

## Epistle of Ya'akov (James) ~ 2:1-13

### The Sin of Partiality

This passage is concerned with how **Believers**, specifically **Messianic Jews**, treat **non-Messianic Jews** inquiring about the New Covenant faith. In **Isra'el**, as in most of the **Roman Empire**, the rich were oppressing the poor (2:6–7). But the temptation to make wealthy converts or inquirers feel welcome at the expense of the poor was immoral (2:4). The language of impartiality was commonly applied mainly to legal settings. Still, because synagogues served as houses of prayer and community courts, this predominantly legal image naturally applies to any gatherings there.

*<sup>1</sup> My brothers, practice the faith of our Lord Yeshua, the glorious Messiah, without showing favoritism. <sup>2</sup> Suppose a man comes into your synagogue wearing gold rings and fancy clothes, and also a poor man comes in dressed in rags. <sup>3</sup> If you show more respect to the man wearing the fancy clothes and say to him, "Have this good seat here," while to the poor man you say, "You, stand over there," or, "Sit down on the floor by my feet," <sup>4</sup> then aren't you creating distinctions among yourselves, and haven't you made yourselves into judges with evil motives?*

*Your synagogue* is talking neither about a Christian church service nor a gathering of **Jewish non-Believers** but a **Messianic** synagogue. He would not refer to *your synagogue* and assume his readers were in charge of seating visitors if the **Messianic Jews** did not control the synagogue. This verse establishes a solid New Testament basis for modern-day **Messianic** synagogues, provided they do not exclude **Gentile Believers**. To do so would *raise the middle wall of partition* once again, in violation of Ephesians 2:11–16. A **Messianic** synagogue, while committed to preserving and developing a **Jewish** rather than a **Gentile** mode of expressing New Covenant faith, must be open to participation by believing **Jews** and **Gentiles** alike, as was Congregation Heart for Isra'el.

*<sup>5</sup> Listen, my dear brothers, hasn't God chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith (see Matthew 5:3) and to receive the Kingdom which he promised to those who love him? <sup>6</sup> But you despise the poor! Aren't the rich the ones who oppress you and drag you into court? <sup>7</sup> Aren't they the ones who insult the good name of Him to whom you belong?*

Why treat *the rich* nonbelieving **Jews** in some particular way when they are *the ones who oppress you and drag you* possibly *into a beit-din*, a **Jewish** religious *court*, and *insult the good name of him to whom you belong*, namely, *our Lord Yeshua*, the *glorious Messiah*?

*<sup>8</sup> If you truly attain the goal of Kingdom Torah, in conformity with the passage that says, "Love your neighbor as yourself," you are doing well.*

*Kingdom Torah* is not a new **Torah** given by the **Messiah**. It does not make the **Mosaic Law** obsolete, even though, as Galatians 5:14 puts it, *the whole of the Torah is summed up in this one sentence: Love your neighbor as yourself.*" (See also Romans 13:8–10.) Instead, **Ya'akov** means that *Kingdom Torah* is, in essence, nothing other than the **Torah of Moses** carried out, by the power of the **Ruach HaKodesh**, *in conformity with* its own *passage that says, "Love your neighbor as yourself."* **Yeshua** was pointing in this direction when He said that this is one of the two *mitzvot* (principles) on which all of the **Torah** and the **Prophets** depend (Matt. 22:40).

*<sup>9</sup> But if you show favoritism, your actions constitute sin since you are convicted under the Torah as transgressors.*

*If you show favoritism*, no matter how much faith you claim to have, *your actions constitute sin.*

The **Torah** condemns favoritism in another context with these words: ***Do not respect persons in judgment but hear the small as well as the great; do not be afraid of the face of any man, for the judgment is God's.*** ~ Deuteronomy 1:17.

***<sup>10</sup> For a person who keeps the whole Torah, yet stumbles at one point, has become guilty of breaking them all. <sup>11</sup> For the One who said, "Don't commit adultery," also said, "Don't murder." Now, if you don't commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the Torah.***

***A person who keeps the whole Torah, yet stumbles at one point, has become guilty of breaking them all,*** that is, of breaking all the points of the **Torah**, as illustrated by v. 11. No one can have a right relationship with **God** apart from **Yeshua**. But it is not true that once violating a commandment means that one has broken the **Torah** permanently and impossible to repair. That is not what this verse is saying. And it is certainly not true that the **Mosaic Law** as given was unfulfillable.

***<sup>12</sup> Keep speaking and acting like people who will be judged by a Torah, which gives freedom. <sup>13</sup> For judgment will be without mercy toward one who doesn't show mercy, but mercy wins out over judgment.*** ~ Ya'akov 2:1-13 (CJB)

Therefore, **speak and act** with the knowledge that you will stand before the judgment of **Yeshua** one day. Everyone who enters our **Kehillahs** should experience them as environments of mercy and hope. If you don't show mercy, don't expect mercy. If you don't offer hope, don't expect hope. Confess any partiality in your life and look for opportunities to show mercy, for ***mercy wins out over judgment.***

We will learn a little more about **Ya'akov** as we dig into what he says about **Faith Without Works Is Dead.**