

Beit Simcha ("House of Joy") Newsletter

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The Road to Jerusalem!

We're on the Road! And it's time for you to join us! Register *now* online at roadtojerusalem.org/events/Allentown2007.php or call toll-free, 866-991-0550. The event will feature Coach Bill McCartney and Dr. Raleigh Washington of Promise Keepers, plus anointed Messianic and Integrity music worship leader Paul Wilbur, Messianic dancers, Chanukah candles, and more! "By demonstrating the love of Yeshua--Jesus, THE ROAD



TO JERUSALEM shall lead in a ministry of reconciliation exhorting Christians and the Messianic Jewish community to stand together in relational oneness. We will encourage both groups to walk hand in hand in humility and work heart to heart in love, so as to provoke Jewish people worldwide to jealousy causing them to know their Messiah. The impact of this will lead both Jew and Gentile to find peace in Messiah, and be life from the dead for the world as they travel together in the biblical pathway to worldwide revival." Beit Simcha, Beth El Gibor, Calvary Temple, Lifechurch, the OneVoice and Share the Power unity networks are co-sponsoring this event, **December 8**, starting at **6:30pm**, at Calvary Temple 3436 Winchester Rd. (Take Route 22 to the Cedar Crest Blvd exit; turn right heading north; turn left at the traffic light at the bottom of the hill onto Winchester Road; Calvary Temple is about a quarter mile on the left; park in back of the sanctuary, facing route 22.) We're expecting great things—so please register now (\$10 in advance, \$12 at the door—registration starts at 5:45PM), invite others (flyers available at www.beitsimcha.org), and pray for greater things than we expect!

There's also a **leadership dinner** with Coach and Raleigh for pastors and staff, starting at 5PM, for \$15 (which includes the conference event)—call 866-991-0550.

Love and Law

The relationship of Messiah Yeshua to the Torah is clear and glorious. Yeshua fulfilled the Torah, from birth to death; he obeyed all its commandments perfectly. Throughout his life, Yeshua fulfilled the Torah and the prophets perfectly, so he could become our Messiah. Unlike the rest of us, who inherit the *yetzer hara* or evil inclination in our genes, he was without sin. Yet like every Jewish boy, he was circumcised on the eighth day, keeping the covenant that Hashem cut with Abraham and his descendants. After Miriam's 33 days of purification (Leviticus 12:4), his parents brought him to the Temple, as Luke 2:23 quotes Exodus 13:2: "Consecrate to me every firstborn male." When he was twelve, his parents found him questioning and teaching the Torah teachers in the Temple—Luke 2:47 says, "Everyone who heard him was amazed at his understanding and his answers." When he came to be immersed in the Jordan, his cousin Yochanan (John) tried to deter him, since he knew that Yeshua need not repent of any sin, yet Yeshua said, "It is proper for us to do this to fulfill all righteousness." For according to Leviticus 16:4, a priest "must bathe himself with water before" he begins his ministry. He amazed everyone with his teaching about Torah, because he taught with authority, yet did not derive his authority from any of the leading Torah-teachers (Matt 7:29), such as Hillel or Shammai, the rabbis of the generation before Yeshua. Yet Yeshua assured his Jewish listeners that he had not come to overthrow the Torah or the prophets, but to fulfill them (Matt 5:17). He infuriated the Pharisees who thought they kept Torah pretty good, pointing out the hypocrisy of blowing trumpets to announce they were giving alms (Matt 6:2) or tithing their mint and dill, while neglecting the more important matters of the Torah—justice, mercy and faithfulness (Matt 23:23).

When the powers that be brought Yeshua to trial, no two witnesses could agree on any charge against him, as the Torah requires. For he committed no transgression against Torah, only against the pride of men. As Isaiah 53 foretold, "he was despised and rejected by men ... he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed."

For the rest of us, our relationship with Torah is more complicated. Hashem gave the Torah as a gift to Israel, writing the Ten Commandments on stone with his finger! As Paul affirms in Romans 7:12, "The Torah is holy; that is, the commandment is holy, just and good."

The problem is, we humans cannot keep the Torah as God intended in our own strength. Consider the 10th commandment: "You shall not covet." How are you doing? Have kept this commandment or have you broken it? You, too? This commandment has to do with the heart. And when you look at your own heart, you know you fall short of God's glorious, righteous standard. Disobeying this one commandment is what leads us to break all the rest. You start coveting, soon you'll be stealing. Then you start lying to cover up your tracks. If you covet, lie, steal, and indulge your lustful appetites, can you honestly say, you have no other gods besides the Holy One? Thus James (Yaakov) 2:10 is just when he says, "For a person who keeps the whole Torah, yet stumbles at one point, has become guilty of breaking them all."

As Psalm 53:2-3 says, "God looks down from heaven on the sons of men to see if there are any who understand, any who seek God. Everyone has turned away, they have together become corrupt; there is no one who does good, not even one." There are a lot of people who are counting on their own self-righteousness to justify themselves with God, but if the Pharisees and Torah-teachers, who were pretty good by contemporary Jewish standards, didn't impress the Lord of glory, why would any of us think we can do any better?

Upon all who do not obey God's holy, good and righteous commandment, the Torah pronounces curses. Because of Adam's disobedience, Hashem said, in Genesis 3:17, "Cursed is the ground because of you; through painful toil you will eat of it all the days of your life," and with our first parents, we were tossed out of Gan Eden, driven from the presence of God which is fullness of joy, and put under the sentence of death, spiritual and physical. And so rain forests burn down, millions die of AIDS, and terrorists multiply.

When we look at the consequences of our disobedience of God's commandments

and the rottenness that spoils even our best intentions, we understand why Paul despaired in his letter to the Romans: "In my inner being I delight in God's law, but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death?"

Who indeed? "Thanks be to God through Yeshua the Messiah, our Lord! There is no longer any condemnation for those who are in Messiah Yeshua." Because he was born without sin, free of the curse of Torah, and because he lived without sin, in perfect obedience to Torah, and because he died without sin, Messiah was able to

remove the curse upon us. As Paul explains in Galatians 3:13, "The Messiah redeemed us from the curse pronounced in the Torah by becoming cursed on our behalf; for the Torah says (in Deut 21:23), "Everyone who hangs from a stake comes under a curse.'" Messiah died on a tree to set all who trust in him free from the curse of disobedience, which is death. Messiah died on a tree so that all who trust in him might live, eternal and abundant life. His perfect life and sacrificial death are His gift to us: all you have to do is trust in Him, and you will live!

Once I have trusted in the righteousness of Messiah, what is my relationship to Torah? As Romans 8 explains, the Spirit of Messiah is to dwell within me and I am able to fulfill the righteous requirements of Torah. "Those

who live in accordance with the Spirit have their minds set on what the Spirit desires". To be sure, I won't do so perfectly. When I fail, I remember, I confess my sin, he forgives me and cleanses me, and I press on toward the goal of becoming more like Messiah, who keeps Torah perfectly.

Let me quickly try to clear up a few confusing passages about Torah (mostly due to awkward translations). Many translations of Galatians 3:13 say something like this: "Messiah redeemed us from the curse of the law." Is the Jewish apostle calling the Torah a curse? Of course not! He said that the Torah is "holy, righteous and good!" But there is embedded within the Torah curses upon those who disobey the righteous standards of Torah, which, alas, is all of us.

When Romans 6:14 and 15 say “you are not under law, but under grace,” what does it mean? You are not under the curse that follows from disobedience of the law, but under the grace of Messiah, who forgives your sins, and has graciously given you the Holy Spirit. Note that Paul is not saying you have no relationship with the Torah. As he says in Romans 3:31, “Do we, then, nullify the law by this faith? Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law.”

Colossians 2:14 says (according to the *NIV*): Messiah “canceled the written code, with its regulations, that was against us and that stood opposed to us; he took it away, nailing it to the cross.” This translation makes it sound like Messiah nailed the Torah to the cross! How can Messiah have

cancelled the written code, when he said he did not come to abolish the Torah? And what good would that do? Here’s how the *Complete Jewish Version* translates this verse: “He wiped away the bill of charges against us. Because of the regulations, it stood as a testimony against us; but he removed it by nailing it to the execution-stake.” Messiah did not cancel the written code; he wiped away the bill of charges against us. In other words, what Messiah nailed to the tree was the curse or penalty for our disobedience of Torah.

Hebrews 8:13 says, “By calling this covenant “new,” he has made the first one obsolete; and what is obsolete and aging will soon disappear.” Alas, to some ears, this might sound like the Torah or the whole Hebrew Bible is obsolete!

Actually, what the writer to the Hebrews has in mind is the sacrificial system that Torah provided, temporarily, to cover the sins of Israel. He devotes several chapters to describing the sacrifices that the priests made in the tabernacle, and explains that Messiah became our High Priest, who “offered himself unblemished to God, to cleanse our consciences from acts that lead to death, so that we may serve the living God!” (Heb 9:14). Because he removed the curse and cleansed our conscience, the sacrificial system is no longer necessary. But as 2 Tim 3:16 says, “All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness”—and obviously, all Scripture includes the Torah. Amen?