramaic, served as their language until the great dispersion when a cognate language, Aramaic, began to replace it. Hebrew, however continued to be used for religious literature, and is today the spoken language in Israel.

The Babylonian Exile

Some scholars have proposed that the Jews lost their Hebrew language, replacing it with Aramaic during the Babylonian captivity. The error of this position becomes obvious. The Jewish people had spent 400 years in captivity in Egypt² yet they did not stop speaking Hebrew and begin speaking Egyptian, why should they exchange Hebrew for Aramaic after only seventy years² in Babylonian captivity? Upon return from the Babylonian captivity it was realized that a small minority could not speak "the language of Judah"³ so drastic measures were taken to abolish these marriages and maintain the purity of the Jewish people and language⁴ One final evidence rests in the fact that the post-captivity books (Zech., Hag., Mal., Neh., Ezra, and Ester) are written in Hebrew rather than Aramaic.

Hellenization

Some scholars have also suggested that under the Helene Empire Jews lost their Semitic language and in their rush to Hellenize, began speaking Greek. The books of the Maccabees do record an attempt by Antiochus Epiphanies to forcibly Hellenize the Jewish people. In response, the Jews formed an army led by Judas Maccabee This army defeated the Greeks and eradicated Hellenism. This military victory is still celebrated today as Chanukkah, the feast of the dedication of the Temple¹⁸ a holiday that even Yeshua seems to have observed at the Temple at Jerusalem in the first century. Those who claim that the Jews were Hellenized and began speaking Greek at this time seem to deny the historical fact of the Maccabean success.

During the first century, Hebrew remained the language of the Jews living in Judah and to a lesser extent in Galilee. Aramaic remained a secondary language and the language of commerce. Jews at

this time did not speak Greek, in fact one tradition had it that it was better to feed ones children swine than to teach them the Greek language. It was **only** with the permission of authorities that a young official could learn Greek, and then, solely for the purpose of political discourse on the National level. The Greek language was completely inaccessible and undesirable to the vast majority of Jews in Israel in the 1st century. Any gauge of Greek language outside of Israel cannot, nor can any evidence hundreds of years removed from the 1st century, alter the fact that the Jews of Israel in the 1st century did not know Greek.

Archaeology

Confirmation of Josephus's claims has been found by Archaeologists. The Bar Kokhba coins are one example. These coins were struck by Jews during the Bar Kokhba revolt (c. 132 C.E.). All of these coins bear only Hebrew inscriptions. Countless other inscriptions found at excavations of the Temple Mount, Masada and various Jewish tombs, have revealed first century Hebrew inscriptions.

Even more profound evidence that Hebrew was a living language during the first century may be found in ancient Documents from about that time, which have been discovered in Israel. These include the Dead Sea Scrolls, and the Bar Kokhba letters.

The Dead Sea Scrolls consist of over 40,000 fragments of more than 500 scrolls dating from 250 B.C.E. to 70 C.E.. These Scrolls are primarily in Hebrew and Aramaic. A large number of the "secular scrolls" (those which are not Bible manuscripts) are in Hebrew.

History of the Movement

That the New Testament, like the Old Testament, was originally written in Hebrew and Aramaic is further verified by the history of the early believers in Yeshua as the Messiah. The first believers in Yeshua were a Jewish sect known as "Nazarenes".

Sometime later the first Gentile believers in Yeshua called "Christians" appeared. This first congregation of Gentile Christians formed in Antioch, the capital of Syria, where some of the people spoke Greek and almost all spoke Aramaic, which is also called "Syriac". Then in 70 C.E., there was a mass exodus of the Nazarenes from their center at Jerusalem to Pella. Eventually, they established communities in Beroea, Decapolis, Bashanitis and Perea. These Nazarenes used Hebrew Scriptures and in the fourth century Jerome traveled to Borea to copy their Hebrew Matthew. As a result, while at least the book of Matthew was first written in Hebrew, very early on Aramaic and Greek New Testament books were needed.

[3] Paul a Hellenist?

The claim that Paul was a Hellenistic is also a misunderstanding that should be dealt with. As we have already seen, Paul was born at Tarsus, a city where Aramaic was spoken. Whatever Hellenistic influences may have been at Tarsus, Paul seems to have left there at a very early age and been "brought up" in Jerusalem. Paul describes himself as a "Hebrew" (2Cor. 11:2) and a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Phil. 3:5), and "of the tribe of Benjamin" (Rom. 11:1). It is important to realize how the term "Hebrew" was used in the first century. The term Hebrew was not used as a genealogical term, but as a cultural/linguistic term. An example of this can be found in Acts 6:1 where a dispute arises between the "Hebrews" and the "Hellenistic." Most scholars agree that the "Hellenistic" here are Hellenist Jews. No evangelistic efforts had yet been made toward non-Jews (Acts 11:19) much less Greeks (see Acts 16:6-10). In Acts 6:1 a clear contrast is made between Hellenists and Hebrews which are clearly non-Hellenists. Hellenists were not called Hebrews, a term reserved for non-Hellenist Jews. When Paul calls himself a "Hebrew" he is claiming to be a non-Hellenist, and when he calls himself a "Hebrew of Hebrews" he is claiming to be strongly non-Hellenist. This would explain why Paul disputed against the Hellenists and why they attempted to kill him (Acts. 9:29) and why he escaped to Tarsus (Acts 9:30). If there was no non-Hellenist Jewish population in Tarsus, this would have been a very bad move.

Paul's Pharisee background gives us further reason to doubt that he was in any way a Hellenist. Paul claimed to be a "Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee" (Acts 23:6) meaning that he was at least a second generation Pharisee. The Aramaic text, as well as some Greek mss. have "Pharisee the son of Pharisees," a Semitic idiomatic expression meaning a third generation Pharisee.