



OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

REACH TEACH ENCOURAGE DISCIPLE



JANUARY 2011

SEEKING

the Holy One of Israel



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STATEMENT OF BELIEF

Outreach Israel Ministries and TNN Online

There is One Almighty Creator God of the Universe, who has revealed Himself to us in the manifestations of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ) came in fulfillment of the Messianic prophecies of the Scriptures and is fully God. It is mandatory for us to believe in a Divine Redeemer to be saved. Salvation is a free gift of God to all who receive Messiah Yeshua into their lives and confess of their sins. Those who reject Messiah will be consigned to eternal punishment.

The Holy Scriptures, Genesis-Revelation, are the inspired, infallible Word of God as revealed in the original Hebrew, Aramaic, and Greek texts.

There is only one assembly of chosen ones/elect, the congregation of Israel, of which all Believers in Messiah are a part. God does not have two groups of elect: Israel and "the Church."

The Torah (Genesis-Deuteronomy) is the foundation of all Scripture, was followed by our Messiah Yeshua, and is to still be followed and studied by Believers today.

Yeshua the Messiah is coming to gather the saints after the Tribulation period.

OIM is an *agapē* ministry, freely and benevolently giving the vast majority of its teachings and resources, without charge, to those who desire to be spiritually nourished.

For a fuller Statement of Faith, consult the OIM website

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OIM UPDATE

January 2011

Another calendar year now begins with the seasonal changes it brings, coupled with me being on the verge of entering into the seventh decade of my life. As I started two months ago with the article, “**The Rules of Engagement**,” I have been reflecting on some critical topics for today’s Body of Messiah. I cannot help but be reminded of some astute words spoken several millennia ago by the Preacher as recorded in the Book of Ecclesiastes:

“There is an appointed time for everything. And there is a time for every event under heaven—a time to give birth and a time to die; a time to plant and a time to uproot what is planted. A time to kill and a time to heal; a time to tear down and a time to build up. A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance. A time to throw stones and a time to gather stones; a time to embrace and a time to shun embracing. A time to search and a time to give up as lost; a time to keep and a time to throw away. A time to tear apart and a time to sew together; a time to be silent and a time to speak. A time to love and a time to hate; a time for war and a time for peace. What profit is there to the worker from that in which he toils? I have seen the task which God has given the sons of men with which to occupy themselves. **He has made everything appropriate in its time. He has also set eternity in their heart, yet so that man will not find out the work which God has done from the beginning even to the end. I know that there is nothing better for them than to rejoice and to do good in one's lifetime**” (Ecclesiastes 3:1-12).

Of course, the life summary reflections by the Preacher have received mixed reviews down through the centuries. But regardless of the differing opinions, the ultimate conclusion is one that is highly recommended for all true seekers of the Most High Creator God:

“The conclusion, when all has been heard, *is*: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies to* every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:13-14).

While the Preacher warns about wearying the body through the writing of books (Ecclesiastes 12:12), the Lord has firmly placed on my heart a desire to share *through writing* some encouraging and loving admonitions. There is a strong need for the greater Body of Messiah to know and implement Scripturally sound insight, understanding, and wisdom for successfully engaging in spiritual battles—which will only increase as the End of the Age approaches. This month’s lead article, entitled “**Seeking the Holy One of Israel**,” will be a part of a forthcoming publication I am working on regarding spiritual warfare. It is my prayer that every reader will diligently consider the profound words of the Messiah Yeshua, and rather than just memorize or meditate upon them, *fully inculcate* His words into their hearts and minds. In this way, may you be personally conformed into His image (Romans 8:29)!

This issue of OIM News also includes an enclosed flier for our planned **Am Echad Tour** to Israel in 2012, which conveys our heart's desire to witness and participate in the unity that is only achievable when our eyes are focused upon Yeshua and not ourselves. It is our hope that many of our faithful friends and extended family of Believers will begin to set aside the resources to join us in Jerusalem for Shavuot 2012!

Please continue to remember us as we are in the midst of our ministry and family transition from Florida to Texas. We greatly appreciate your continued prayers for the sale of our house in Kissimmee. Your support needed to make the move is still needed and most welcomed! This is a rather challenging time for all of us, with the family split up between two locations, and with a few of our ongoing ministry projects on hold for a short time while we get some things stabilized. Our ongoing TNN Press Book Printing project has been delayed a bit because of this relocation, although new titles are still definitely being readied for paperback release.

We are confident that what the Father has put in our hearts and minds will bear spiritual fruit in the coming years, for not only our efforts and steadfast dedication—but also for what He has put in your heart! Since we are all living stones (1 Peter 2:5) in the spiritual house of the Lord, we are thankful that in some way you have been placed in relative close proximity to our lives and ministerial endeavors, as we all rely upon the Chief Cornerstone, Yeshua. May the mortar of the Holy Spirit draw us even closer still, as we work and serve together in the months and years to come!

Advancing His Kingdom, until the restoration of all things...

William Mark Huey

SURVEY OF THE TANACH BIBLE STUDY COMING SOON

One of the major reasons that today's Messianic movement has grown in the past decade is a significant interest by Believers in the Torah and the Tanach. In too many cases, the Tanach Scriptures were not probed in that great a detail in a Jewish Believer's traditional Synagogue upbringing—and perhaps more serious, a non-Jewish Believer's Christian experience often witnessed the Old Testament taking a back seat to the New Testament in the Church. With many of the ethical and moral controversies the greater Judeo-Christian religious community is experiencing in our age, a need for God's people to return to a foundational grounding in the Tanach Scriptures is absolutely imperative. The Old Testament cannot simply be disregarded any more.

Many have stayed away from consulting the Tanach not because of a lack of interest, but because few want to have to deal with the controversies it addresses. Questions like: Who was the Pharaoh of the Exodus? Did God actually condone the genocide of the Canaanites? and Am I the only one who thinks the Prophets are mentally disturbed? are debates that many people do not want to enter into. For a Messianic movement that claims to place a high value on the Tanach, it is time that we join in to these conversations.



SEEKING the Holy One of Israel

by Mark Huey

When it comes to being an effective soldier in the spiritual warfare that encompasses the world, it is imperative that one truly knows that he or she is a born again disciple of the Messiah Yeshua! Without the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit (Ruach HaKodesh) operating through a redeemed and circumcised heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26), the ability to be useful in the work of God's Kingdom is demonstrably diminished. Many people across the spectrum have a difficult time comprehending this truth, from those who mock and deride the Word of God and its reliability, to those who can spend so much time studying Scripture that they can forget *the reason* why they are to allow its message of life to transform them from within (cf. John 5:39).

Many people, myself included, had to have dramatic life experiences and encounters to come to the end of themselves, turning toward a Holy God in recognition of our sinfulness and need for salvation. Many other people, though, spend a lifetime associating themselves with religion and religious things, going through various *motions* without necessarily having experienced redemption. **This latter group should really concern us.** In the Bible we encounter an astute, recognized teacher, Nicodemus (John 3:1ff), who not only secretly comes to Yeshua in the dark of night, but who initially lacked the faith to truly understand what He taught about being “born again” (John 3:4-10). Consequently, if knowledge of the Scriptures is not enjoined with the presence of the Helper and the guidance of the Messiah's example, what will come of it? Empty knowledge? Random information and facts without a course of action? Rules and regulations without any true desire to follow them?

One of the most foundational statements spoken by Yeshua (Jesus), I believe, is that His followers are to be like children in order to enter into Heaven:

“And He called a child to Himself and set him before them, and said, ‘**Truly I say to you, unless you are converted and become like children, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.** Whoever then humbles himself as this child, he is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven. And whoever receives one such child in My name receives Me’” (Matthew 18:2-5).

If you are able to have the faith of a child, as children are frequently not concerned with many of the finer details of “theology,” then you should be able to humbly approach the Lord. Those who are humble before God, knowing their mortal and sinful limitations, are those who can truly recognize their bankrupt condition, accept His offer of forgiveness from sin in the gospel, repent of their transgressions, *and then* be born again from above. The transition that then occurs is that such a redeemed soul is no longer a child of the Devil (John 8:44), but is instead a child of God (John 1:12). It is upon this radical change of nature that one then has the ability to draw upon the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit. The faith that develops as a result of the resurrected Messiah's atoning work at Golgotha (Calvary), now makes it possible for the child of God to actually please

Him. Faith, trust, and confidence in the Lord are required in order for someone to be reckoned as righteous (Genesis 15:6; Habakkuk 2:4; cf. Galatians 3:11). The author of Hebrews appropriately summarizes,

“And without faith it is impossible to please *Him*, for he who comes to God must believe that He is and *that* He is a rewarder of those who seek Him” (Hebrews 11:6).

When the forgiven child begins to fervently seek more knowledge, understanding, and wisdom about his or her new nature—what would be the most appropriate way in order to know the Eternal God? Beyond communion with the Almighty through prayer, praise, and worship—how significant is it to turn to the profound words contained in the Scriptures? With all of the heart, a born again Believer should strive to obey God’s instructions for living a life that is pleasing to Him! This is especially true if you acknowledge Yeshua the Messiah as the Word (or “Torah”) made flesh. No matter what circumstances were used to bring someone to faith in the Messiah, it should be understood that it was a part of the Father’s plan for his or her life. This saving act and what transpires afterward, is amplified in how the Apostle Paul emphasizes that the redeemed are to be conformed to the image of God’s Son:

“And we know that God causes all things to work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to *His* purpose. For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to *become* conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; and these whom He justified, He also glorified” (Romans 8:28-30).

With these wonderful promises explaining the sovereign hand of God upon His children, surveying and inculcating the actual instructions and admonitions of Yeshua *must* then be considered. After all, since Messiah followers are to be “heirs of God and fellow heirs with Messiah” (Romans 8:17), would it not be appropriate to knowledgeably pursue and do the things He directs? One of the keys to a vibrant and dynamic relationship with the Lord is recognizing that in no way are we to remain as simplistic children once we enter into the faith. Yeshua instructs how we are to abide in Him, growing and continuing in our abilities to not only manifest God’s love *but also* obey His commandments:

“Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself unless it abides in the vine, so neither *can* you unless you abide in Me. I **am the vine, you are the branches; he who abides in Me and I in him, he bears much fruit, for apart from Me you can do nothing.** If anyone does not abide in Me, he is thrown away as a branch and dries up; and they gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned. If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you. My Father is glorified by this, that you bear much fruit, and *so* prove to be My disciples. Just as the Father has loved Me, I have also loved you; abide in My love. If you keep My commandments, you will abide in My love; just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love” (John 15:4-10).

A critical survey of some of the most important teachings of Yeshua to His Disciples should be of primary importance. Among the four most well known

and read parts of the Bible, appears the Beatitudes of Matthew 5:2-12.¹ As I have observed elsewhere before, the tired businessman who pulls out a Gideon New Testament in his hotel room, could easily get to this section of Scripture by just starting to read the Gospel of Matthew.

In turning to some of the Messiah's most significant recorded words, as He addressed a multitude seeking answers gathered to hear Him, some elementary characteristics encouraged for His followers are delineated. In these instructions appearing within the Sermon on the Mount, Yeshua methodically establishes a blueprint for what it means to truly be a disciple of His. Upon examination, one will find that Yeshua condenses and expounds upon many key concepts found in the Torah and the Prophets, deepening and expanding their importance. Each beatitude² delivered to His hearers could have been taken as each person needed to incorporate a critical aspect of the Holy One's character into his persona. In order to receive the blessings promised, some study, prayer, and meditation should be invested to truly live forth what the Messiah is declaring. Ultimately, the decision to change and embrace these attributes contributes immensely, as one is being conformed to His image.

In order to take the time to fully digest and absorb what is stated within the Beatitudes—so that one can actually have a new life in the Messiah of Israel (2 Corinthians 5:17)—it is prudent to review these statements and reflect upon them. There are eight admonitions that we will need to focus on in total:

He opened His mouth and *began* to teach them, saying,
Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted.
Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth.
Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied.
Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy.
Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.
Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.
Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven.
Blessed are you when *people* insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me.
Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you. (Matthew 5:2-12).

These most-inspired words uttered forth by the Messiah are life altering to children of God today, precisely because they speak to the new spiritual nature that we are to have. They utterly contradict many of the inclinations that dominate the old carnal nature, one which is highly influenced by the world, the flesh, and the Devil (1 John 2:16). In fact, according to the realities of spiritual discern-

¹ The three other sections include Psalm 23, the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17), and the Lord's Prayer (Matthew 6:9-13).

Cf. Charles L. Allen, *God's Psychiatry* (Grand Rapids: Fleming H. Revell, 1953).

² The common description "beatitudes" is taken from Matthew 5:3-12 in the Latin Vulgate, which employs *beati*; in much of Roman Catholic teaching, ironically, these verses are called *makarioi* (μακάριοι), derived from the Greek source text.

ment as given through the indwelling power of the Holy Spirit, full comprehension of what Yeshua communicates is largely limited to those born from above. Only those with the spiritual eyes to see and ears to hear (Isaiah 6:10; Matthew 13:15-16) can *even begin* to understand what Yeshua is ultimately stating. The way that Paul puts it is that a natural person does not have the spiritual capacity to grasp eternal principles:

“But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no one. For WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD, THAT HE WILL INSTRUCT HIM [Isaiah 40:13]? But we have the mind of Messiah” (1 Corinthians 2:14-16).

In order for any of us to properly apply the teachings of the Messiah, it is only natural that we have the mind of the Messiah! Such a mind needs to be filled up with the transforming presence of the Holy Spirit, who is to serve as our Helper or Comforter. *This is a mind that is constantly molded by God's love, mercy, and grace for others.* The Ruach HaKodesh will not only be responsible for teaching us, but will also bring recollection of what the Holy One has instructed His people to follow:

“But the Helper [Counselor, RSV/NIV; Advocate, NRSV], the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I [Yeshua] said to you” (John 14:26).

Let us now review the eight admonitions that Yeshua delivers within the Beatitudes.

“Blessed are the poor in spirit...”

“Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven” (Matthew 5:3).

What does it mean to be “poor in spirit”? Those who are poor in spirit have access or entrance into the Kingdom of Heaven. Perhaps this is best understood by the honest and humble recognition that *only* by the grace and mercy of God does anyone ever have a chance of even approaching Him, let alone enjoying the privilege of access to the Kingdom of Heaven. So what we find here is that the Lord Yeshua is stating how without first recognizing people as not only poor, but in essence totally bankrupt before a Holy and Righteous Creator God—they will never experience the fullness of eternal life found only in a God who is rich. The New Living Translation offers the paraphrase, “God blesses those who are poor and realize their need for him.” Lamentably, this foundational principle must be secured first by us, **before** any of the other blessings are obtainable. As witnessed multiple times throughout the Bible, the “hard words” of Yeshua affirm that one must come to the end of his or her self, being willing to completely follow after Him:

“Then Yeshua said to His disciples, ‘If anyone wishes to come after Me, he **must deny himself**, and take up his cross and follow Me. For **whoever wishes to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.** For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or

what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Matthew 16:24-26).

So with these distinctions in rewards, what is more profitable for a person: gaining the whole world and being rich in material possessions, *or* being poor enough in spirit to cry out to God for mercy and salvation? The choice people should make is quite evident—but then again it is a choice that men and women must willingly make for themselves. Obviously, the poor in spirit have a great reward, but in order to seek the Holy One of Israel, one must actually believe that there is a Kingdom of Heaven, a power and reality that is something beyond the temporal world where humanity resides. The belief that there is a supernatural dimension requires faith, which usually comes to the needy or materially poor. The typical situation is that since the natural needs of rich people are minimal, it is most difficult for them to come to faith (Matthew 19:23-24).

Additionally, it should be noted that being "poor in spirit" is not necessarily a one time event that is over and done with following the salvation experience. In fact, during the sanctification process as the Holy Spirit convicts someone of sin and transgressions against God's Instruction, there should be a persistent desire to repent and cleanse the soul of disobedience to His ways. The poor in spirit honestly recognize that through the maturation process while walking with the Lord, there should be a *growing desire* for purity and righteousness. A desire to gain intimacy with the Holy One of Israel and entrance into His Holy Place for communion with Him, requires sin to be removed. The poor in spirit seek access to this place, and provide evidence where their heart is truly located, by faithfully clinging to the Messiah Yeshua. *Accessing the power of the Heavenly realm can be truly life-changing* as we diligently serve the Lord. Have you been able to do this? If not, then perhaps it is time to evaluate the net worth of your spirit. Oddly enough, in the Lord's economy, being poor, if not in abject poverty, can really be a blessing!

"Blessed are those who mourn..."

"Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted" (Matthew 5:4).

The second blessing seems contrary to what the world at large would suggest is discomfoting. After all, the concept of mourning does not generate images of things that are fun, as one is frolicking and frivolous. In fact, what Yeshua says sounds a bit morose or depressing: "How happy are those who know what sorrow means" (Phillips New Testament). However, the Messiah states that there is a blessing for being a mourner, and the gift is being comforted beyond the tangible. Sometimes we need to remember that mourning is a common condition to humanity. In the Book of Ecclesiastes, the Preacher speaks of the timeliness of mourning: "A time to weep and a time to laugh; a time to mourn and a time to dance" (Ecclesiastes 3:4).

It seems that mourning should almost be a subliminal state of mind for those who are lost and perishing. Yet, if one truly understands that without the salvation available in Yeshua, people are doomed to an eternity separated from the Eternal One, then mourning is a condition in which many will exist. This fact, in and of itself, should engender a great deal of lamentation on the part of the re-

deemed—and stimulate them to prayer, intercession, and supplication for the salvation of the lost—especially for those in your family or immediate circle of friends and acquaintances. In every wicked and perverse generation that has ever existed, there has always been a remnant of faithful who the Almighty has chosen to be His representatives in a lost and perishing world. Composing His Kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:6; Revelation 1:6), disciples of the Messiah Yeshua have a special calling to be interceding for the unrighteous, and also mourning on behalf of those who the Father has providentially put in our sphere of influence. The Apostle Peter puts it this way:

“But you are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR *God’s* OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Peter 2:9; cf. Deuteronomy 7:6; 10:15; Exodus 19:6; Isaiah 61:6; 43:21; Deuteronomy 4:20; 14:2).

By mourning *and* interceding for loved ones and others who do not know the Holy One of Israel, He promises to comfort aching hearts with His love. While no one can explain or even fully understand some of His plan for Creation, and answers to questions like *Why do the good die young?*, the indwelling power of the Comforter Himself will actually console those who mourn and who need a special ministering of His presence. Additionally, notice all of the actions that the Comforter or Helper will accomplish for those who mourn for salvation and righteousness among those who are perishing:

“These things I have spoken to you so that you may be kept from stumbling. They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. These things they will do because they have not known the Father or Me. But these things I have spoken to you, so that when their hour comes, you may remember that I told you of them. These things I did not say to you at the beginning, because I was with you. But now I am going to Him who sent Me; and none of you asks Me, ‘Where are You going?’ But because I have said these things to you, sorrow has filled your heart. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. **And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin and righteousness and judgment; concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father and you no longer see Me; and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged**” (John 16:1-11).

Remember, part of being a disciple of Yeshua is being cast out of society—which can actually include being ejected out of synagogues, churches, or various assemblies—precisely because His followers are to stand firm for righteous principles. Persecution on some level is guaranteed for the followers of the Messiah (Matthew 23:34). It is during such times of great personal stress, because of the mourning for the injustices or the lack of righteousness found among persecutors, that the promise of the Comforter will be found. *Hallelujah!* The Lord blesses those who mourn, for without His Divine comfort and solace, rather than *mourning* when difficult times come we might instead foster *anger* and *bitterness* against others and against Him. If this occurs, our ability as Believers to intercede for the

hurting and lost is impeded, and we do not find ourselves guided by God's love.

Consider this concept: the more one mourns, the more one is comforted. We all need the gentle presence of the Lord in our lives, not chastisement because we have reacted inappropriately to the circumstances of life.

“Blessed are the gentle...”

“Blessed are the gentle, for they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).

How is it possible for the gentle or the “meek” (KJV) to inherit the Earth? This word of Yeshua's seems to contradict human nature, and the fact that power on this planet is often something that has to be aggressively taken. Social Darwinism, after all, has helped promote the axiom of survival of the fittest and that the strong get stronger by crushing the weak.

Is inheriting the Earth properly interpreted as conquering or controlling continental land masses, oceans, various natural resources, and in modern times the space surrounding the globe? *How can the gentle be the inheritors of the Earth?* Is it not more logical that the strong and powerful will dominate the world? Naturally it is, but from God's eternal perspective the profound and ostensibly wise conclusions of fallen humanity are simply foolishness to Him (1 Corinthians 1:25). After all, He is the Creator God who made the universe in which this planet exists—the One who will ultimately decide its destiny. According to the Psalmist,

“The earth is the LORD's, and all it contains, the world, and those who dwell in it. For He has founded it upon the seas and established it upon the rivers....[T]he humble will inherit the land and will delight themselves in abundant prosperity” (Psalm 24:1-2; 37:11).

The Holy One of Israel not only created time, space, and matter—things actually held together by Yeshua the Messiah (Hebrews 1:3)—but He is also the final arbiter determining who or what entity He desires to give them to, for an inheritance. For clearly, every created human being formed from the very dust of the earth (Genesis 2:7) is limited because of mortality (Ecclesiastes 3:20). Only by being special creations of God (Genesis 1:27) can any of us realize our connection to something beyond this Earthly realm.

According to Yeshua, the meek or gentle sojourners on the Earth, those who have the quiet strength of waiting upon and depending upon the Almighty for His goodness and blessing, will eventually inherit it. In God's economy regarding how He chooses to distribute the Earth in the future Messianic Kingdom, it is the gentle who will actually receive it as an inheritance. It is those among the followers of the Messiah who have best emulated Him, knowing that by adhering to His instructions for living, there will be eternal blessings in the hereafter. In fact, according to the Apostle Paul, the spirit of gentleness coupled with love is far more powerful than what can be achieved with a rod:

“For the kingdom of God does not consist in words but in power. What do you desire? Shall I come to you with a rod, or with love and a spirit of gentleness? (1 Corinthians 4:20-21).

Perhaps the epitome of gentleness can be found when one is truly walking in

the Spirit and being led by the Spirit, so that the fruit of the Spirit flows forth. Consider a meek and gentle person, and contemplate just how many of these attributes are evident:

“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law. Now those who belong to Messiah Yeshua have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live by the Spirit, let us also walk by the Spirit. Let us not become boastful, challenging one another, envying one another” (Galatians 5:22-26).

If one wants to be a gentle inheritor of the Earth, it is highly recommended that a meekness evidenced by depending on the sovereign Almighty One, giving thanks for whatever is received, should be a desire of the heart. Today’s Believers must seek to emulate the Messiah Yeshua, who in and of Himself, had to be the most gentle person who ever walked the Earth. Considering everything He put aside by leaving His exalted glory in Heaven to be incarnated in human flesh, we surely owe it to Him to be the best servants we can possibly be in helping and looking out for each other. Take important note of the humble obedience that Yeshua demonstrated for us:

“Do nothing from selfish ambition or conceit, but in humility regard others as better than yourselves. Let each of you look not to your own interests, but to the interests of others. Let the same mind be in you that was in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not regard equality with God as something to be exploited, but emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, being born in human likeness. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient to the point of death—even death on a cross” (Philippians 2:3-8, NRSV).

With this description of humble, meek submission to the will of the Father—with the Messiah actually not using His equality with Him “for His own advantage” (HCSB)—is there any doubt why Yeshua is ultimately the inheritor of all? His example must inspire all of us to seek gentleness as the conformation process that being like Him matures!

The sobering reality is that if the gentle or meek will inherit the Earth, and anything beyond this planet in the Eternal State, what will those who are not gentle or meek inherit? We are told that one of the things they will actually inherit is “wind.” Those who seek after evil will be rewarded with an equal amount of judgment, as those who seek after good will be rewarded favorably:

“He who diligently seeks good seeks favor, But he who seeks evil, evil will come to him. He who trusts in his riches will fall, but the righteous will flourish like the *green* leaf. He who troubles his own house will inherit wind [a fistful of air, The Message], and the foolish will be servant to the wisehearted. The fruit of the righteous is a tree of life, and he who is wise wins souls. If the righteous will be rewarded in the earth, how much more the wicked and the sinner!” (Proverbs 11:27-31).

The contrast between good and evil is extraordinary. The choice to meekly seek good is available to all!

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness...”

“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they shall be satisfied” (Matthew 5:6).

Understanding the purity of absolute holiness and how darkness cannot co-exist in the light of God’s truth, the blessing for desiring a holy life is fulfilled because the Almighty is constantly looking at the hearts of His human creatures. The fact that a person would euphemistically “hunger and thirst” for righteousness, paints an excellent picture of what Yeshua communicates throughout much of His teaching in the Gospels. Here, it is almost like He is saying that to place the pursuit of righteousness ahead of one’s physical needs for food and water, will eventually result in satisfaction beyond the temporal needs for sustenance. One has to *want righteousness* more than the basic necessities for physical living.

Yeshua exhorts His followers to seek a sanctified life that is pleasing to the Holy One of Israel. Studies on the Hebrew word *tzedakah* (צְדָקָה) and Greek word *dikaïosunē* (δικαιοσύνη), rendered as “righteousness,” “justification,” and a whole host of derivatives in our Bibles—have filled volumes of books.³ One can certainly conclude that the Holy Texts of Scripture were almost written to describe the great gulf between the righteous and the unrighteous, and how God had to solve the seemingly insoluble problem of unrighteous man being acceptable to Himself. For clearly, when the Creator decided He was going to make man and woman, He had to recognize that by giving them a free will that they might reject Him and His ways. Of course, the solution to the subsequent human sin problem had to be God taking on human flesh in the person of Yeshua the Son, who would be sacrificed in order to provide a permanent covering for the sin of humanity. Then, by placing faith in the atoning work of the Messiah, redeemed persons can now be imparted His righteousness, and they can be reckoned among His people. The way Apostle Paul explains it is that those who were once slaves to sin, now become slaves to righteousness:

“But thanks be to God that though you were slaves of sin, you became obedient from the heart to that form of teaching to which you were committed, and having been freed from sin, you became slaves of righteousness. I am speaking in human terms because of the weakness of your flesh. For just as you presented your members as slaves to impurity and to lawlessness, resulting in *further* lawlessness, so now present your members as slaves to righteousness, resulting in sanctification. For when you were slaves of sin, you were free in regard to righteousness. Therefore what benefit were you then deriving from the things of which you are now ashamed? For the outcome of those things is death. But now having been freed from sin and enslaved to God, you derive your benefit, resulting in sanctification, and the outcome, eternal life. For the wages of sin is death, but the free gift of God is eternal life in Messiah Yeshua our Lord” (Romans 6:17-23).

It seems that being a slave to righteousness is what Yeshua Himself talks

³ Cf. Harold G. Stigers, “צְדָקָה (root),” in R. Laird Harris, Gleason L. Archer, Jr., and Bruce K. Waltke, eds., *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), 2:752-755; G. Schrenk, “*dikaïosynē*,” in Geoffrey W. Bromiley, ed., *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, abridged (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1985), pp 171-175.

about, when He spoke about a person hungering and thirsting for righteousness. Righteousness-seeking slaves can be likened to those who rely completely upon the goodness of their master for their food and drink. No matter where the master is to be found, the eyes of those who serve him seek after him. In a similar manner, those seeking righteousness are to be encouraged to keep their eyes focused on Yeshua the Messiah, so that any temptation to sin is removed:

“Therefore, since we have so great a cloud of witnesses surrounding us, **let us also lay aside every encumbrance and the sin which so easily entangles us**, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **fixing our eyes on Yeshua**, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you will not grow weary and lose heart” (Hebrews 12:1-3).

The great result of hungering and thirsting after righteousness is the reward of *true spiritual satisfaction*. In fact, during the sanctification process, there is often great joy when through perseverance and deliverance from sin that has once entangled a saint, there is a genuine victory over its power! This victory over sin comes through prayer, supplication, intercession, deliverance, is sometimes coupled with fasting, and involves a steadfast perseverance to be righteous and holy before an omniscient Creator God. Various hidden sins that only the Almighty knows about must all be dealt with, in order to attain a desirable communion with the Holy One of Israel. Once accomplished within a person's life, the satisfaction of communion is so sweet and comforting, that returning to the way of sin really is like a dog returning to its vomit. While the Apostle Peter likens it to salvation, suffice it to say breaking communion because of unrighteous acts, is a clear indication that someone is not truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness:

“For if, after they have escaped the defilements of the world by the knowledge of the Lord and Savior Yeshua the Messiah, they are again entangled in them and are overcome, the last state has become worse for them than the first. For it would be better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn away from the holy commandment handed on to them. It has happened to them according to the true proverb, ‘A DOG RETURNS TO ITS OWN VOMIT [Proverbs 26:11],’ and, ‘A sow, after washing, *returns* to wallowing in the mire” (2 Peter 2:20-22).

If one does not hunger and thirst after righteousness, the result is *no spiritual satisfaction*. There will be no peace or joy, but rather turmoil in the heart and life of one who claims to be a child of God will only be found. Such a person might even question just how much he or she believes in the Lord, or how committed they actually are to Him. *This choice is available to each of us*. Seeking righteousness gains satisfaction, but not seeking righteousness results in dissatisfaction. Prefer God's blessings over His penalties, because without His blessings life is going to be a roller coaster of emotions. When one thinks he or she is up, it may really mean one is down, or if nothing else, *upside down* and caught in trespasses and sin. So, be one who seeks to be fed and watered by God's righteousness, being nourished from His Word and made healthy by His Spirit.

“Blessed are the merciful...”

“Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matthew 5:7).

This beatitude focuses on one of the primary attributes of the Holy One of Israel, who in and of Himself is the Most High and Merciful God. It is by the blessing of His mercy alone that anyone can even exist, and why we are not immediately punished for our transgressions. Consequently, when one emulates the act of being merciful, he or she in return will receive mercy. This hearkens us back to a proverb which contrasts a merciful person with a cruel person, but the emphasis on receiving mercy is the blessing bestowed:

“The merciful man does himself good, but the cruel man does himself harm” (Proverbs 11:17).

The blessing of receiving mercy is something that is better understood, especially if one is caught “red handed” in the act of sin, and swift punishment is justly due upon an offender. Looking back to the golden calf incident in the Book of Exodus, one finds that despite the obvious anger harbored by the Lord because of the riotous, lascivious, and rebellious acts of the Israelites—in His mercy Moses is allowed to cut two new stones and proceed to once again receive the Ten Commandments. It is in this statement from God Himself, that He actually describes the essence of what being merciful is all about:

“Then the LORD passed by in front of him and proclaimed, ‘The LORD, the LORD God, compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in loving-kindness and truth; who keeps lovingkindness for thousands, **who forgives iniquity, transgression and sin**; yet He will by no means leave *the guilty* unpunished, visiting the iniquity of fathers on the children and on the grandchildren to the third and fourth generations” (Exodus 34:6-7).

It is important to point out some of the key attributes found in this self description of God. The Lord is compassionate, gracious, slow to anger, abounding in lovingkindness, and above all He is forgiving of transgressions and sin. How awesome is it to know, as people who have to contend with sin, that the Almighty is this merciful?! However, it is also critical to know that despite His merciful forgiveness, there are definite consequences for sin committed. While mercy might triumph over judgment (James 2:13), the principle of reaping what is sown still applies (Galatians 6:7).

James the Just makes a practical application of mercy and how it intersects with faith. He issues a distinct admonition to avoid judging others, but rather to let the royal law of loving one’s neighbor as yourself rule and reign in your heart. He issues this instruction because many in his audience had shown partiality to rich people over poor people. Their responsibility was to show mercy in all of their actions. If we learn to do this as well, then mercy will forever be on our hearts and minds, as no one wants to be judged harshly for the transgressions of life:

“My brethren, do not hold your faith in our glorious Lord Yeshua the Messiah with *an attitude of* personal favoritism. For if a man comes into your assembly with a gold ring and dressed in fine clothes, and there also comes in a poor man in dirty clothes, and you pay special attention to the one who is wearing the

fine clothes, and say, 'You sit here in a good place,' and you say to the poor man, 'You stand over there, or sit down by my footstool,' have you not made distinctions among yourselves, and become judges with evil motives? Listen, my beloved brethren: did not God choose the poor of this world *to be* rich in faith and heirs of the kingdom which He promised to those who love Him? **But you have dishonored the poor man.** Is it not the rich who oppress you and personally drag you into court? Do they not blaspheme the fair name by which you have been called? If, however, you are fulfilling the royal law according to the Scripture, 'YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR AS YOURSELF [Leviticus 19:18],' you are doing well. But if you show partiality, you are committing sin *and* are convicted by the law as transgressors. For whoever keeps the whole law and yet stumbles in one *point*, he has become guilty of all. For He who said, 'DO NOT COMMIT ADULTERY [Exodus 20:14; Deuteronomy 5:18],' also said, 'DO NOT COMMIT MURDER [Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17].' Now if you do not commit adultery, but do commit murder, you have become a transgressor of the law. **So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the law of liberty. For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment"** (James 2:1-13).

So take the recommendation from Yeshua to heart: how blessed are the merciful to receive mercy! Considering the consequences of judgment, it is most worthwhile to know that by having a merciful attitude of extending grace and compassion as a general rule—that the byproduct is being shown mercy by the Lord in return. What is even more compelling is when one personally receives mercy, because one has made the practice of showing mercy a regular attribute in his or her life. Whether it is receiving a warning rather than a ticket from a police officer, or grace from a spouse for doing or saying something uncalled for, the blessing of receiving mercy should encourage all of us to be merciful!

"Blessed are the pure in heart..."

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God" (Matthew 5:8).

The significance of being "pure in heart" is most heightened, because its reward is something that is beyond description. Just contemplating "seeing God," who is Spirit (cf. John 4:24), is beyond our dimensional ability. But, perhaps seeing God in others and in aspects of His Creation may have to suffice for now. On the other hand, it might be important to note how the Greek verb *horaō* (ὁράω) can also mean "to see with the mind, to perceive, know" and "to see i.e. to become acquainted with by experience, to experience" (Thayer).⁴ At the very least, the blessing of a pure or clean heart will allow a person to more fully experience and perceive the Holy One of Israel and His ways. Consequently, seeking a pure heart should be a consistent goal of all who call upon the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

What Yeshua declares about being "pure in heart," takes one back to the words of King David, who was known to be a man after God's own heart (1 Sam-

⁴ Thayer, 451.

uel 13:14). It was David's purity of heart that gave him a profound love for God's Torah and the wisdom it provides. Often throughout the various Psalms attributed to David, we find him speaking not only of the purity of the Torah, but also the need for those approaching the Holy One to maintain a pure heart:

"The law of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; **the commandment of the LORD is pure** [*mitzvat ADONAI barah*, מִצְוַת יְהוָה בָּרָה], enlightening the eyes. **The fear of the LORD is clean** [*yirat ADONAI tehorah*, יִרְאַת יְהוָה טְהוֹרָה], enduring forever; the judgments of the LORD are true; they are righteous altogether. They are more desirable than gold, yes, than much fine gold; sweeter also than honey and the drippings of the honeycomb" (Psalm 19:7-10).

"Who may ascend into the hill of the LORD? And who may stand in His holy place? **He who has clean hands and a pure heart** [*neqi kappayim u'bar-levav*, נֶקִי כַפַּיִם וְבָרַר], who has not lifted up his soul to falsehood and has not sworn deceitfully. He shall receive a blessing from the LORD and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of those who seek Him, who seek Your face—even Jacob. Selah" (Psalm 24:3-6).

Being pure in heart, meaning clean and undefiled in approaching the Holy One, is between each individual and Him. In this beatitude, Yeshua clearly states that the blessing of having a pure heart leads a person to a more complete relationship with the Almighty God. The Lord God, in and of Himself, *is purity personified*, being completely righteous and perfect **without any infinitesimal amount of darkness**. He is the Light. According to this awesome description offered by the Apostle Paul in his letter to the Colossians, by Yeshua's atoning work, Believers become saints of Light:

"For this reason also, since the day we heard of it, we have not ceased to pray for you and to ask that you may be filled with the knowledge of His will in all spiritual wisdom and understanding, so that you will walk in a manner worthy of the Lord, to please *Him* in all respects, bearing fruit in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; strengthened with all power, according to His glorious might, for the attaining of all steadfastness and patience; **joyously giving thanks to the Father, who has qualified us to share in the inheritance of the saints in Light. For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and transferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins**" (Colossians 1:9-14).

In more specific terms, when addressing his disciple Timothy, Paul speaks of a pure heart to note the connection between love, faith, righteousness, and peace:

"But the goal of our instruction is **love from a pure heart** and a good conscience and a sincere faith...Now flee from youthful lusts and pursue righteousness, faith, love *and* peace, with those who **call on the Lord from a pure heart**" (1 Timothy 1:5; 2 Timothy 2:22).

King David and the Apostle Paul both understood the connection between a pure heart and approaching the Father of Lights (cf. James 1:7). An additional approach is communicated through the image of purifying oneself through a washing of the heart and soul by the Word of God. The author of Hebrews talks

about communion with the Almighty, drawing an analogy of how Believers are to be purified with water:

“Let us draw near with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, **having our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water**” (Hebrews 10:22).

From a different perspective on purity of the heart, when comparing the relationship of the Messiah to the assembly, to the relationship a husband and wife are to have, Paul describes the concept of washing by the water of the word:

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Messiah also loved the [assembly] and gave Himself up for her, so that He might sanctify her, **having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word**, that He might present to Himself the [assembly] in all her glory, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she would be holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:25-27).

This “word” is actually the *rhēma* (ῥῆμα) or “saying” (YLT), likely a reference to the spoken declaration of faith which occurs when a person recognizes “Yeshua is Lord” (Romans 10:9). Yet, the only way that any of us can understand the power of the good news is to have a firm rooting within the Scriptures. In 2 Timothy 3:15-17, we see one of the most significant statements made about the importance of the Tanakh or Old Testament for the instruction of Messiah followers:

“[F]rom childhood you [Timothy] have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yeshua. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.”

If one wants to see God and experience Him in ways that are beyond description, be sure to employ as many of these purifying measures as possible! According to Yeshua, it is *only* one with a pure heart who is granted access to the Holy One of Israel.

“Blessed are the peacemakers...”

“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God” (Matthew 5:9).

It is most natural, coming from the Prince of Peace Himself (Isaiah 9:6), that one would expect Yeshua to bless those who are truly seeking to be peacemakers. The Messiah is the epitome of peace, having nullified in His atoning sacrifice the enmity that existed between the Father and sinful humanity. The *shalom* (שָׁלוֹם) that is to be found in Him is something that “means much more than mere absence of war. Rather, the root meaning of the verb *shālēm* [שָׁלַם] better expresses the true concept of *shālôm*. Completeness, wholeness, harmony, fulfillment, are closer to the meaning. Implicit in *shālôm* is the idea of unimpaired relationships with others and fulfillment in one’s undertakings” (TWOT).⁵ Given the significance of peace beyond a cessation of hostilities—with *shalom* being a total peace, harmony, and tranquility between God, man, and nature—there should be no disputing why the Tanakh and the Apostolic Scriptures are replete with admonitions to pursue and seek peace with all!

“Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the LORD. Who is the man who desires life and loves *length of days* that he may see good? Keep your tongue from evil and your lips from speaking deceit. **Depart from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.** The eyes of the LORD are toward the righteous and His ears are *open* to their cry” (Psalm 34:11-15).

“If possible, so far as it depends on you, **be at peace with all men**” (Romans 12:18).

“**Pursue peace with all men**, and the sanctification without which no one will see the Lord” (Hebrews 12:14).

Yeshua’s word here engenders an almost incomprehensible relationship, which extends far beyond standard genetics inherited from one’s ancestors. Instead, those who are considered to be makers of peace have the extraordinary privilege of being called “children of God” (NRSV/TNIV) Himself.

In the examples referenced above, note that those who seek peace and pursue it will actually have the eyes and ears of the Lord directed toward them. **He will hear their cries to Him.** But most important, the peacemaker will see the Lord and be reckoned as one of His own! This is a most fitting reward for simply seeking peace among not only brothers and sisters in the faith, but according to additional words from Yeshua, pursuing peace with one’s enemies as well:

“**But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you**, so that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He causes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous” (Matthew 5:44-45).

“If you do good to those who do good to you, what credit is that to you? For even sinners do the same. If you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what credit is that to you? Even sinners lend to sinners in order to receive back the same amount. **But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, and you will be sons of the Most High; for He Himself is kind to ungrateful and evil men.** Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. Do not judge, and you will not be judged; and do not condemn, and you will not be condemned; pardon, and you will be pardoned” (Luke 6:33-37).

The Messiah includes *loving the enemy* as being most critical in the pursuit of true peace. To heighten His point, the kind of love His followers are to demonstrate is one which expects nothing in return (Luke 6:35). The reward is simply to be regarded as a son or daughter of the Most High! Of course, the ability to muster unconditional love from a pure heart, can only be a product of the Holy Spirit demonstrating forth the character of God, *giving most freely* without consideration of a return for the blessing. Yet, in order for this to even happen, one must relinquish his or her will to the Heavenly Father, in order for the Holy Spirit to love an enemy.

The principle of the Spirit extending unconditional love, *agapē* (ἀγάπη), was also understood by the Apostle Paul, as he instructed the saints in Rome. Here, the differences between walking by the flesh and being led by the Spirit are delineated:

⁵ G. Lloyd Carr, “shālôm,” in *TWOT*, 2:931.

Shalom is frequently rendered as *eirēnē* (εἰρήνη) in the Greek Septuagint, and in the Apostolic Scriptures is by no means to be understood only by its classical definition of absence of war.

“So then, brethren, we are under obligation, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh—for if you are living according to the flesh, you must die; but if by the Spirit you are putting to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. **For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, ‘Abba! Father!’ The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Messiah, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him**” (Romans 8:12-17).

With the spirit of adoption received, redeemed men and women are to regard themselves as fellow heirs of God and the Messiah. They possess the ability as children of God to cry out to Him with the intimacy of “Abba! Father!” What a joy to be a peacemaker in order to not only be at peace with the Holy One of Israel, but most especially be recognized as a son or daughter of the Most High God! Of course, attaining this level of spirituality, subduing the human will to the will of the Holy Spirit, does not always come easily. But according to Yeshua, it will come by being one of His disciples. **May all receive the blessing of adoption resulting in peace with all people!**

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted...”

“Blessed are those who have been persecuted for the sake of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when people insult you and persecute you, and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward in heaven is great; for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12).

The final beatitude is rather long, and with it comes a sobering reality check, because the blessing of obtaining the Kingdom of Heaven frequently comes with a host of personal abuse from others. No one instinctively enjoys being persecuted, insulted, or being lied about, because the natural tendency is not only to defend oneself from the abuse—but to do so in a rather vindictive and harsh manner. But because children of God are to seek righteousness, a walk of holiness, and be separated from evil, they are to know that the world and unrighteous people will attack them in a variety of ways. This can be rather difficult to swallow, yet Yeshua lets His followers know rather clearly that a part of being reckoned as His is the guarantee of persecution on His behalf. Down through the centuries, many people who have served the Messiah of Israel have been persecuted, and in some cases have had to give up their lives for the gospel.

Later in Yeshua’s teachings, we encounter that not only will other people persecute the faithful, but this may actually include one’s own blood relatives:

“Brother will betray brother to death, and a father *his* child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. **You will be hated by all because of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved.** But whenever they persecute you in one city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you will not finish *going through* the cities of Israel until the Son of Man comes. A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, and the slave like his

master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more *will they malign* the members of his household!" (Matthew 10:21-25).

The reality of being hated for the Messiah Yeshua is better understood when He says that despite the persecution, lies, slander, and hatred—one has to endure through the abuse to the end in order to be saved. Confirming words are found during His conversation held at the Last Supper, where Yeshua reiterates the concept that as followers of His, the Disciples will be persecuted the same way that their Master was persecuted:

"Remember the word that I said to you, 'A slave is not greater than his master.' **If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you; if they kept My word, they will keep yours also**" (John 15:20).

The supernatural challenge is to follow the Lord's advice, and rejoice and be exceedingly glad when the persecutions come, rather than fighting back in the manner that persecution is issued—because the reward in Heaven will be great! Since followers of the Messiah will be persecuted because of their righteous behavior, then we are to recognize that this is simply the pattern established down through the millennia, first by the Prophets of Ancient Israel. While their reward was great for enduring the abuse, so too did the succeeding generations mock, abuse, and scorn those who believed in Yeshua. In the Last Days things will get particularly bad:

"Then they will deliver you to tribulation, and will kill you, and you will be hated by all nations because of My name. **At that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another**" (Matthew 24:9-10).

Faithfully believe the words of Yeshua and be committed as one of His disciples—despite the guaranteed challenges!

Seeking the Holy One of Israel

My dear brothers and sisters, be sure you understand that being a follower of the Messiah is a privilege without comparison in the world! The challenge for many of us, though, is making sure that we heed the Messiah's words and teachings—embracing them with all of our hearts. We must have a deep-seated desire to be poor in spirit, mournful for the lost, meek, seeking righteousness, demonstrating mercy, possessing a pure heart, always out to be a peacemaker, and possibly at times being a recipient of persecution. It is with these attributes in motion that one can begin to operate in a manner which will enable you *to effectively fight* the spiritual battle that always looms.

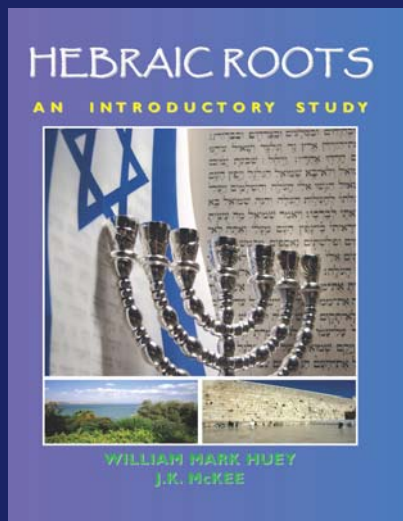
The Beatitudes reveal much to us, ask us various questions, but above all point to the great wisdom and direction that are only found in the Holy One of Israel. **Do you truly seek to follow after the Lord and His righteousness?** If you do, be encouraged as you seek after Him. Yeshua says that if you seek Him with all of your being, then you will truly find Him:

"Ask, and it will be given to you; seek, and you will find; knock, and it will be opened to you. **For everyone who asks receives, and he who seeks finds, and to him who knocks it will be opened...**In everything, therefore, treat people the same way you want them to treat you, for this is the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 7:7-8, 12).

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