

## FAMILY BREAKDOWN – THE REMEDY – WEEK SIXTEEN.

As we continue our journey, we have come to the point where we need to choose the counsel that best repairs damaged relationships. We should endeavour to follow and receive counsel and teachings from those who best follow that which HaShem has set down for the Children of Israel. Just as Shaul/Paul made a choice, so too will many others have to make such a choice. In Shaul's day there were many choices that confronted the Children of Israel, both those "old" in the faith and those "new" in the faith. We have the same today, so can we learn from Shaul, who had plenty of experience with this dilemma? Not only can we learn from what Shaul had to say on this matter, but we can learn from the Master Himself.

*Finally, my brethren, rejoice in the Lord. To write the same things again is no trouble to me, and it is a safe guard to you. Beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision; for we are the true circumcision, who worship in the Spirit of God and glory in Messiah Yeshua and put no confidence even in the flesh, although I myself might have confidence even in the flesh. If anyone else has a mind to put confidence in the flesh, I far more: Circumcised the eight day, of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law a Pharisee; as to zeal a persecutor of the assembly; as to righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless. But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Messiah. More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Messiah Yeshua my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish, in order that I may gain Messiah.*  
Philippians 3:1-8 [NASB]

There is need for us to look a little more closely at these words Shaul wrote, as they are very relevant to what we face today, especially with many realising the validity in following the Torah. Which teachers of God's Word do we attach ourselves too? Shaul goes a long way to answering that question here.

First and foremost, take notice that we are to rejoice in the Lord, regardless of all other influences. For the Children of Israel, we are to find our joy in the work HaMoshiach has done on our behalf and show that joy through adhering to the instructions of HaShem. We are not to put the instructions [especially the instructions of man] over and above Yeshua, and we are not in any manner to submit ourselves to the burdens of those that behave as Shaul once behaved. Shaul had a complete change in heart in how he viewed and taught the Torah. He saw the need to repeat what he had written before on this issue, in order to provide good counsel that would both protect and give reason to rejoice in HaMoshiach Yeshua.

After encouraging all to rejoice in the Lord, Shaul then goes on to give some warnings, advice and counsel. He begins this by telling the believers in Philippi to **“beware of the dogs, beware of the evil workers, beware of the false circumcision”**. These are very harsh and pointed words, especially when you consider the absolute abhorrence of being called a dog in the Ancient Near East culture at that time. Calling someone a dog was one of the most derogatory terms you could possibly use in order to shame someone. It is why Moslems often call Jews and Christians dogs today. So who were these “dogs, evil workers and false circumcision”? Considering the accusation, we must try to be very careful in our assessment of such. Fortunately, Shaul gives us more than a hint when he says, that believers in Messiah Yeshua are the true circumcision. I suggest, as do most commentators, that these dogs etc were overzealous Pharisees who hated Yeshua and insisted that to be saved one had to not only convert to Judaism but had to convert to their sect of Judaism. These dogs and evil workers, circumcised in the flesh but not in the heart [thus false circumcision] had no time for Yeshua the Messiah of Israel. They had all their trust and beliefs embedded in the rules and regulations of the religious elite of the day. Remember Shaul was well qualified to make such a statement, considering he was once one of the “false circumcision”. Yeshua Himself had many a conversation with the Pharisees along the same lines. We look at one such occasion in the book of Mark:

*“The Pharisees and some of the scribes who had come from Jerusalem gathered around Him, and they noticed that some of His disciples were eating with unclean hands, that is, without washing them. For the Pharisees, and all the Jews, keep the tradition of the elders and never eat without washing their arms as far as the elbow; and on returning from the market they never eat without first sprinkling themselves. There are also many observances which have been handed down to them to keep, concerning the washing of cups and pots and bronze dishes. So the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, ‘Why do your disciples not respect the tradition of the elders but eat their food with unclean hands?’ He answered, ‘How rightly Isaiah prophesied about you hypocrites in the passage of scripture: **This people honours me only with lip-service, while their hearts are far from me. Their reverence of me is worthless; the lessons they teach are nothing but human commandments. You put aside the commandments of God to observe human traditions.**’ And He said to them, ‘How ingeniously you get round the commandment of God in order to preserve your own tradition.’” Mark 7:1-9 [NJB]*

It is fair to say that Yeshua, Paul/Shaul; James/Ya’aqov; Peter/Kefa; John/Yochanan had conflicts with the Pharisees, scribes etc over their propensity to teach their traditions over and above the Word of HaShem and the Biblical Torah of Moshe. Teaching the true Torah or instructions that HaShem set down

for His Children were certainly to be adhered too. Yeshua made this point when He said:

*“Then addressing the crowds and His disciples Yeshua said, ‘The scribes and the Pharisees occupy the chair of Moses. You must therefore do and observe what they tell you; but do not be guided by what they do, since they do not practice what they preach. They tie up heavy burdens and lay them on people’s shoulders, but will they lift a finger to move them? Not they! Matthew 23:1-4 [NJB]*

So the argument is not over whether the Torah is valid for all the Children of Israel, as it surely is, but who should we be following regarding the teaching of the Torah. Well one thing is for certain we should not be following the teachings of those labelled as dogs, evil workers and false circumcision. Shaul/Paul says that those who believe in Yeshua as HaMoshiach and follow the Torah of Moshe are the true circumcision. It is these we should be following and learning from. Paul made some other statements that are very appropriate in this day and age, as there is much interest in Judaism from the House of Ephraim. We must be very aware of what is on offer within some circles. For any who believe and trust in Yeshua as HaMoshiach, I caution against any thought of converting to what is commonly known as Rabbinical Judaism, whether it be Orthodox, Reform or Conservative or branches thereof. You will find “Rabbinical Judaism” is totally against Yeshua. There are individuals within those sects who are not, some even hold to Him as Moshiach, but as religious bodies they totally reject Yeshua as Moshiach. We have to face the fact that Yeshua is the biggest hurdle in the Two Houses coming together as one, and it may not happen until Moshiach Ben David arrives. None the less we can learn to respect each other and acknowledge each “House” as that of Israel. Not a new Israel but a still disjointed Israel. I am convinced only HaMoshiach will bring the Two Houses together as one, and this will happen in His time. None the less we must continue the journey as we believe HaShem would have us walk. This is one reason behind establishing JSI, JSIU and MJM. We are trying to expose people to the “Judaism” that Yeshua taught and walked and the “Judaism” that Shaul and the Talmidim embraced. JSI would hope that we listen to those who occupy the seat of Moshe, when they teach authentic Torah as Yeshua Himself taught. We at JSI are blessed to have Rabbi Mordecai Silver as our CEO, a Jew who teaches and follows Torah, but has the light of Yeshua HaMoshiach guiding his footsteps. Our conversion program is for those who feel the call to identify fully with Judah, especially those Jews such as Paul/Shaul, James/Ya’aqov, Peter/Kepha, John/Yochanan, Jude/Y’hudah and their families. This conversion will not make you any greater in the eyes of HaShem or Yeshua or open the door to making aliyah to Israel but it will give you a greater understanding of the Jewish community and becoming a family member of Judah.

We at JSI truly pray that we offer, for those interested, a biblical form of Judaism that would please our Moshiach Yeshua and His Talmidim. We pray we are teaching the counsel of HaMoshiach Yeshua and can help bring you closer to HaShem through learning more about the biblical Yeshua and the Torah He walked and taught. Make no mistake Yeshua is the Prince of peace and the great Counsellor.

The process of reconciliation requires great patience, endurance and understanding. There are always issues that challenge us. These can enhance our growth if we handle them the correct way. If we fail to handle them in the correct biblical manner, these same challenges can actually destroy us. We have wonderful examples on how to approach and handle these challenges in studying the lives of Yeshua and His talmidim. They all faced the prospect of death for their faith in Yeshua as HaMoshiach and their adherence to the Torah of Moshe. Everyday there are countless numbers facing the same prospect today. If you love and trust the Holy One of Israel, blessed be He, then you will be persecuted at some time, if you haven't already. It is this persecution that will bring the "Family of Israel" together, it is sad that we will most likely have to face such before we reconcile our differences. As we close off this week, let us finish with some good counsel and encouragement from the book of Hebrews.

*"So then, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, let us, too, put aside every impediment – that is, the sin which easily hampers our forward movement – and keep running with endurance in the contest set before us, looking away to the Initiator and Completer of that **trusting**, Yeshua – who, in exchange for obtaining the joy set before Him, endured execution on a stake as a criminal, scorning the shame, and has sat down **at the right hand** of the throne of God. Yes think about Him who endured such hostility against Himself from sinners, so that you won't grow tired or **become despondent**.*

Hebrews 12:1-3

There is never a quick fix to a reconciliation that will last the distance. It takes the strength and wisdom of HaShem to enable us to endure the process. Let us knuckle down to this challenge and look up to HaShem for the instructions we need to complete this journey.

Truly there is no God like our God, the God of Israel and no nation like the Nation whom He elected.

Blessings to all citizens of biblical Israel,

Rabbi [Prof] Philip [Yochanan] Hammond. PhD.