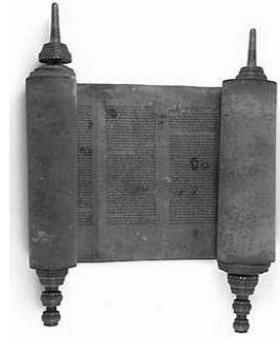


# CHAPTER 4

## BIBLICAL MESSIANIC JUDAISM



### Redeemed from a life of slavery to sin

Yeshua redeemed us from:

- The power of sin (Colossians 1:13-14; 2:13-14). Colossians 1:13-14 states, “He has rescued us from the domain of darkness and transferred us into the kingdom of His dear Son. It is through His Son that we have redemption — that is, our sins have been forgiven.”
- The bondage of legalism. Romans 6:14 states, “Sin will not have authority over you, because you are not under legalism, but grace.” Galatians 3:13 explains, “Messiah redeemed us from the curse [of legalism], pronounced in the Torah by becoming cursed on our behalf.”

### Redeemed by grace

We are saved from a life of sin and eternal separation from God by His grace through our trust in Him. Ephesians 2:8 says, “You have been delivered by grace through trusting, and even this is not your accomplishment, but God’s [free] gift.”

### Believers and followers of Messiah Yeshua

How do we know Yeshua is the Messiah?

- He claimed to be Messiah. John 4:25-26, Mark 14:62, John 8:58
- He fulfilled Scriptural requirements. David Stern, in his Complete Jewish Bible, lists 54 prophecies that had to be fulfilled with Messiah’s first coming (pp. xlv-xlvii). The following summary lists only a few of them.
  - Scripture requires that Messiah be born from a virgin woman. Isaiah (Yesha’yahu) 7:14 states, “Behold the virgin [Hebrew *almah*] shall conceive and bear a son, and shall call his name Immanuel [God with us].” According to the account given in Luke 1:34-35, Yeshua’s mother, Miriam, conceived him in her womb without having sexual relations. Most modern Jewish translations interpret “*almah*” as “young maiden.” However, Hebrew scholars working on the Septuagint, the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, translated this word as “virgin.” Not until believers in Yeshua began claiming this verse was fulfilled in Yeshua did Hebrew scholars begin translating it as

“young maiden.” One cannot ignore the apparent bias in this new development.

- Messiah had to come at a specific time in history. Daniel (Dani’el) 9:24-26a says,

“Seventy weeks are determined for your people and for your holy city, to finish the transgression, to make an end of sins, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal up vision and prophecy, and to anoint the Most Holy. Know therefore and understand, that from the going forth of the command to restore and build Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince, there shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; the street shall be built again, and the wall, even in troublesome times. And after the sixty-two weeks, the Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; and the people of the prince who is to come shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.”

At the time Daniel (Dani’el) wrote this prophecy, the city of Jerusalem lay in ruins, destroyed by the Babylonians in 586 B.C. Most scholars understand the weeks to be weeks of 7 years each. The seven weeks and the sixty-two weeks accordingly, make a total of 483 years. The “command to restore and build Jerusalem” was given by Cyrus, king of Persia. By counting the years from Cyrus to Yeshua, we count 483 years. Also according to prophecy, Messiah had to come and die prior to the city’s second destruction. We know from history that the Romans destroyed the city 40 years after Yeshua was “cut off” by his sacrificial death.

- The Messiah had to be a direct descendant of Abraham (Genesis [B’resheet] 12:2-3), Isaac (Genesis [B’resheet] 17:19, 21:12), and Jacob (Genesis [B’resheet] 28:14). He had to be from the tribe of Judah (Genesis [B’resheet] 49:10) and a direct descendant of King David (2 Samuel [Sh’mu’el Bet] 7:12-13). The details of his lineage in Matthew (Mattityahu) chapter one show he met these requirements of pedigree.
- He had to be born in Bethlehem (Micah [Mikhah] 5:2). Matthew [Mattityahu] 2:1 tells us that His birthplace was, in fact, Bethlehem.
- He had to make a public entry into Jerusalem on a donkey (Zechariah [Z’kharyah] 9:9). In Matthew [Mattityahu] 21:1-11, Yeshua made a grand appearance into Jerusalem while riding a donkey.
- Scripture tells us that Messiah would be hated without a cause (Isaiah [Yesha’yahu] 49:7; Psalms [Tehillim] 69:4). Yeshua plainly told His disciples in John [Yochanan] 15:24-25 that the Jewish leadership of His day hated Him without justification of their anger. Surely His cruel death at the instigation of the religious leaders (Luke 23:13-24; John [Yochanan] 19:4-16) demonstrated just that.
- He had to be betrayed as a friend (Psalms [Tehillim] 41:9, 55:13-15). The books of Matthew [Mattityahu] (26:21-25, 47-50) and John [Yochanan] (13:18-21) record that Judas Iscariot (Y’hudah of K’riot), one of Yeshua’s twelve disciples, conspired with the religious leaders to develop a plan for capturing Yeshua.

- He had to be rejected by the religious leaders of His day (Psalms [Tehillim] 118:22). We find the fulfillment of this requirement in Matthew [Mattityahu] 21:42 and John [Yochanan] 7:48.
- He had to be sold for thirty pieces of silver (Zechariah [Z'kharyah] 11:12). The payment Judas Iscariot (Y'hudah of K'riot) received for his evil deed was 30 pieces of silver (Matthew [Mattityahu] 26:15).
- Messiah had to be executed by cruel crucifixion (Psalms [Tehillim] 22:17; Zechariah [Z'kharyah] 12:10). All the gospels record that Yeshua was put to death by being crucified on a tree (Matthew [Mattityahu] 27:35; Mark 15:22-24; Luke 23:33; John [Yochanan] 19:18, 34-37).
- The prophet Malachi (Mal'akhi) declared Messiah would be announced by a forerunner (Malachi [Mal'akhi] 3:1), coming in the spirit and power of Elijah (Eliyahu) (Malachi [Mal'akhi] 4:5). Yochanan the Immerser (John the Baptist) fulfilled this requirement (Matthew [Mattityahu] 3:1-3, 17:11-13; Luke 1:11-17).
- The prophet Isaiah (Yesha'yahu) spoke of miracles that would be performed by Messiah (Isaiah [Yesha'yahu] 35:5-6). Throughout the gospels, we find accounts of the miracles performed by Yeshua, too numerous to list in detail.
- Scripture declares He would be buried with the rich upon his death (Isaiah [Yesha'yahu] 53:9). Matthew's (Mattityahu) gospel records that He was buried in the tomb of Joseph the Arimathean, a wealthy man (Matthew [Mattityahu] 27:57-60).
- Finally, Scripture declares that Messiah would be resurrected from the dead (Isaiah [Yesha'yahu] 53:9-10; Psalms [Tehillim] 2:7, 16:10). All the gospels recorded this event (Matthew [Mattityahu] 28:1-7; Mark 16:1-6; Luke 24:1-12; John [Yochanan] 20:1-9).

### **New Creations with a new nature**

2 Corinthians 5:17 states, “. . . if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.” The word “new,” in this verse is “hadash.” This word does not mean “renewed” or “rebuilt,” but something brand new, which never before existed.

In Messiah, God gives each of us a brand new start. He essentially wipes our slates clean. We are as if we had never sinned, and He makes us into His righteous servants. As Jeremiah (Yirmeyahu) 31:34 states, “. . . for they shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Adonai. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

As believers, we are at peace with God, a peace far greater than anything the world can offer. Yeshua said in John (Yochanan) 14:27, “Peace I leave with you. My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” Rabbi Sha'ul gave similar encouragement by stating, “let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body” (Colossians 3:15).

Prior to believing in Messiah, we were dead in our sins. Now that we have come to know Messiah Yeshua, He has made us alive with Him (Colossians 2:13).

## **Called-out ones**

The word “congregation” (often translated as church) in the New Covenant Scriptures is translated from the Hebrew word “kehilah,” meaning “called-out ones.” The term represents exclusively the Hebrew word “kahal”, which is the root word of “kehilah”, and means a summons to an assembly and the act of assembling.”<sup>1</sup> Hence, by using this term, Yeshua is saying His followers have been called out to assemble, in order that they might hear, worship, and serve Him.

As His “kahal”, we are set apart from this world. No longer do we perform the deeds of darkness. Our lives have now become radically changed. No longer do we desire to live like our old selves. Instead, we become holy, united with one another.

“Kehilah” can also be translated as “community.” Hence, all believers are members of the worldwide community of Messiah. This community is composed of Jewish and Gentile followers of Messiah.

## **Bride of Messiah**

Revelation 19:7-9 states:

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready. And to her, it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Then he said to me, ‘Write: Blessed are those who are called to the marriage supper of the Lamb!’ And he said to me, ‘These are the true sayings of God.’”

Collectively, we are not only Messiah’s kahal, but also His bride. Rabbi Sha’ul compared the love of a man for his wife to that of Messiah for His kahal (Ephesians 5:32). In this comparison, he clearly explains that Messiah cares for His kahal as much as a man cares for his own body. We are told in verses 25-27 that “Messiah loved the kahal and gave Himself for it . . . that He might present it to Himself a glorious kahal, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that it should be holy and without blemish.” The apostle is speaking in terms of a Jewish wedding. A bride and groom on their wedding day are said to be without spot or blemish. On the day Messiah permanently unites Himself to His bride, she will be without spot or blemish. Until then, we are to strive for that state of perfection.

## **Yeshua’s representatives on Earth**

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<sup>1</sup> Ariel and D’vorah Berkowitz, *Take Hold*, p. 142.

2 Corinthians 5:20 declares, “We are ambassadors of the Messiah”. As such, we are called to live a life radically different from our old nature. In summary, we are:

- Called to a life filled with the fruit of the spirit (Galatians 5:22-23; Ephesians 5:9; Romans 7:4).
- Called to a life of humility (Philippians 2:3, 5-8; Jacob [Ya’akov] (James) 4:10; 1 Peter [Kefa] 5:5-6).
- Called to a life of suffering (Philippians 1:29; 1 Thessalonians 2:14; 2 Thessalonians 1:4-5; 2 Timothy 2:3, 8-9, 3:10-12; Jacob [Ya’akov] (James) 1:12; 1 Peter [Kefa] 2:21, 3:14, 17, 4:1-2, 4:12-16, 5:9).
- Called to a life of generosity to those in need and to the needs of the kahal (Leviticus [Vayikra] 19:9-10; Deuteronomy [D’varim] 15:7-10, 24:14-15; Psalms [Tehillim] 41:1; Proverbs [Mishlei] 14:21, 31, 19:7, 22:9, 28:27, 29:7, 31:20; Luke 6:38; Acts 4:34-35; Galatians 2:10; 1 Timothy 5:17-18, 6:17-19).
- Called to a life of prayer (Matthew [Mattityahu] 6:9-13; Romans 12:12; Ephesians 6:18; Philippians 4:6; Colossians 1:9, 3:2, 4:2; 1 Thessalonians 3:10, 5:17; 2 Thessalonians 1:11-12, 3:1; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; Jacob [Ya’akov] (James) 5:16; 1 Peter [Kefa] 4:7).
- Called to a life of contentment (Luke 3:14; Philippians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 6:6-10; Hebrews 13:5).
- Called to a life of forgiveness (Matthew [Mattityahu] 5:22-24, 6:14-15, 18:21-35; Mark 11:25-26; Luke 6:36-37, 17:3-4; Colossians 3:13).
- Called to a life of morality (Exodus [Sh’mot] 20:13-17, 22:21-22, 25-27; Leviticus [Vayikra] 18:6-24, 19:11-15; Acts 15:28-29; Colossians 4:1; 1Thessalonians 4:3-7).
- Called to a life of modesty (Exodus [Sh’mot] 20:26; Proverbs [Mishlei] 31:25-27; 1 Thessalonians 4:11-12; 1 Timothy 2:9-10; 1 Peter [Kefa] 3:1-4).
- Called to a life of holiness (Leviticus [Vayikra] 11:44-45, 19:2, 20:7; 1 Peter [Kefa] 1:15-16; 2 Peter [Kefa] 3:11).
- Called to a life of continually putting to death our old nature (Romans 6:6; Galatians 5:24-26; Ephesians 4:22; Colossians 3:9-10; 1 Peter [Kefa] 1:13-14).
- As believers in Messiah, we are called to share our faith with others, encouraging them to be reconciled to God (Matthew [Mattityahu] 18:19-20; Mark 16:15; 1 Corinthians 9:19-22; 2 Corinthians 5:18-20; Colossians 4:5-6; Jude [Y’hudah] 22-23).
- Called to a life filled with good works
  - Matthew (Mattityahu) 5:16: “Let your light shine before men, so they may see the good things you do and praise your Father in heaven.”
  - Galatians 6:2: “Bear one another’s burdens.”
  - Galatians 6:9: “Let us not grow weary in doing what is good.”
  - Ephesians 2:10: “We are of God’s making, created in union with the Messiah Yeshua for a life of good actions already prepared by God for us to do.”

- 2 Thessalonians 3:13: “Your brothers are doing what is good, don’t slack off.”
  - Titus 3:8: “Those who have put their trust in God may apply themselves to doing good deeds.”
  - Jacob [Ya’akov] (James) 2:24: “A person is declared righteous because of actions, not because of faith alone.”
- Called to a life of discipline and discipleship (Proverbs [Mishlei] 6:23, 9:8-9, 19:25; Matthew [Mattityahu] 28:19; Hebrews 12:5-11; Revelation 3:19).

### **Under Scripture’s authority**

All true believers are to accept the word of God as authoritative for their lives (Romans 7:25; Colossians 3:16; 2 Timothy 3:16; Jacob [Ya’akov] (James) 1:22) and govern themselves accordingly (Deuteronomy [D’varim] 6:6-9, 13:4, 27:9-10, 30:11-16, Psalms [Tehillim] 1:2; John [Yochanan] 15:7; Romans 7:22).

### **Torah on our hearts**

The scriptural reference to the New Covenant found in the Tanakh comes mainly from the prophet Jeremiah (Yirmeyahu).

“Behold, the days are coming, says Adonai, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah — not according to the covenant I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says Adonai. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says Adonai: I will put My Torah in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying ‘know Adonai,’ for they shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says Adonai. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more” (Jeremiah [Yirmeyahu] 31:31-34).

Hebrews 8 quotes this passage from Jeremiah (Yirmeyahu) and clearly states we are now living in New Covenant times. Notice that God’s Torah is written on our hearts. That is, those of us who have accepted Yeshua as Messiah. In doing so, God has given us the ability to instinctively know the commandments.

The reality of the Torah written on our hearts is that, just like the Jewish believers, the myriads of Gentiles brought into covenant relationship with God now have the new nature of “doing the things contained in the Torah” (Romans 2:14-15).

With the Torah written on our hearts, we are expected to put away the deeds of our sinful nature (Romans 8:3-4; Colossians 3:5-10; 2 Timothy 2:16; 1 Peter [Kefa] 4:1-3).

## One flock and one shepherd

Yeshua said in John [Yochanan] 10:16, “. . . other sheep I have which are not of this fold [the Gentiles]; they also I must bring, and they will hear my voice; there will be one flock and one shepherd.”

The context of this verse indicates the other sheep are Gentiles. If God has only one flock, composed of Jew and Gentile, and one Messiah who redeems both, then He must also have one Torah for both to follow. He does not have one set of commandments, complete with its holy days, for the Gentiles to follow and another for the Jews.

Jew and Gentile are made one in Messiah. This is the mystery of the gospel. God accepts the Goyim, i.e., those among foreign nations, without requiring them to become Jews. In fact, their conversion to Judaism would prevent the mystery from being revealed. Instead, their action distorts God’s plan.

Gentile followers of Yeshua are made a part of God’s household and have the divine right and calling to participate in His appointed feast days and other commandments, short of circumcision.

Ephesians 2:15 states that Messiah has abolished the “enmity”<sup>2</sup> which separated Jew from Gentile and made them into one new man. The new man is Jewish, not Gentile, as many would claim.

### Differences between Gentile Christianity and Messianic Judaism

Even though Gentile Christians and Messianic believers constitute one body, there are several differences between them. One primary difference is their individual congregational identities. Gentile Christians belong to a church, while Messianic believers belong to a Messianic synagogue or congregation.

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<sup>2</sup> The full verse, together with verse 14, states, “For He Himself is our peace. He has made us both [Jew and Gentile] one and has broken the dividing wall between us by destroying in His own body the enmity occasioned by the Torah, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances. He did this in order to create in union with Himself from the two groups a single new humanity and thus make peace.” The dividing wall is likely a reference to the boundary fence which surrounded the Temple. Gentiles were forbidden to go beyond this point on pain of death. In Messiah, this boundary no longer exists. Therefore, the Gentiles are free to cross and join the Jews on the other side, not the other way around, as many well-meaning Christians have erroneously interpreted. An important question needs to be addressed here. How can the Torah occasion enmity? David Stern, in *The Jewish New Testament Commentary*, states, “This enmity between Jews and Gentiles had four components: 1) Gentile envy of the special status accorded by God to Israel in the Torah; 2) Jewish pride of being chosen; 3) Gentile resentment of that pride; 4) Mutual dislike of each other’s customs. This is a common cause of friction between cultures, but in this instance, Jewish customs are different for a unique reason. They did not merely evolve; rather, they were the Jewish people’s response to the Torah, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances. This is why it is appropriate to say that the enmity between Jews and Gentiles was occasioned by the Torah.” The enmity in this verse is not to be equated with the Torah. The enmity was “occasioned by the Torah,” but was not itself the Torah. The two are closely related, but not the same.

Another difference between the two groups is their view of Torah. Messianic Jews and Gentiles believe Torah is still relevant. Gentile Christians, in varying degrees, tend to believe Torah is no longer applicable. Consequently, the lifestyles of the two groups differ in many respects. Messianic believers, for the most part, observe the Biblical holy days, including the Sabbath, and eat kosher foods. With few exceptions, Gentile Christians no longer keep the holy days, nor recognize some foods as Biblically prohibited.

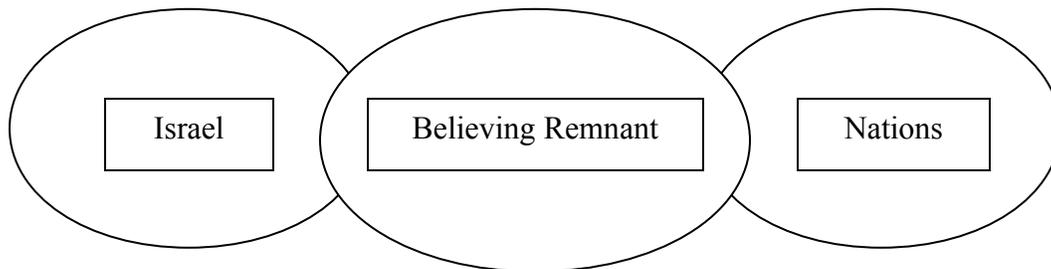
The terminology of Messianic believers is quite different than their Gentile counterparts. Gentile Christians tend to use words like Christ, Jesus, Christian, church, baptize, Law, and Old Testament. These words are not only foreign to Messianic believers; they also express concepts foreign to Messianic Judaism. In place of these terms, they use Messiah, Yeshua, believer, follower, congregation, synagogue, immerse, mikveh, Torah, and Tanakh.

### **Part of the remnant**

The prophet Isaiah [Yesha'yahu] declares in 10:21-22, "The remnant will return, the remnant of Jacob, to the Mighty God. For though your people, O Israel, be as the sand of the sea, yet a remnant of them will return . . ." [The term "Mighty God," Hebrew "El Gibbor," is a reference to Messiah. In Isaiah (Yesha'yahu) 9:6, He is called "Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God."] So, we can interpret this verse to mean the remnant of Israel will return to God by accepting Yeshua as Messiah.

Non-Jewish believers become part of the remnant from among the nations. We conclude, then, that Yeshua's followers are composed of a righteous remnant from Israel and a righteous remnant from foreign nations. Together, these two groups compose God's community. Each group is distinct, yet one community.

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The non-Jewish believers are so grafted in that they are like the native-born Israelites, with full rights of inheritance. They are not, in any way, second-class citizens.

Into what are non-Jews grafted? Rabbi Sha'ul uses the imagery of the olive tree in Romans 11 to show that Gentiles are grafted into Israel. Israel is the cultivated olive tree.

The Gentile believers are wild olive branches cut from a wild olive tree that have subsequently been grafted into the cultivated tree.

The cultivated olive tree is not Yeshua, as a few commentators erroneously interpret. The context makes clear that the tree is Israel. Marvin Wilson, a well-respected Biblical scholar, remarks the “root of the olive tree” (verse 17) is synonymous with the “root of Jesse” (Isaiah [Yesha’yahu] 11:10) and “root of David” (Revelation 5:5, 22:16). Accordingly, the root represents the patriarchs — Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.<sup>3</sup>

Using Wilson’s analysis, we can conclude that Gentiles have become fully grafted-in, with all the rights and privileges of citizenship.

When wild olive branches are grafted into a cultivated olive tree that has stopped bearing fruit, something miraculous happens. The wild olive branch suddenly begins bearing edible fruit, and then the rest of the tree begins bearing fruit again. Following the analogy, grafted-in Gentiles are able to bear fruit for God’s kingdom, unlike their former lives, when they were unable to do so. In addition, the engrafting of the Gentiles causes the Jewish remnant to bear fruit after centuries of dormancy.

### **Brought into covenants of promise and covenant relationship**

Ephesians 2:12 states that before they came to know Messiah, Yeshua’s Gentile followers were “strangers to the covenants of promise.” Notice the word “covenants” is plural. Why not “covenant of promise?” The reason is that Scripture introduces us to five covenants, all of which are first mentioned in the Tanakh. These are the Noachic (Genesis [B’resheet] 9:8-17), Abrahamic (Genesis [B’resheet] 15), Mosaic (Deuteronomy [D’varim] 5:2-21), Davidic (2 Samuel [Sh’mu’el] 7:4-16), and New (Jeremiah [Yirmeyahu] 31:31-34).

Of these five, three of them — the Abrahamic, Davidic, and New — are considered covenants of promise. That is, these covenants were given as gifts to Israel. God unconditionally pledged them to His people.

These are the covenants mentioned in Ephesians, which Gentile believers are brought into. The New Covenant is really a completion of the Abrahamic, Davidic, and Mosaic covenants. Therefore, when Ephesians speaks of the “covenants” in which Gentile believers are brought into, it is speaking also of the Mosaic.

Gentiles are no longer “strangers to the covenants of promise” (Ephesians 2:12). As citizens, they have full rights to participate in those covenants, so long as they remain consistent with Scripture.

A word about covenants . . .

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<sup>3</sup> Marvin Wilson, *Our Father Abraham*, p. 14, as cited in Ariel and D’vorah Berkowitz, *Take Hold*, p. 104

- Covenants are the basis on which all relationships with God are built and maintained.
- Covenants were often “cut.” This terminology derives from the practice of cutting an animal in two, with each consenting party walking between the pieces. Typically, each piece would be placed in a ditch, and a piece on either incline, with the blood flowing down to its basin. Every party would then walk through the blood. The message being conveyed was simply, “May this be my fate should I fail to keep the terms of this covenant.”

According to the Torah Anthology on Genesis (B’resheet) 15,

“The symbolism of this act was to demonstrate that the two parties were as one in heart and soul. Just as both halves of the animal were actually a single individual, so these two people were two bodies with one soul. And just as an animal cannot be divided in half without killing it, so these two would be separated only by death.”<sup>4</sup>

We see this in the covenant God made with Abraham (Avraham). God told Abraham (Avraham) to cut a 3 year-old heifer, a 3 year-old female goat, a 3 year-old ram, a turtledove, and a young pigeon in half. We learn this was a covenant of promise, because Abraham did not walk between the halves. Instead, God sent two representatives to walk through the pieces — one for Himself, and one representing Abraham (Avraham). Abraham (Avraham) was totally passive; he could only receive. When his descendants eventually broke the terms of the covenant, God was the one who paid the penalty on Abraham’s (Avraham’s) behalf.

Signs usually accompany covenants. Each of the five covenants of Scripture embodies a sign. The rainbow is the sign for the covenant with Noah (Noach) (Genesis [B’resheet] 9:16-17). God instituted circumcision as the sign of the covenant with Abraham (Avraham) (Genesis [B’resheet] 17:10-11). God gave the Shabbat as the sign of the Mosaic covenant (Exodus [Sh’mot] 31:16-17). Although Scripture is unclear, the context of 2 Samuel [Sh’mu’el] 7:11-13 seems to indicate the sign of the Davidic covenant is a house or kingdom. Perhaps the sign of the Davidic covenant is the Messiah Himself. Messiah is the ultimate King and Son referenced in this passage. Moreover, Isaiah [Yesha’yahu] 7:14 states, “Adonai Himself will give you a sign. Behold the virgin shall conceive and bear a son,” i.e., the Messiah. Lastly, the blood of Messiah Yeshua is the sign of the New Covenant, according to Luke 22:20.

### **A covenant community . . .**

As believers in Messiah, we are all part of God’s covenant community. Yes, we are individually God’s children, but more importantly, we are also part of His larger community. No longer do we focus on ourselves. We must see ourselves as vital to the whole. The individual is intimately connected with the larger community of believers. In God’s eyes, the two are inseparable.

<sup>4</sup> The Torah Anthology, Genesis 2, 1989, Moznaim Publishing.

We become faithful to God as individuals and as a community. Many of the commands found in the Torah are given, not in the singular, but in the plural “you.”

Rabbi Sha’ul gave instructions to the community when he said, “Always be humble, gentle and patient, bearing with one another in love, and making every effort to preserve the unity the Spirit gives through the binding power of shalom” (Ephesians 4:3; 1 Peter [Kefa] 3:8).

As individuals, we must “submit to one another in the fear of the Messiah” (Ephesians 5:21) for the greater good of the community. Furthermore, we must love one another, receive other believers into our homes without complaint, and we must use the gifts and talents given to us by God, in order to edify the Messianic community (1 Peter [Kefa] 4:8-10). Lastly, we must clothe ourselves in humility toward one another (1 Peter [Kefa] 5:5), regarding fellow brothers and sisters in the Messiah as better than ourselves (Philippians 2:3).

As a New Covenant community, we are commanded to look out for the interests of others, not just our own (Philippians 2:4).

### **Yeshua is the center of believers’ lives**

With the coming of Messiah, Scripture teaches us that Torah observance is part of the life of the believer (Matthew [Mattityahu] 5:17-19, 23:19-20; John [Yochanan] 14:15), the faithful keep the Torah (John [Yochanan] 14:15; 1John [Yochanan] 2:2-5; 1John [Yochanan] 5:2-3; Revelation 12:17; Revelation 14:12). Following Yeshua is critical but not exclusive of Torah. There is no contrast here, but rather we need to understand "how" Yeshua wants us to observe the Torah for our own blessing as the lifestyle of the redeemed. Accordingly, the Spirit is to be our guide in following many of the commandments found in the Torah.

As Messiah’s community, we have been resurrected with Him and “seated with Him in heaven” (Ephesians 2:6). Romans 6:4 explains the meaning of being resurrected with Yeshua. When we were immersed, or mikveh’ed, we identified with His death by being “buried” in the pool of water. Our coming out of the water symbolized our leaving our old sinful nature behind and walking in the newness of life.

To be seated with Messiah speaks of the authority of the believing community over the powers of darkness. Yeshua sits at God’s right hand (Romans 8:34), the place of authority. Since we are His bride (Revelation 19:7, 21:9) and His body (Ephesians 1:22-23, 3:6, 4:4, 12, 5:30), we symbolically sit there with Him, exercising His authority on Earth.

When a person accepts Yeshua as Messiah, he becomes His slave (Romans 6:22; Ephesians 6:6). As Scripture says, “We are not our own, but were bought at a price” (1

Corinthians 6:19-20; 7:23). Just as a slave is purchased, so God purchased us with Messiah's own blood from our former lives as slaves to sin, thereby making us His slaves to righteousness (Romans 6:16-19).