

## Exhortations and Warnings ~ Part 2

### Messianic Jews 13:7-17

#### Letter to the Messianic Jews

In my last post, we move on the final chapter of **Messianic Jews** where we study **General Messianic Obligations** in **Messianic Jews 13:1-6**. In this post, we explore the **Warnings** in **Messianic Jews 13:7-17**. [NOTE: This post is a little longer, but I did not want to break it up. You may want to click on the link below for the PDF version.]

*<sup>7</sup> Remember your leaders, those who spoke God's message to you. Reflect on the results of their way of life, and imitate their trust - <sup>8</sup> Yeshua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today and forever. <sup>9</sup> Do not be carried away by various strange teachings; for what is good is for the heart to be strengthened by grace, not by foods. People who have made these the focus of their lives have not benefited thereby. <sup>10</sup> We have an altar from which those who serve in the Tent are not permitted to eat. <sup>11</sup> For the cohen hagadol brings the blood of animals into the Holiest Place as a sin offering, but their bodies are burned outside the camp. <sup>12</sup> So too Yeshua suffered death outside the gate, in order to make the people holy through his own blood. <sup>13</sup> Therefore, let us go out to Him who is outside the camp and share His disgrace. <sup>14</sup> For we have no permanent city here; on the contrary, we seek the one to come. <sup>15</sup> Through Him, therefore, let us offer God a sacrifice of praise continually. For this is the natural product of lips that acknowledge His name. <sup>16</sup> But don't forget doing good and sharing with others, for with such sacrifices God is well pleased. <sup>17</sup> Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your lives, as people who will have to render an account. So make it a task of joy for them, not one of groaning; for that is of no advantage to you.*" ~ Messianic Jews 13:7-17 (CJB)

Stern writes that the references to **your leaders** in verse 7, 17 and 24 suggest that Chapter 13 was appended as a covering letter accompanying the summary of sermons constituting Chapters 1-12 and was addressed to individuals in the congregation whom the author knew personally. Perhaps they had heard him give this series of sermons orally and had requested a written summary from him. The Greek phrasing seems to imply that the leaders mentioned in this verse had died, perhaps as a result of persecution.

**Imitate their trust.** It should be more comfortable for the readers to emulate the faith of leaders they had known and loved than that of their distant forefathers (10:35-12:4). Compare **Sha'ul** at 1 Corinthians 11:1, **"Try to imitate me."** The chief argument for imitating these leaders is **the results of their way of life.**

Verse 8 connects back to **those who spoke God's message to you**. The author implies that they acted on the message then but are forsaking it now. If **Yeshua the Messiah is the same yesterday, today and forever**; if His sacrificial death remains the only true atonement; if holiness, **"without which no one will see the Lord,"** (Messianic Jews 12:14) comes only through Him; then why are you slacking off or seeking other paths to God? Regain your former loyalty to **Yeshua**, and behave accordingly!

Moreover, **Yeshua's** being the **same yesterday, today and forever** means that He is still Jewish and will return as a Jew. The **Messiah** has not been transformed into a Gentile. **Yeshua** was born a Jew, died a Jew, and was resurrected as a Jew. He is a Jew now, serving in heaven as a Jewish **cohen gadol**. He will return as a Jewish king to occupy the throne of his Jewish ancestor David. His humanity makes Him the savior of all, both Jews and non-Jews.

For me, it is essential that we put our trust in **Yeshua** from the mere fact that He is the **same yesterday, today and forever**.

**Do not be carried away by various strange teachings.** This is evidence that verse 8 warns against seeking ways apart from **Yeshua** for reaching God. (Compare Galatians 1:9, 3:1; 1 Corinthians 2:2).

Okay, what is the reference to **foods** all about? This has nothing to do with whether **Messianic Jews** should keep **kosher**, which is not at issue in this book. Moreover, scholars agree that the early Jewish believers observed **kashrut**. The only question which they needed to solve concerned how Jewish believers should behave at the dining table with Gentile Believers (Galatians 2:11-16).

There are two possibilities for interpreting **foods** here. The more likely, based on the way in which verse 10 elaborates the subject, is that it refers once again to animal sacrifices, this time somewhat ironically - recall that those who offered ate the animal sacrifices.

The other is that some members of this community thought that eating certain foods would enhance their spirituality. This could be a reference to an early health-food craze. However, one's spiritual condition of sin is affected **by** God's **grace** appropriated by **trusting, not by foods. People who have made these the focus of their lives have not benefitted thereby.** Rather, faithfulness to God and **Yeshua** should be the focus of everyone's life; this provides eternal benefits.

We, Believers, **have an altar.** This altar is in heaven; on the heavenly altar **Yeshua the Messiah** made the once-for-all sacrifice of himself. But the altar is also **outside the camp**, so that although **those who serve in the Tent**, the Levitical **cohanim**, representing the **pre-Yeshua** dispensation and nonbelievers, may eat the thank offerings and peace offerings, they **are not permitted to eat** the sin offerings, because the **bodies** of those animals **are burned outside the camp.** Since Yeshua was a sin offering, nonbelievers **are not permitted to** partake of Him unless and until they put their **trust** in **Yeshua.**

Many churches today do not allow non-believers to participate in their communion services.

In verses 11-14 the author evokes at least five images here:

1. **Sin offering:** **Yeshua suffered death**, and this had the significance of **a sin offering** in two ways. First, just as **the cohen gadol brings the blood of the animals into the Holy Place**, so **Yeshua suffered death in order to make the people holy through his own blood.** Second, just as the **bodies** of the **animals** used for **a sin offering are burned outside the camp**, so **Yeshua's** death took place **outside the gate** of the city of Jerusalem, which replaced the **camp** in the wilderness.
2. **Impurity:** Just as lepers and other people declared impure had to remain **outside the camp in disgrace**, so **Yeshua** was wrongfully regarded as unclean and **suffered death** with **disgrace** by being executed as a criminal on a stake **outside the gate** at Golgotha.
3. **Separation:** Being **outside the camp in disgrace** implies not only impurity but separation from the Jewish people. **Yeshua** is indeed separated; however, His separation is in fact not **from** the Jewish people, due to impurity, but **unto** God, due to His holiness; so that His separation from the Jewish people is wrongful, illusory and not disgraceful. Moreover, he can **make the Jewish and Gentile people holy through his own blood**, ending their genuine and justified separation from God due to sin. Messianic Jews, who **go out to him who is outside the camp to share his disgrace**, remain, like him, part of the Jewish people, even though, like Him, we may not be so regarded. Like **Yeshua**, we experience the pain of exclusion; but we must stand with Him and not seek respect or inclusion on any terms except God's.
4. **Red Heifer:** The reference to **Yeshua's** making **the people holy through his own blood** recalls Messianic Jews 9:11-14, which mentions the **red heifer**. The body of the **red heifer** too was **burned outside the camp**; by suggestion, then, **Yeshua** is also our **red heifer.**
5. **Permanent city:** Having mentioned the **gate** of the city, the author returns to the language of 11:9-10, 13-16; 12:22 in reminding us believers that **we have no permanent city here** but **seek the one to come**, heavenly Jerusalem. There is no implication of otherworldliness, in the sense of neglecting the needs of this world; instead, we live simultaneously in both the **'olam hazeh** and the **'olam haba.**

We are not accustomed to using the word **sacrifice** except metaphorically, but the author here may be referring to real, physical thank-offerings. This would be consistent not only with the context of verses 10-16

but also with the End-Time prophecies of Jeremiah 33:11, the Messianic prophecies of Malachi 3:1-4 and with rabbinic Jewish understanding. Does that mean we will be able to have BBQ's in Heaven still? I certainly hope so!!

But for two reasons it seems at least equally likely that he is, in fact, speaking of metaphorical sacrifices, like **Sha'ul** at Romans 12:1-2. First, *lips that acknowledge His name* should *offer God a spiritual sacrifice* which consists of *praise*. Second, *doing good and sharing with others* are spiritual *sacrifices* with which *God is well pleased*.

*Obey your present leaders and submit to them*. Many who call themselves believers in the Bible are unwilling to live by this verse of inspired Scripture; possibly because of fear and distrust of authority figures or excessive individualism (read self-centeredness). They are rebellious, undisciplined, and unwilling to be part of a team to accomplish the work of the Body of the Messiah. Such people should acknowledge this attitude as sin and seek the Body's help and counsel in overcoming it.

On the other hand, some leaders misuse this verse to exploit their charges, to brainwash or to force them to submit to unreasonable and ungodly demands.

But the verse itself encourages cooperation between leader and led for the good of the led and the glory of the Lord. On the one hand, your leaders have work to do: *they keep watch over your lives*. Moreover, they are not their bosses: *they will have to render an account* of their stewardship to *the great Shepherd of the sheep, our Lord Yeshua* (see verses 18-21). On the other hand, you who are being led can *make it a task of joy for them, not one of groaning*; and it is to your *advantage* to do so.

In my next post, we conclude our study of **Messianic Jews** through **Prayer, Personal References, and Benedictions** in **Messianic Jews 13:18-25**.