

Ya'akov (James) ~ Part 4

Consistency Between Faith and Conduct

Partiality Not Faith

When interacting with colleagues or acquaintances, make a conscious effort to engage with those who are often overlooked, such as maintenance staff or receptionists. Show genuine interest in their work and lives. You might invite them to coffee or engage them in conversation. This tangible act of kindness reflects **God's** heart and can break down barriers of division, demonstrating His love in a powerful, everyday setting. I do this weekly grocery shopping with the staff and other customers.

The following section concerns how **Believers**, specifically **Messianic Jews**, are to treat **non-Messianic Jews** inquiring about the **New Covenant** faith.

2¹ My brothers, practice the faith of our Lord Yeshua, the glorious Messiah, without showing favoritism. ² Suppose a man comes into your synagogue wearing gold rings and fancy clothes, and also a poor man comes in dressed in rags. ³ 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,"

Your synagogue. This is a **Messianic Synagogue**, a predominantly **Jewish** congregation of **Believers** in **Yeshua**, expressing their **New Covenant** faith in a way that retains most or all of the prayers, customs, and style of **non-Messianic synagogues**. That was true in our **Kehilah** as well. Worship did include mostly **Messianic** songs.

These verses establish a solid **New Covenant** basis for modern-day **Messianic Synagogues**, provided they do not exclude **Gentile Believers**. Doing so would "raise the middle wall of partition" once again, violating Ephesians 2:11-16. A **Messianic Synagogue**, 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.

⁴ then aren't you creating distinctions among yourselves, and haven't you made yourselves into judges with evil motives? ⁵ Listen, my dear brothers, hasn't God chosen the poor of the world to be rich in faith and to receive the Kingdom which he promised to those who love him?

God has chosen the poor to be rich, as **Yeshua** said in Mattityahu 5:3.

⁶ But you despise the poor! Aren't the rich the ones who oppress you and drag you into court? ⁷ Aren't they the ones who insult the good name of Him to whom you belong?

Why treat **the rich** nonbelieving **Jews** in some special 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**" (v. 1)? Alternatively, these verses speak of any **rich** person, **Jewish** or **Gentile**, and any **court**.

Any Violation Disrespects

⁸ If you truly attain the goal of Kingdom Torah, in conformity with the passage that says, "Love your neighbor as yourself," (Leviticus 19:18), you are doing well. ⁹ But if you show favoritism, your actions constitute sin, since you are convicted under the Torah as transgressors.

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 (compare Romans 13:8-10), "**the whole of the Torah**" is summed up in this one sentence: **Love your neighbor as yourself.**" Instead, **Ya'akov** means that **Kingdom Torah** is essentially nothing other than the **Torah** of **Moshe** 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," Mattityahu 22:36) on which all of the **Torah** and the **Prophets** depend (Mattityahu 22:40). Here the principle says that the poor, including the "widows and orphans" of 1:26, as well as the rich are counted as "neighbors" to be loved as oneself; **Yeshua** meant the same at Luke 10:25-37 in the parable of the man from **Shomron**.

¹⁰ **For a person who keeps the whole Torah, yet stumbles at one point, has become guilty of breaking them all.** ¹¹ **For the One who said, "Don't commit adultery,"** (Exodus 20:13(14); Deuteronomy 5:17(18)) **also said, "Don't murder."** (Exodus 20:13; Deuteronomy 5:17) **Now, if you don't commit adultery but do murder, you have become a transgressor of the Torah.**

Whole Torah ... one point. The **Law of God** is not a series of detached injunctions but a fundamental unity that requires perfect love of Him and neighbors (Mattityahu 22:36-40). Although not all sins are equally damaging or heinous, they all shatter that unity and render people **transgressors**, much like hitting a window with a hammer at only one point will shatter and destroy the whole window. **Guilty of all.** Not in the sense of violating every command, but in the sense of violating the **Law's** unity. One transgression makes fulfilling the **Law's** most basic commands—to love God perfectly and to love one's neighbor as oneself—impossible. Repent.

¹² **Keep speaking and acting like people who will be judged by a Torah which gives freedom.** ¹³ **For judgment will be without mercy toward one who doesn't show mercy; but mercy wins out over judgment.**

Ya'akov exhorted his readers to have proper attitudes. **Speaking and acting** refer to tempered speech, as in 1:19 27. The **law of freedom**, or the **Gospel**, will serve as the basis for eschatological judgment (1:2-12).

Changed Life Evidence of Faith

¹⁴ **What good is it, my brothers, if someone claims to have faith but has no actions to prove it? Is such "faith" able to save him?** ¹⁵ **Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food,** ¹⁶ **and someone says to him, "Shalom! Keep warm and eat hearty!" without giving him what he needs, what good does it do?** ¹⁷ **Thus, faith by itself, unaccompanied by actions, is dead.** ¹

If someone claims to have faith, it is an important phrase that governs the interpretation of the entire passage. **Ya'akov** does not say that this person has faith, but that he claims to have it. **Faith** is best understood broadly, speaking of any degree of acceptance of the truths of the Gospel. **Can faith save him?** **Ya'akov** is not disputing the importance of **faith**. Instead, he opposes the notion that saving **faith** can be a mere intellectual exercise void of a commitment to active obedience (see Mattityahu 7:16-18). **Ya'akov** illustrates his point by comparing **faith** without works to words of compassion without acts of compassion (Mattityahu 25:31-46).

In our next post, we continue to dig into the **Letter of Ya'akov**.

¹ Ya'akov 2:1-17.