

Messiah Yeshua's Followers becoming "as Judah?"

By Barbara L. Klika, MSW, Personal Life Coach
Undershepherd
Set Apart Ministries
www.set-apart-ministries.org
November 2010

Among Messianic believers, there is a tension that is unknown to the Christian church today. It is an old tension; one that we seem to have re-entered now in our times with great but often un-tempered zeal on all sides. It is the unresolved issue of how much "like Judah" followers of *Yeshua Messiah*/Jesus must be as we return to *Torah* and a Hebraic understanding in our faith, seeing Messiah, *Aleph* and *Tav*, as the Living Torah Who does not change. Having just returned from Israel, this tension has been brought into even more sharp focus for me.

It is difficult to deal with this tension for many more reasons than what may appear on the surface. Just having a different understanding is sometimes interpreted as being contentious and causing strife. Even lovingly pointing out the difference between the content of the argument and the personal behavior of those involved is sometimes interpreted as hostility. Either position could be taken in a calm, mature way or in an immature, reactive and argumentative way. It is also true that some refuse to deal directly with any issues or immature behavior, believing that to overlook it is the loving and "covering" thing to do. This is not a new issue either.

And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual men, but as to men of flesh, as to infants in Christ. I gave you milk to drink, not solid food; for you were not yet able to receive it, Indeed, even now you are not yet able, for you are still fleshly. For since there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not fleshly, and are you not walking like mere men?

1 Cor. 3: 1-3 NASB

Following Messiah Yeshua for those not born into the House of Israel has been controversial from the start. No less than it was in the first century, it is confusing for those newly come under conviction that the Torah is for us today, recognizing obedience out of faith to our God and His righteous teachings rather than bondage under law. There are two approaches which appear to be equal and opposite errors being commonly made as we all strive to *Shema, Shema!* hear and obey our Elohim. The first is more commonly found within traditional Christianity and a few Messianic groups. The second is almost exclusively found within Messianic groups:

- 1) Complete rejection of Judah or Judaism and distancing from the roots of our faith, even to the extreme belief that the "church" has replaced Judah. This seems to carry into some Messianic circles, believing that Ephraim will eclipse or replace Judah.

- 2) Complete acceptance of everything of Judah or Judaism as the only standard by which unity with Judah and Messiah can be obtained or some even say, salvation is established.

There are more longstanding factors briefly reviewed before going on to more recent arguments. The evil one loves to maximize polarity and set one against another with an “either/or” perspective, which is not in itself, Hebraic but rather a western or Hellenistic perspective. (*ie. Reject Judah entirely or accept Judah unconditionally.*)

Variations on these two predominant themes will likely be apparent. These polarized responses are often considered to be strife between brothers since the “either/or” perspective makes collaboration more difficult. Strife, Strongs #4090, *medan*, appears to be mostly associated with lies, hatred, and untruths. **The difference of understanding, in itself, is not truly strife, but the manner of dealing with the differences certainly can be that.**

Of course, a compromise that violates Torah in any way would be unacceptable to those who Honor the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. A third possible response will be presented in conclusion.

1) Complete Rejection of Judah and Judaism

The subject of those coming into faith in the God of Israel rather than being born into it was perhaps first addressed in the council described in Acts 15: 20-21, coming to the following conclusion:

...we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from sexual immorality, from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath. NKJV

Here is one of the first confusions as to what this means. Many have thought that all that is needed for righteousness is to observe these four things without concern for any other aspects. These four concerns represent the “old law” and were originally understood to be necessary to have fellowship with Jewish people. As long as new believers observed these four things they were living “righteously” while learning more. A later conclusion was that this is, indeed **all** that is necessary for those of Gentile bloodlines to enter in to the Body of Messiah in complete fellowship with one another.

In our day, these four seem completely irrelevant to many anyway! They aren’t worried about whether or not Judah or Judaism approves, since Christianity has been viewed as a “new” religion. Even Paul’s many admonishments that the Torah has not been abolished and that we are not to boast against the root as recorded in the Book of Romans fall on deaf ears, often confusing the law of sin and death with

the Law/Torah. Thus, the current question of how much “like Judah” we need to be is mostly limited to those persuaded of the importance of our Hebraic heritage.

For two thousand years, many Christians have taken several Scriptures as a repudiation of all things “Jewish,” with this one prominent among them.

*For the law was given through Moses, **but** grace and truth came through Jesus Christ.* John 1: 17 NKJV

This passage has been understood to contrast the past relevance of Moses teaching of the law with the current reality of grace and truth in Jesus. A knowledge of Hebraic perspective and Hillel’s Rules of comparison, along with recognition of the added word “But” by translators, will reveal that this comparison is more of—**For if this is true, how much more so that!—** and not an “either/or” contrast.

The type of “grace” referred to here is not that of undeserved merit so much as it is the social grace, charm and beauty of the Law more fully revealed in Messiah. (Strong’s #G5463 *charis*) Concepts of grace have been the subject of great confusion as summarized here from Easton’s Bible Dictionary.

. Summary:

Most of the discussions of the Biblical doctrine of grace have been faulty in narrowing the meaning of "grace" to some special sense, and then endeavoring to force this special sense on all the Biblical passages. For instance, Roman scholars, starting with the meaning of the word in (say) [2Co 12:9](#), have made [Ro 3:24](#) state that men are justified by the infusion of Divine holiness into them, an interpretation that utterly ruins Paul’s argument. On the other hand, Protestant extremists have tried to reverse the process and have argued that grace cannot mean anything except favor as an attitude, with results that are equally disastrous from the exegetical standpoint. And a confusion has resulted that has prevented men from seeing that most of the controversies about grace are at cross-purposes. A rigid definition is hardly possible, but still a single conception is actually present in almost every case where "grace" is found—the conception that all a Christian has or is, is centered exclusively in God and Christ, and depends utterly on God through Christ. The kingdom of heaven is reserved for those who become as little children, for those who look to their Father in loving confidence for every benefit, whether it be for the pardon so freely given, or for the strength that comes from Him who works in them both to will and to do. ¹

¹ Easton, Burton Scott. "Grace," *International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*. Edited by James Orr. Blue Letter Bible. 1913. 1 Apr 2007. 28 Jun 2010.
<<http://www.blueletterbible.org/Search/Dictionary/viewTopic.cfm?type=GetTopic&Topic=Grace&DictList=4#ISBE>>

A right understanding of “grace” is beyond many so to simplify it, many seem to equate “grace” with the New Testament, thus denying the abundant grace our Father has shown to His people from the very beginning. This, too, is used as justification to reject anything perceived as “Jewish.” A simple online search for the term throughout Scripture will quickly reveal its presence throughout. Really, just to comprehend that God didn’t outright kill Adam and Eve in their rebellion but covered for them, that He didn’t immediately destroy rebellious Israel during the Exodus but bore with them and raised up their children in strength, and that even later in the land He allowed them to experience their need for Him yet quickly sent a judge/deliverer when they cried out to Him is already pushing against this false dichotomy,

Some who have embraced a Hebraic view are certain to include the second sentence as recognition that the four issues noted were ***just a starting point to begin fellowship*** since the new believers could be expected to learn a little at a time every Shabbat in every city. Even in the time soon after Yeshua’s earthly ministry confusion and misunderstanding arose over how to best follow Him. Galatians is an excellent example, still often understood as grounds for rejecting Torah. As Gentile believers came in greater numbers, the “Jewishness” of the faith came into question, a simple description of a very complex situation with many historical factors that cannot be addressed here.

There are various schools of thought here. In what we call traditional Christianity, the view has been that we are to distance ourselves from Judah as much as possible while Judah has had an equally strong stance to stay away from Christians.

Some Christians will allow admiration from a distance, though often grudging and still having a clear “us” and “them” perspective. Some even have interest, respect and admiration for the cultural aspects of Judaism, recognizing them as part of the foundation of our faith, though they would still consider them “quaint” and not really relevant for practice today. Is not this the same picture found in Ezekiel 33: 31-32:

So they come to you as people do, they sit before you as My people and they hear your words, but they do not do them, for with their mouth they show much love, but their hearts pursue their own gain.

Indeed, you are to them as a very lovely song of one who has a pleasant voice and can play well on an instrument; for they hear your words, but they do not do them.

NKJV

People often think that Judaism has been maintained in some kind of pure form since the days of Messiah which is not accurate. Synagogue teachers in the time following Yeshua’s death and resurrection were divided. It is seldom recognized that many accepted Him as Messiah and taught Torah accordingly.

Then the word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the faith.

Acts 6:7 NKJV

It is more commonly known that most denied Yeshua as Messiah and also taught Torah accordingly, taking it upon themselves to threaten and punish the disciples who taught of Him as presented in many Scripture passages. These teachers actually eventually added a “malediction” to the daily prayer of benediction, **Shimona Esra**, which cursed those who accepted Yeshua as Messiah. Certainly, those who received Yeshua could not remain under a teacher such as this so fellowship was disrupted!

Later, the Roman Catholic (Christian) church also codified this separation most emphatically in what is known as Constantine’s Creed:

As a preliminary to his acceptance as a catechumen, a Jew “Must confess and denounce verbally, the whole of Hebrew people, forthwith declare that with a whole heart and sincere faith he desires to be received among the Christians. Then he must renounce openly in the church all Jewish superstition, the priest saying, and he, or his sponsor if he is a child, replying in these words:

...in one word, I now renounce absolutely everything Jewish...

Furthermore, I accept all customs, rites, legalisms and feast of the Romans...In the New Roman Religion.”

(This information can be found in its entirety online. Stefano Assemani, Acta Sanctorum Martyrum Orientalium at Occidentalium, Vol. 1, Rome 1748, page 105)

In these days, the veils and scales described in Scripture as being over the eyes of the nations and of Israel are being removed as we are called to move back together once again to be made one in His Hand. The division was allowed for His purposes, whether we understand them or not. A study of all the singular concepts that were divided into two and later called into unity through Scripture is a very enlightening study. It can be done by examining the meanings and implications whenever the number 2 is involved. Our God is a specialist in teaching the same theme over and over through many different circumstances and people; together making a convincing picture of the two becoming one in more than one matter!

2) Complete Acceptance of Judah and Judaism

There are a number of concerns here, as would be expected in such an old dilemma. Most of them center in one way or another on the fact that the Torah was given to Moshe and that Judah has kept the Torah intact over the centuries. Because they have kept the Torah they deserve respect and honor as the leader of the tribes of Israel. This often appears in practice as complete acceptance of all they do as well. In fact, there has been a blurring of distinction between the whole House

of Israel and Tribe of Judah, many taking them to mean exactly the same people group. (In truth, Judah, often called “Jews” today, is only one of the twelve tribes of the whole House of Israel. Yeshua is very clear many times that He is coming back for the **whole** House of Israel.)

Because Judah has kept the Torah it is believed by many that they have the only correct understanding of how to honor YHWH, or *HaShem*, which many would say includes the Oral Torah, or traditions of the elders. While some have taken the position that Gentile believers who come to faith in the God of Israel and/or Yeshua Maschiach are privileged to then honor the Torah and the moedim, others conclude that there is no need for Gentile believers to do so. Many people have written extensively of this position over the years so their arguments won't be repeated in full. The interested reader can find a recent series of statements along these lines from First Fruits of Zion director, Boaz Michaels, at their website, www.ffoz.org as it was printed in Messiah Magazine. (There is also a very thorough Scriptural rebuttal of this argument provided by Tim Hegg at www.torahresource.org . Mordechai Silver, of Tree of Life Ministries also speaks eloquently to this division and the need for appropriate unity.)

A more recent approach to the argument that Judah is to be emulated in order to find unity with them and with Messiah comes through the examination of the 7 Spirits of YHWH in light of their relationship to these days of Creation, events and Spirits connected with each day. While dealing with eschatological events the argument is made that since Judah is the fourth son, and the fourth day of Creation involved the sun, moon and stars along with the *Ruach ha Kodesh* and the concept of government being on his shoulder, thus Judah is to have the governing role over all those who believe in the God of Israel

Agreeably, many things in Revelation cannot be understood accurately without a familiarity with Temple practices or at least what Judaism has practiced for many of the Feast Days. Clearly it seems that Judah will at some point in the future exercise leadership and not ownership of the moedim. It seems equally clear that at such a point in the future Ephraim should humbly agree with YHWH's order and not become arrogant as they come into Torah and think that they will surpass Judah. Some recommend that people follow Judah's lead on calendar issues and other matters since they have been keeping Torah for so many years; and surely have a lot to teach us. This would also include doing whatever is necessary to keep peace with those who disagree, even to the point of observing more than one calendar if need be. The Scripture about the scepter not departing from Judah (Numbers 24:17) as another confirmation of their leadership role.

Observations

There are issues and conflicts with both of these polarized positions. Neither polarized response is valid. The division between those who kept Torah and those

who accepted Messiah Yeshua was foreknown and acceptable to YHWH for a season for His purposes; just as the concept of “two” includes both witness and division. **Judah is to be respected and there is indeed, a great deal to be learned from their experience, history and Torah understanding.** This respect does **not** necessitate uncritical adherence to all of their practices. Each of the tribes and each individual has been gifted by our Elohim with certain attributes and each of these attributes is equally important, not to be overridden or ignored. Just as there are 7 aspects to the Spirit of YHW and each is to be in balance with the other, so respect for all the people of YHWH should be in balance.

It is also true that “Jewish by bloodline” believers in Yeshua are still carrying vestiges of their former belief systems of one form or another of Judaism with them. Just as those coming from a traditional Christian background of whatever denomination need to re-evaluate their understanding of Scripture and spiritual phenomenon experienced in light of what they are learning usually about Torah, so do Jewish believers often carry patterns of thought and beliefs that need to be re-evaluated in light of Messiah Yeshua and the *Brit Chadasha* and are not necessarily to be accepted uncritically.

Despite some Messianic leaders supposition that this is the case, it is not really difficult to check into practices within Judaism over several centuries and see differences even here, let alone over several thousand years. In fact, if one studies the concept of *halachah*, which means “the way we walk” and is the term to describe how one actually practices various aspects of Torah **it will become evident rather quickly that there has never been a time when only one “way” was considered correct.**

Which portion of Judah should be considered THE correct way?

If one is to “follow Judah” for the sake of unity, a primary issue is that of Judah’s lack of unity within Judaism. Orthodox, Ultra Orthodox, Reformed, Chassidic—these are some of the labels, rather like the different synods or divisions within many denominational churches Christians are familiar with. Just a short visit to Israel reveals the large number of differing sects, each with their own customs and traditions, often including very specific manner of dress and hairstyles for men and women. There has been great disgust among Judah for the division within Messianic circles yet perhaps it can be said that the only “advance” in Judaism is that they are more settled and fixed in their differences.

This is not a new situation either. Even in Scripture, we see the tension between groups such as the Sadducees and the Pharisees, Scribes, Essenes and Zealots, and the two main leaders of Judaism of the time: Hillel and Shammai. In truth, there never has been only one “Jewish *Halachah*” but rather a system of regional or area leaders that determined what was considered accepted in their realm.

Some people would have us believe that kosher food laws and laws concerning ritual slaughter can be extrapolated BACK to first Century times with the assumption that what was done in the 3rd century is surely what was done in the 1st.² This is not an automatically correct conclusion, nor is it clear how those who hunted wild game for food managed to convince the game to stand still while the certified *shochet* made the prescribed cut with prayer. Since Abraham fed his 3 guests meat and curds (Gen. 18:6-8) Scriptural support for the prohibition of meat and dairy together as is taught does not seem valid; in view of the rule of complete mention, or allowing Scripture to interpret Scripture.

Investigation of current *Beit Din* authority over food handling practices is another area that is in fact NOT so uniform as one might think, but rather a loose network of groups having authority in different countries or regions around the world that do not all agree on every point.

It is not necessary to agree or observe these practices beyond that which is stated in Scripture, in order to remain respectful of those who are persuaded of their importance. This is often a matter of personal and corporate maturity.

The calendar of observance of the moedim is another salient point. The vast majority of Jewry around the world adhere to the schedule established early on in the Diaspora. A few groups still differ on how to count the *Omer* or other details of observance such as one or two days. The Karaite's are Jews who have broken away from this practice centuries ago. Modern Karaites now observe the sighted moon as near in observance of Torah commands as they understand to do. For this, they are respected by some and denigrated by others. Recently, there has been a resurgence of what is called the "lunar Sabbath" calendar again by those called Jews as well as others, now saying that even the sighted moon practice at the beginning of months is not adequate to be on YHWH's true timetable.

Just a few weeks ago I was told by a Jewish Believer in Messiah that "everyone knows" the calendar established while in the Diaspora is "wrong" but that it is kept for the sake of unity with Jews around the world. The desire for unity amidst so much uncertainty in the world is certainly understandable. Is the choice really the best one? Might it also just be more for the sake of convenience in planning?

Our desire is to please Messiah and to honor His Word and directions to our best ability. If unity between believers is chosen as the criteria to continue doing what is recognized as inaccurate, how does this keep Messiah and His Word of primary, central importance?

Should believers in the God of Israel then follow every lead of people who have a different criteria from what is taught in the Torah for the sake of human unity?

² Holy Cow! God Cares what We Eat? Eagan, Hope,

Seems that Isaiah spoke pretty clearly to this point in another situation:

*For the leaders of this people cause them to err;
And those who are led by them are destroyed.*
Isaiah 9:16 NKJV

This teaching metaphor of putting different things that are in groups of sevens “on” the menorah has been very enlightening; a wonderful part of studying thematically including the awareness of Hebraic meanings of things that just go past our awareness in English. Still, as there are limitations to how far one can take an interpretation of parables so there is a limit here.

Judah, being the fourth brother, would seem to have no significance here as he is one of a group of at least twelve brothers, not seven. It doesn't seem reasonable to fit him on the fourth day/candle to establish leadership metaphorically. If this reasoning were to hold true, then what would we do with David who, though he was of Judah's line, was the 8th son? He would not be “on” the menorah at all yet who could deny his position of leadership as King? Perhaps this can be done by grouping the tribes/brothers, in two sets of 3 pairs with the central stem/candle as Messiah, which would come to “four” but with the central candle being the Ruach, and Messiah; not Judah.

It is understood that the spiritual Truth came first, as Messiah was slain before the foundation of the world, and that physical pictures were given to help human beings comprehend the greater spiritual truths. But if our eyes stop at the physical representation, ***ie look to Judah rather than to the Ruach***, how would this be different than the serpent on the pole? Looking to the serpent was given as a method of healing and restoration but eventually King Hezekiah had to destroy it as the people saw the physical form without keeping the spiritual Truth, a picture of idolatry. To look for unity with human Judah rather than THE Lion of Judah as a prerequisite for Truth appears to be the same error made with the serpent on the pole.

If Judah has the only significant leadership role, what do we do with Moshe and Aharon who were of Levi? Certainly it is well known that the priests often led in battle; Levites, going forth in song and with shofars? And what of Moshe's recognition of the leadership of Caleb and Joshua? Was it “Judah” who led them into conquest of the promised land? No; Joshua was of the house of Ephraim.

There are different types of leadership presented throughout Scripture; often in a group of three: prophet, priest and king. This three strand cord provided a stable base for decision-making which still stands today as a sound model for leadership. Various skills are needed for effective leadership and rarely is there one individual who has all three in sufficient measure; might it also be reasonable to say then that the different positions might also represent people from different tribes with

complimentary skills? Since human nature is unchanged, unlike manmade procedures which rarely stay the same, this might seem reasonable to extrapolate backwards and assume that it would still be the same, and with Scriptural support as well!

Unconditional rejection or acceptance of Judah as the only possible leader and keeper of **THE** correct way has surely been a polarizing, divisive matter at Messiah's fulfillment of the spring moedim and now again as we await His return for the fulfillment of the fall feasts and the restoration of all things. Not only are we dealing with fleshly matters but spiritual forces as well. **Surely it is obvious that the evil one doesn't really care which position is taken, so long as it is done in a divisive manner?** In this way, the content of the discussion gets lost in the personal animosity and contentiousness.

Just as an overwhelming desire for one of the seven spirits of YHWH to be operating more so than the others can lead to an imbalance and instability for a person, so could it also be true that a desire for one tribe to hold all forms of leadership tightly and exclusively could lead to the same phenomenon? This effect will be most pronounced as we lift up our heads anticipating His return, under greater and greater pressure from the world, the flesh and the evil one.

Seems rather like the arguments that arose between Yeshua's talmudim as to who would be greatest, doesn't it? Didn't He encourage them in humility, to be content with what each was given?

And there arose a reasoning among them, which of them should be greatest. And Jesus, perceiving the thought of their heart, took a child....for he that is least among you all, the same shall be great.

Luke 9: 46-48 KJV

Didn't Shaul/Paul deal with this as well when people spoke of following other people?

Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that ye all speak the same thing and that there be no divisions among you; but that ye be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For it hath been declared unto me of you, my brethren, by them of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now this I say that every one of you saith I am of Paul, and I, of Apollos, and I, of Cephas and I of Christ. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were ye baptized in the name of Paul?

1 Cor. 1: 10-13 KJV

Scriptural Truths come alive the more we pursue the various levels and depths of what has been provided for us. No longer just looking at people and their stories, but at the connection between them, the connections between their circumstances as well as examining the intricacies of the Hebrew language in its great depth we see so much more. The end is told from the beginning in many forms. I believe this can

help us in the quest for understanding precedent for reconciliation and leadership in the end times as well.

The vision in our age of history that Judah is to be “the” leader and that others who want to find unity with Messiah need to unite with Judah first pertains to the restoration of all things as we near the end of the age and Messiah’s return. There is a parable about this matter. It seems quite well accepted that the parable of the prodigal son represents the elder son as Judah and the younger son as Ephraim; both looking to the Father who is as our Abba.

When Ephraim came to his senses and returned, with whom was he reconciled? With the Father.

Where was Judah? Off in the distance resisting and protesting the love and care shown to Ephraim.

As he complained the Father reassured him that he, too, was loved but that celebration should be made for one who has come back as from the dead. Rather a picture relating to Ezekiel’s dry bones, too, isn’t it? It is the Father who brought about any reconciliation that happened between the brothers. They apparently couldn’t do it on their own. Does this application seem to be “stretching” the parable beyond its intent? Human nature doesn’t change though traditions do.

Unfortunately, this picture of Judah’s behavior seems to be a painfully accurate one of his behavior toward those who are returning to Torah in our day. Clearly this is NOT the case with every Jewish person having an “attitude” of superiority or disdain toward “Gentile” believers coming in but it is certainly a frequent enough occurrence as to leave no doubt that arrogance can easily come from an assumed leadership role. This is certainly an instance of strife among brothers when one considers himself above the others, and however benevolently, abrogates their input as unworthy of serious consideration.

Perhaps the most compelling argument to be cautious about “becoming as Judah” in order to find unity with fellow believers first is the danger of that form of idolatry and the path it encourages. It is a reality that many thousands of believers have made the transition from faith in the Jesus of Christianity, to faith in *Yeshua* understood in a Hebraic context, and have then become enamored of all things Jewish. Judaism has their “anti-missionaries” as well; specifically trained to challenge Christians and those who believe in *Yeshua* as Messiah. There is even a website with a chart depicting this as a normative pattern of faith development. Many thousands have moved right past holding on to both written Torah and the Living Torah, *Yeshua ha Maschiach* to the position that there is no need for Messiah *Yeshua* at all. They then begin to question the validity of the entire *Brit Chadasha*. Some reject Him in their return to Judaism, and some express an ambivalence: maybe he is and maybe he isn’t Messiah but it no longer matters to them.

Though leaders of Judaism may rejoice, the greater question is whether or not Messiah does.

Conclusion

Based on all of the above commentary the conclusions are as follows:

- REJECTION 1) distance from anything perceived as “Jewish.”
And the ancillary error of the first position to assume that anyone will replace or eclipse Judah.
- REJECTION 2) unconditional acceptance of what is perceived as Jewish.

THIRD OPTION

I propose a third option of mutual respect, one for another and for the specialized roles each tribe and each person is to play in our Father’s plan.

I further propose that all parties concentrate on unity/echad in Messiah Yeshua and His written Torah. (I specify written Torah due to the unresolved and perhaps un-resolvable-until-Messiah-comes issues pertaining to Oral Torah.)

This will still leave some conflict as people strive to determine how best to interpret and walk out what has been written. As has been done in times past, there is a need to understand that each regional area will have leaders of influence who help determine what is done in that area. Good people of good will and deep Biblical scholarship can have very different understandings as we know painfully well. **Since an omnipotent, omnipresent, omniscient Elohim certainly knew this would happen and did not prevent it**, it behooves us to graciously respect one another in our halachic differences while also continuing to exhort and encourage one another on to completion or maturity in all aspects of life.

Confusion can not be avoided in some issues that were left ambiguous: the snares left to test us and see whether or not we will be able to hold loosely to those things that cannot be proven one way or another while still retaining relationship with our brothers.

While we need to remain open-handed to avoid dogmatic, rigid interpretations and imposing them on others, we also need to remember that maturity needs to be addressed whichever position is taken. Accountability and exhortation toward maturity in all aspects of personality, behavior and relationships is still necessary and should not be construed as contentiousness or strife. “Bearing with one another” in our weakness and “covering” should not be understood as a form of enabling one to continue in that weakness, hardly a gift of love.

Joyfully, with this approach, Yeshua willing, we may be able to learn to walk Torah together with all the strengths, giftings, talents and special abilities of **each of the tribes working together toward the one new man described. At the time of restoration each tribe will be functioning as they were called, under Messiah.** The new flock that our Shepherd has promised: one flock, one Law, one Shepherd. He is the Head and Leader over us all.

May it be so in our day.

²¹*And although you were formerly alienated and hostile in mind, engaged in evil deeds,*
²²*yet He has now reconciled you in His fleshly body through death, in order to present you before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach--*

²³*if indeed you continue in the faith firmly established and steadfast, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel that you have heard, which was proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, was made a minister.*

²⁴*Now I rejoice in my sufferings for your sake, and in my flesh I do my share on behalf of His body, which is the church, in filling up what is lacking in Christ's afflictions. ²⁵Of this church I was made a minister according to the stewardship from God bestowed on me for your benefit, so that I might fully carry out the preaching of the word of God, ²⁶that is, the mystery which has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints, ²⁷to whom God willed to make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.*

²⁸*We proclaim Him, admonishing every man and teaching every man with all wisdom, so that we may present every man complete in Christ. ²⁹For this purpose also I labor, striving according to His power, which mightily works within me. Colossians 1: 23-29*