



# OUTREACH ISRAEL NEWS

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**MARCH 2011**

**ANCIENT ADVICE REVISITED**

A compass rose is visible in the top left corner. The background features the words 'OUTREACH ISRAEL' and 'NEWS' in large, stylized letters, with 'NEWS' being significantly larger. There are also some faint numbers and letters scattered in the background.

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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

March 2011

This month, as the weather begins to warm and the vegetation again reminds us of new life, the Spring Feasts of the Lord once again come into focus. The annual celebration of *Purim*, followed a month later by Passover, reminds followers of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob that the Sovereign Lord of Creation has a special plan for His people. Despite the attempts of Haman to annihilate the Jewish people as witnessed in the Book of Esther, the Almighty used terrible circumstances to demonstrate His care and faithfulness. Rejoice in the salvation of the Lord when you commemorate *Purim*, and be reminded that the Holy One is still in control of the nations! Continue to pray for the peace of Jerusalem, as the turmoil in the Middle East is evidence that the enemies of Israel (Psalm 83) will not rest until they are ultimately dealt with by Him.

In order to assist you in your celebration of the Spring appointed times, I encourage you to get a copy of our ministry publication, the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper*, as well as our Passover Haggadah for your home *seder* meal. Additionally, my *Counting the Omer* reflection book is a useful tool for you to employ as you count the days from the Festival of Unleavened Bread to *Shavuot*. I trust these teachings and exhortations will benefit you, your family, and your Messianic fellowship as the opportunity to obey the commands of the Lord will pour out blessings beyond measure!

This month as I continue to review the admonitions found in Yeshua's Sermon on the Mount, I have written an article entitled, "**Ancient Advice Revisited.**" Being reminded of how Yeshua's teaching parallels and enhances that of Moses in the Torah, makes the Messiah's words that much more meaningful to all who worship and serve Him as the King of Kings. It is my prayer that further considering His words will draw you closer to Him!

Thank you again for your prayers and support, during this transitional season as we all relocate back to Texas.

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

Mark Huey

# ANCIENT ADVICE REVISITED

by Mark Huey

The Sermon on the Mount within Matthew chs. 5-7 is perhaps the most memorable of Yeshua's teachings to His Disciples, not only because it is recorded early in the Gospel of Matthew, but because it challenges all today who examine it to embrace a deeper walk with Him as the Master Teacher. After first delineating the individual responsibilities found in the Beatitudes (Matthew 5:1-12), and then turning to the duties of His followers to be salt and light by their good works in obedience to the Torah or Law of Moses (Matthew 5:17-19), the Messiah then delivers some important words that are intended to substantiate what He means by coming to fulfill the Torah.

Within much of the Sermon on the Mount, one encounters Yeshua saying "You have heard it said..." Frequently, many of today's Christian readers assume that the Messiah was contradicting the previous instruction of the Torah of Moses, but such a reading of His teaching has been separated from some of its key First Century context. Much of what we actually see in Matthew chs. 5-7 is a significant correction of how various Torah instructions were misinterpreted by the Jewish community of His time.<sup>1</sup> And it is also quite true that much of what the Lord directs His followers' attention to is how the very words one utters and the thoughts they contemplate *can constitute* disobedience. It is not only physical action that can bring judgment, but what one says or even thinks in his or her heart. Yeshua does not contradict the teaching of Moses, but He surely amplifies and enhances it as the quintessential Teacher of Teachers.

In general terms, what Yeshua does by explaining some proper applications of the Torah commandments prohibiting murder, adultery, false vows, and speaking of "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth" (Matthew 5:21-48)—is building upon the Torah's thrust that Israel was called by God to be holy just as He is holy. The conduct, attitudes, motives, and thoughts of His people are to be *qadosh* (קָדוֹשׁ) or set-apart,<sup>2</sup> noticeably different from the world around it:

"Speak to all the congregation of the sons of Israel and say to them, '**You shall be holy, for I the LORD your God am holy**'" (Leviticus 19:2).

Further on in Leviticus 19, the core Torah principle to love one's neighbor is found:

"You shall not go about as a slanderer among your people, and you are not to act against the life of your neighbor; I am the LORD. **You shall not hate your fellow countryman in your heart**; you may surely reprove your neighbor, but shall not incur sin because of him. You shall not take vengeance, nor bear any grudge against the sons of your people, **but you shall love your neighbor as yourself**; I am the LORD" (Leviticus 19:16-18).

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<sup>1</sup> Walter C. Kaiser, *The Promise-Plan of God: A Biblical Theology of the Old and New Testaments* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2008), 313 explains how for much of the Sermon on the Mount, "Jesus was correcting the *oral* traditions that had accumulated around the law ('You have heard it said'). He did not say, as all too many presume, something like 'It is written, but I now correct that by saying...'"

<sup>2</sup> Grk. equiv. *hagios* (ἅγιος).

## “You shall not commit murder”

As we remember the steadfast Torah requirements for God’s people to be holy and loving to their neighbors, Yeshua begins this section of His Sermon on the Mount by referring to one of the most recognized Biblical prohibitions: the murder of innocent life. This obvious reference to the Sixth Commandment found in the Decalogue (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17) certainly received the attention of His original listeners. Everyone knew the prohibition against murder and its capital consequences. Taking the life of another without any just cause is *the exact opposite* of loving a neighbor. But as Yeshua reminded His Disciples about what the ancients were instructed, He added a much fuller meaning and interpretation to the Sixth Commandment. He incorporated elements of anger expressed verbally, as well as a lack of forgiveness, as constituting violation of the Sixth Commandment. These are two critical heart issues that go far beyond a physical act of slaying a fellow human being:

“You have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT MURDER [Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17]’ and ‘Whoever commits murder shall be liable to the court.’ **But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever says to his brother, ‘You good-for-nothing,’ shall be guilty before the supreme court; and whoever says, ‘You fool,’ shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell.** Therefore if you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar and go; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, so that your opponent may not hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. Truly I say to you, you will not come out of there until you have paid up the last cent” (Matthew 5:21-26).

Physical murder is obviously a heinous crime against humanity, so much so that cultures all over the globe—whether or not they acknowledge the Holy One of Israel as God—universally prohibit it. But, slander or speaking against another with the intention to do harm is equally problematic. In His teaching, Yeshua addresses the very root of the emotions which often generate the actions resultant in someone taking another’s life. *If uncontrolled, vitriolic slander can lead to murder.* But in diagnosing a major cause of murderous acts, Yeshua says that the emotional anger in one’s heart makes people **equally guilty** of the offense of murder. It is not only the antagonism in the heart, but also the emotional outburst, which generates vicious statements like calling another person “Raca” (Matthew 5:22, NASB) or a “good-for-nothing.”<sup>3</sup> The consequences of such attacks, according to Yeshua, result in culpability worthy of going to Hell.

This is a very sobering truth for all of us to consider. After all, Yeshua is most concerned about the heart condition of His followers. Further clarification of this heart problem is found later in Matthew’s Gospel when Yeshua speaks to

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<sup>3</sup> Transliterated into the Greek text as *rhaka* (ῥακά), *BDAG*, 903 defines this word as “a term of abuse/put-down relating to lack of intelligence, *numskull, fool,*” but indicates that it is “fr. the Aramaic ריקא or ריקה ‘empty one.’” It is entirely possible that this was a First Century curse word used by many in First Century Israel, and the Messiah specifically uses it to make an important point to His listeners.

various Pharisees, making a direct link between what fills the heart and what ushers forth from the mouth:

“You brood of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak what is good? For the mouth speaks out of that which fills the heart. The good man brings out of *his* good treasure what is good; and the evil man brings out of *his* evil treasure what is evil. **But I tell you that every careless word that people speak, they shall give an accounting for it in the day of judgment.** For by your words you will be justified, and by your words you will be condemned” (Matthew 12:34-37).

The Messiah’s observation that “Every one of these careless words is going to come back to haunt you” (The Message) should be taken very seriously by us as His followers—especially when those words might very well be slanderous, gossiping things we have said intending to do harm to another. Calling people names reveals a blackened heart condition. We each need to be warned that **the propensity to think evil or unkind thoughts** toward others is probably a clear sign that a heart change needs to be enacted, to remedy the malady. Perhaps there is a lack of forgiveness in the heart.<sup>4</sup>

The need to forgive others is critical to being a true disciple of the Messiah Yeshua. When it comes to entering into the presence of God in the Temple, Yeshua admonishes His audience to first make sure that all is well with their relationships with others (Matthew 5:23). In fact, He makes it imperative that if one knows that he has an offense against another, it is necessary to first reconcile with the one offended before offering at the altar (Matthew 5:24). This is further amplified when Yeshua mentions the problems that erupt when a disagreement results in a need to go to court (Matthew 5:25). Rather than let (secular) judges rule on an issue, it is much better to come to terms with one another. But this requires forgiveness on the part of both parties involved in a dispute. In essence, we see Yeshua admonishing His audience to have a heart attitude toward others that exemplifies the great love and forgiveness embodied in Leviticus 19:18, leaving final vindication of a wrongdoer to God (cf. Deuteronomy 32:35). That vengeance and retribution are ultimately of the Lord is elaborated on by the Apostle Paul:

“Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of *God*, for it is written, ‘VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY’ [Leviticus 19:18], says the Lord. ‘BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD’ [Proverbs 25:21-22]. Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good” (Romans 12:17-21).

Obviously from reading the Bible, but most especially the Apostolic Scriptures, Yeshua and His early followers **understood the need to love others**. *Peace with all people is something to be desired by the redeemed in Messiah*. As difficult as it may be to see peace enacted with others (and sometimes such peace might only be a cessation of hostilities), those who have a new heart of flesh provided by the salvation available in Yeshua (Ezekiel 36:26-27) make the effort to see that

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<sup>4</sup> Cf. Matthew 6:15; 18:35; Mark 11:26.

as much that can be done to avoid harmful actions is done.

It is incumbent upon followers of Yeshua to not only monitor what comes forth from their hearts *and* through their mouths, but also to genuinely employ forgiveness when it comes to resolving differences with others. Avoiding these spiritual exercises should be a warning that someone might not have experienced a true conversion of faith. This is why the Apostle Paul warned the Corinthians that they were to test themselves to see whether they were truly in the faith:

“Test yourselves *to see* if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Yeshua the Messiah is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test” (2 Corinthians 13:5-6).

## “You shall not commit adultery”

After dealing with the issues of murder, slander, and forgiveness, the Messiah turns to another readily recognizable principle of the Decalogue: the prohibition against adultery (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17). It is here that the thought life of a person is once again addressed:

“You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL NOT COMMIT ADULTERY [Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17]’; but I say to you that everyone who looks at a woman with lust for her has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye makes you stumble, tear it out and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. If your right hand makes you stumble, cut it off and throw it from you; for it is better for you to lose one of the parts of your body, than for your whole body to go into hell. It was said, ‘WHOEVER SENDS HIS WIFE AWAY, LET HIM GIVE HER A CERTIFICATE OF DIVORCE [Deuteronomy 24:1]’; but I say to you that everyone who divorces his wife, except for *the* reason of unchastity, makes her commit adultery; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery” (Matthew 5:27-32).

Yeshua points out that it is not just committing the act of fornication with another man’s wife, but it is contemplating sexual immorality within one’s heart, that merits violation of the Seventh Commandment. Even in ancient times when women were much more modestly attired than compared to the Twenty-First Century West—a problem of lustful thinking needed to be considered by those gathered. In our more promiscuous times, those who claim to be diligent Messiah followers need to get their thought life under control! *Men especially* need to take the advice of Job seriously, making a covenant with their eyes: “I have made a covenant with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?” (Job 31:1).

Yeshua’s strong admonition that one pluck out an eye or cut off a hand in order to avoid being thrown into Hell (Matthew 5:29-30), should keep men from looking lustily upon women and then acting upon their lusts. *Yeshua is not mincing words*. Once again, it is a heart issue being addressed by the Messiah. Fidelity to a spouse is critical for God’s people to maintain their required holiness, and deviant behavior will erode the moral fabric of its culture.

One area of Yeshua’s teaching on marital fidelity, which can often stir a great amount of consternation among Believers today, is where He states that divorce

is permissible for the reason of marital infidelity (Matthew 5:32-32). Yeshua does not totally prohibit divorce, and does confirm Moses' instruction on how divorce is permitted due to unfaithfulness:

“When a man takes a wife and marries her, and it happens that she finds no favor in his eyes because he has found some indecency in her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce and puts it in her hand and sends her out from his house” (Deuteronomy 24:1).

Sometimes Matthew 5:31-32 is applied rather strictly in some circles of Believers, as though marital infidelity is the only reason why a husband or wife can be divorced. What this can do, unfortunately, is while there are no affairs going on, a spouse can be locked into a relationship where the other spouse is involved in illegal activities, where there is spousal abuse and/or violence, or where there is sheer unhappiness and depression—in spite of attempts made to fix the problem(s). Yeshua's words were given against a First Century backdrop, likely the divisions between the Pharisaical School of Shammai which held to a conservative view of Deuteronomy 24:1, and the School of Hillel which held to a rather liberal view.<sup>5</sup> As expressed by the historian Josephus, a common attitude of the period was “He that desires to be divorced from his wife for any cause whatever, (and many such causes happen among men,) let him in writing give assurance that he will never use her as his wife any more...” (*Antiquities of the Jews* 4.253).<sup>6</sup> Yeshua's teaching, in stark contrast, **only allows for the most extreme circumstances for divorce to be an option for a married couple.** An important Pauline principle to consider is whether Believers should be bound to non-Believers, which may certainly allow for divorce:

“Do not be bound together with unbelievers; for what partnership have righteousness and lawlessness, or what fellowship has light with darkness?” (2 Corinthians 6:14).

There are certainly many legitimate reasons for divorce, as the Holy Scriptures easily bear witness to. Being married to someone who is not a Believer can be one of them. Being married to someone who verbally or physically abuses you is also a major reason for divorce. But, there can also be many illegitimate reasons for divorce, such as dismissing one's current husband or wife with the sole purpose of marrying another (cf. Matthew 5:32b). If a married man or woman has uncontrolled lusts and passions for another—and thinks that divorce from the current spouse and marriage, to marrying that other person, will not be violation of the Seventh Commandment—Yeshua says that adultery is still present.<sup>7</sup>

## “You shall not make false vows”

Following His remarks on sexual fidelity in marriage and divorce, Yeshua turns to the subject of making vows, oaths, and in essence, doing what one has verbally committed to doing. Here, He admonishes His audience to avoid making

<sup>5</sup> Summarized in John R.W. Stott, *The Message of the Sermon on the Mount* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1978), 93.

<sup>6</sup> Flavius Josephus: *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 120.

<sup>7</sup> For some additional thoughts, consult the author's commentary on *Ki-Teitzei* (Deuteronomy 21:10-25:19), “From Curse to Blessing,” appearing in *TorahScope Apostolic Scripture Reflections*.



vows, primarily because it is impossible to know what is going to come in the future. Instead, He focuses on the much larger principle of people keeping their word:

“Again, you have heard that the ancients were told, ‘YOU SHALL NOT MAKE FALSE VOWS, BUT SHALL FULFILL YOUR VOWS TO THE LORD’ [Leviticus 19:12; Numbers 30:3; Deuteronomy 23:22]. **But I say to you, make no oath at all, either by heaven, for it is the throne of God, or by the earth, for it is the footstool of His feet, or by Jerusalem, for it is THE CITY OF THE GREAT KING [Isaiah 66:1].** Nor shall you make an oath by your head, for you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your statement be, ‘Yes, yes’ or ‘No, no’; anything beyond these is of evil” (Matthew 5:33-37).

Making vows is something that Yeshua does not recommend. The nature of human life is transitory, and making a vow can be something rather presumptuous—because there is no way anyone can know what tomorrow brings. Significant thought has to go into what people commit themselves to do, and it is not worthwhile if they just flippantly make oaths or vows—much less oaths or vows that attempt to incur some kind of Divine favor on one’s action. James the Just echoes Yeshua’s teaching regarding anticipating the future, in his epistle:

“Come now, you who say, ‘Today or tomorrow we will go to such and such a city, and spend a year there and engage in business and make a profit.’ **Yet you do not know what your life will be like tomorrow. You are *just* a vapor that appears for a little while and then vanishes away.** Instead, *you ought* to say, ‘If the Lord wills, we will live and also do this or that.’ But as it is, you boast in your arrogance; all such boasting is evil. Therefore, to one who knows *the* right thing to do and does not do it, to him it is sin” (James 4:13-17).

Note that James points out the qualifying statement, “If the Lord wills...,” when someone enters into an agreement on doing something that is to occur in the future. Interestingly, James points out that boasting about doing something in the future is evil, just as Yeshua points out that anything beyond simply stating yes or no is evil. What is most critical for Messiah followers is that they, to the best of their ability, simply honor their verbal commitments. This is somewhat reminiscent of words found in Psalm 15, which address the issue of honoring one’s word among other traits exemplifying integrity:

“A Psalm of David. O LORD, who may abide in Your tent? Who may dwell on Your holy hill? He who walks with integrity, and works righteousness, and speaks truth in his heart. He does not slander with his tongue, nor does evil to his neighbor, nor takes up a reproach against his friend; in whose eyes a reprobate is despised, but who honors those who fear the LORD; **he swears to his own hurt and does not change;** he does not put out his money at interest, Nor does he take a bribe against the innocent. He who does these things will never be shaken” (Psalm 15:1-5).

## “An Eye for an Eye, a Tooth for a Tooth”

Perhaps even more controversial than the subject of divorce or making vows, is what Yeshua means when he addresses the Torah principle of “eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot” (Exodus 21:24). Far too frequently,

Christian readers with no Torah background think that Yeshua the Messiah is promoting some form of pacifism, where contrary to the Law's allowance for penalties to be issued to those who commit physical harm—Yeshua says to just let yourself be taken advantage of for the sake of “peace.” Does Yeshua's teaching on “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” contradict Moses' Teaching?

“You have heard that it was said, ‘AN EYE FOR AN EYE, AND A TOOTH FOR A TOOTH’ [Exodus 21:24; Leviticus 24:20; Deuteronomy 19:21]. **But I say to you, do not resist an evil person; but whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, let him have your coat also. Whoever forces you to go one mile, go with him two. Give to him who asks of you, and do not turn away from him who wants to borrow from you.** You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR [Leviticus 19:18] and hate your enemy.’ 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. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet only your brothers, what more are you doing *than others*? Do not even the Gentiles do the same? Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect” (Matthew 5:38-48).

The challenge with thinking that Yeshua contradicts the Torah's allowance for “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” is how this principle is intended to apply to **significant** physical damages. In contrast to this, Yeshua speaks of various material damages or personal damages, where one might be tempted to enact the Torah command “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth,” when it does not easily apply. While being slapped, or being sued, or even being forced to walk a long way with someone can excise a degree of pain or unpleasantness—it is not the same thing as losing a limb or control over a part of one's body.

The ability to restrain oneself when being slapped, or not slandering a person who has taken you to be sued in court, or just walking the extra mile with someone you do not like—is certainly supernatural. These are things that can all happen within a course of a normal day, and they require that we each be able *to control ourselves*. And indeed, if there is any ancient abuse and misapplication of the Torah that needs to be recognized, it is how Yeshua had to say, “You have heard that it was said, ‘YOU SHALL LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOR [Leviticus 19:18] and hate your enemy.’ 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” (Matthew 5:43-45a). **Nowhere does the Torah ever allow for hating one's enemies!** Some within the mileu of First Century Judaism allowed for hatred of one's enemies—something which Yeshua knew would clearly impede the advance of the mission He would send His Disciples out in the world to fulfill. Those in the Qumran community, specifically commanded love only for the members of one's covenant community and that hatred could be shown for the outsider:

“He is to teach them both to love all the Children of Light—each commensurate with his rightful place in the council of God—and to hate all the Children

of Darkness, each commensurate with his guilt and the vengeance due him from God” (1QS 1.9-11).<sup>8</sup>

The admonition to love one’s enemies and pray for those who persecute you is certainly something that only those completely submitted to and controlled by the Lord can do! Have you ever considered that this very requirement was exemplified by Yeshua Himself, when He was being unjustly tried by the Jewish religious leaders and crucified by the Romans? Yeshua prayed for forgiveness for those who humiliated Him and beat Him, driving spikes through his wrists and ankles:

“When they came to the place called The Skull, there they crucified Him and the criminals, one on the right and the other on the left. **But Yeshua was saying, ‘Father, forgive them; for they do not know what they are doing.’** And they cast lots, dividing up His garments among themselves” (Luke 23:33-34).

Clearly, when humanity truly focuses on the sacrificial Lamb of God and how Yeshua was led to slaughter without a fight, it has to come to the same conclusions that many witnesses did when His body was crushed for our transgressions (Isaiah 53:5). Here are a few immediate testimonies recorded by Luke:

“And Yeshua, crying out with a loud voice, said, ‘Father, INTO YOUR HANDS I COMMIT MY SPIRIT’ [Psalm 31:5]. Having said this, He breathed His last. **Now when the centurion saw what had happened, he *began* praising God, saying, ‘Certainly this man was innocent.’** And all the crowds who came together for this spectacle, when they observed what had happened, *began* to return, beating their breasts. And all His acquaintances and the women who accompanied Him from Galilee were standing at a distance, seeing these things. And a man named Joseph, who was a member of the Council, a good and righteous man (he had not consented to their plan and action), *a man* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who was waiting for the kingdom of God; this man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Yeshua. And he took it down and wrapped it in a linen cloth, and laid Him in a tomb cut into the rock, where no one had ever lain” (Luke 23:46-53).

Not only was the executioner of Yeshua praising Israel’s God for His innocence, but many in the crowd of onlookers were convicted to the very depths of their souls. Additionally, religious leaders like Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus (John 19:39) were also convicted that Yeshua was indeed the Son of God and the promised sacrificial Lamb of God. It is amazing how the Messiah’s humiliating death on a cross could be used to convict a wide range of people down through the ages!

## Ancient Advice Heeded

These amplifying statements of Yeshua—whether they regard murder, adultery, false vows, or speaking of “an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth”—lead us to the key word of Matthew 5:48: **“Therefore you are to be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”** With all of the tough things that Yeshua has spoken about in Matthew 5:21-48, *how difficult would this have been for His audience?* Can you imagine listening to this statement and concluding that it is simply im-

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<sup>8</sup> Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 127.

possible to be perfect as the Almighty Creator?

What is our response when we hear Matthew 5:48, and really allow it to penetrate our hearts and minds? *The great mystery of the ages comes forth.* Everyone must recognize that he or she is a sinner who falls short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). A change of heart, from a dead heart of stone to a living heart of flesh, **is required** to possess the spiritual insight necessary to even understand what it is Yeshua is communicating in such a word. Deep spiritual truths which require the enlightenment that only comes from the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit develops and cultivates the mind of Messiah within a person. The Apostle Paul summarizes that a natural person cannot comprehend spiritual things, because one must be imbued by the Spirit of God to interpret things that come from God:

“For to us God revealed *them* through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the *thoughts* of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the *thoughts* of God no one knows except the Spirit of God. Now we have received, **not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, so that we may know the things freely given to us by God, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words.** 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 2:10-16).

Without the indwelling presence of the Holy Spirit to enlighten us as the followers of the Messiah, Yeshua’s further amplification of the ancient advice found in the Holy Scriptures, referenced in His Sermon on the Mount—will **largely fall on deaf ears.** *At most, what Yeshua says might be interesting, speculative philosophy,* but not instruction designed to orient human beings toward the will of their Creator.

Most thankfully, there are millions of truly born again Believers all over the globe who have experienced the salvation available in Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ), and they *can understand* the transformative power in His words! Admittedly, some of them need to do a little bit more digging into those words, and read them a bit more carefully with more attention given to detail. When this is done, and people are enlightened as to the right meaning and application of Yeshua’s teachings, not only will a higher standard be established for one’s life—but the need to trust in the Lord and obey the Scriptures is much more appreciated. Messiah followers understand that deviating from Yeshua’s words is tantamount to disregarding the literal words of the Most High God, as the Messiah *is God.*

In fact, consider how serious it is to recognize Yeshua as the Greater Prophet foretold by Moses as he peered into the future. It is this Greater Prophet whose words must be believed or one suffers the consequences:

“The LORD your God will raise up for you a prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen, you shall listen to him. This is according to all that

you asked of the LORD your God in Horeb on the day of the assembly, saying, 'Let me not hear again the voice of the LORD my God, let me not see this great fire anymore, or I will die.' The LORD said to me, 'They have spoken well. I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you, and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require *it of him*'" (Deuteronomy 18:15-19; cf. Acts 3:22-23; 7:37).

As you meditate upon different elements of the Sermon on the Mount such as murder, adultery, false vows, or "an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth"—understand that these admonitions have come from the heart of the Holy One of Israel. Not following the words of Yeshua, the words of the Most High, is **not an option**. In fact, everyone who calls upon Yeshua is required to listen to His words and follow Him. If not, then God will require it of you. Yeshua Himself succinctly said, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life: no one comes to the Father but through Me" (John 14:6).

*There are no other options.* As you read the ancient advice revisited by Yeshua, remember that it is God in the flesh speaking. Take His revelatory advice to serious heart! Doing anything else will have negative consequences...



## Am Echad Israel Tour Shavuot-Pentecost

May/June 2012

Join Outreach Israel Ministries Directors Mark and Margaret Huey, and TNN Online editor John McKee, for our Am Echad Israel

Tour 2012 (May 22-June 4, 2012) featuring an Am Echad Shavuot in Jerusalem, as well as a traditional tour of the Land of Israel. Our tour guide will be native Israeli Rami Danielli (a Messianic Jewish Believer who lives in the Galilee area), who has years of guide experience coupled with a deep love for the Messiah Yeshua.

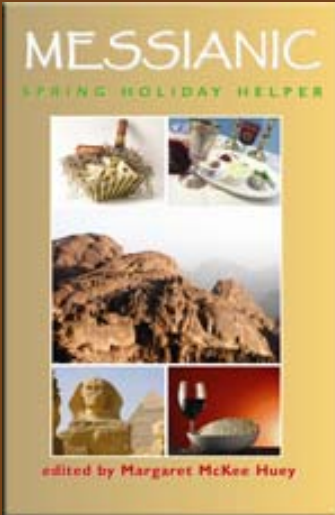
Providentially, the celebration of Shavuot/Pentecost 2012 occurs on Sunday, May 27 (Sivan 6), which just happens to be the day that every major Jewish, Messianic, and Christian group commemorates this annual feast of the Lord. Our intention is to join with others on this day in Jerusalem and pray that the unity the Father and Son desire for their children (John 17:9-26) comes together. (Sign up for the Facebook group labeled "Shavuot-Pentecost Am Echad Israel Tour 2012" for announcements and pertinent details as they materialize over the next year and a half.)

Based on current projections, the estimated cost is approximately \$3300 per person for twelve hotel nights (which includes breakfast and dinner but not lunches, tips, etc.) **More information available at [www.outreachisrael.net](http://www.outreachisrael.net)**

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# MESSIANIC

## SPRING HOLIDAY HELPER



The Spring holiday season is a very busy time for those in today's Messianic movement, beginning with *Purim*, continuing to the week of Passover and Unleavened Bread, and then culminating with *Shavuot* or Pentecost. This broad season is one of the most demanding for Messianic Believers, not only as it concerns the many things to celebrate and reflect upon, but also as we strive to exhibit a positive testimony to both the Jewish and Christian communities: to Jewish people remembering the Passover and deliverance of Ancient Israel from Egypt, and to Christians memorializing the death and resurrection of Yeshua the Messiah (Jesus Christ).

The *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper* is a valuable compilation of resources designed to assist you, your family, and your Messianic fellowship for this season. We have included a wide selection of articles discussing the different salvation historical themes from the Spring season. The significance of *Purim* is addressed. The role that the Passover and the Exodus

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play, and how they relate to our redemption in the Messiah, is described. We go into great detail discussing the Last Supper, and the death and resurrection of the Messiah. We consider what it means to observe *Shavuot* as a time for both the giving of the Torah (Law) and the Holy Spirit. We offer a fair-minded and loving way to communicate to those who observe an Easter holiday often separated from anything in the Tanach or Old Testament. A selection of FAQs on the Spring holidays has been provided, as are some delicious recipes, and an educational Passover *haggadah* you can use for your home or congregation.

Let the *Messianic Spring Holiday Helper* be a resource of great blessing to you during this sacred season!

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