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Bridges for Peace Israel Teaching Letter

Vol. #770206

February 2006



*Love
Light
Wisdom*

Walking GOD'S WAY

"Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ (Messiah) also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma. "

Ephesians 5:1-2

Walking God's Way

הלכה

The Way on Which One Goes

My husband, Tom, and I frequently walk in the evening after work for exercise and just to spend a little time together in conversation, which we enjoy because it is our time. We live in Gilo, a southern neighborhood in Jerusalem, which is the highest point in the city. No matter how hot the day is, there is almost always a cool breeze in the evening. Recently, I was reading in Ephesians chapter five and noticed a repeated theme of walking. It was an emphasis of how we live or “walk” out our lives, that led me on a trek through the Scriptures to see the connections between walking and God.

Adam and Eve Walked with God

Adam and Eve lived an idyllic life in a beautiful garden and, best of all, they had close fellowship with God, who would come and walk in the garden with them. In Genesis 3:8 it says: “*And they heard the sound of the Lord God walking in the garden in the cool of the day...*” It seems that God agrees with us, walking and fellowshiping in the cool of the day is a pleasant thing.

Walking with God

The word walk in the Bible is used literally and figuratively. When used figuratively, it has to do with conduct and manner of life, or the observance of laws and customs (Tenney).

Repeatedly, we read accounts in the Bible of those who walked with God, like Enoch, Noah, Abraham, and Isaac. From the scriptural accounts it is apparent that God was greatly pleased by such followers.

Over and over again, God encourages His people to walk in His ways. “*And now, Israel, what does the Lord your God require of you, but to fear the Lord your God, to **walk** in all His ways and to love Him, to serve the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul, and to keep the commandments of the Lord and His statutes which I command you today for your good?*” (Deuteronomy 10:12–13). This passage has been described as the essence of the Law. The apostle Paul uses the same kind of terminology in Ephesians. “*For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should **walk** in them*” (Ephesians 2:10).

The Way We Walk

In Hebrew the most common word for walk is *halak* and it means:

- 1 To make one's way, progress; to make due use of opportunities.
- 2 To live, to regulate one's life, to conduct one's self, to pass one's life.

Hebrew is a language of consonants, with the vowel sounds being memorized or sometimes indicated by small symbols placed above, below, or inside of letters. Every Hebrew word is comprised of a root, called a *shoresh*. So in this instance the *shoresh* for walk, *halak* is composed of the consonants H-L-K (הלך). Other words share this same root and have similar meanings. One of the most common is *halaka*, which literally means the way on which one goes.

Halaka—The Way on Which One Goes

I believe it is important for us to understand this word, which permeates Hebraic thought and the practice of Judaism. The Bible was written by Jewish writers (with the possible exception of Luke), who thought Hebraically. They lived in a Hebraic culture and would have been very familiar with the idea of *halaka*.

Dr. Marvin Wilson in his book, *Our Father Abraham*, describes *halaka* in part:

“During the period of Rabbinic Judaism, the Hebrew term *halaka* (literally walking, proceeding, going) took on special significance. It designated the religious laws and regulations to follow so one might keep straight on the road of life. It provided a map from the start to the end of one’s journey. When one errs from God’s path into crooked and perverse ways, one violates God’s *Torah* (Gen.–Deut.) and must ‘return.’ The Hebrew word for repentance is *teshuva*, suggesting the idea ‘turn around,’ ‘go back.’ The way back is the way of *Torah*; it gives direction and guidance needed to remain on the way.”

Halaka is the term used for Jewish Law. It refers to the final authoritative decision on any specific question. It rests, first and foremost, upon the biblical statutes and commandments in the written and oral *Torah*, it is practical not theoretical. *Halaka* is legal not philosophical (Donin).

Judaism is a way of life. *Halaka* (walking) is the way the commandments are translated into everyday living. Although faith is the basis out of which *halaka* develops, its major emphasis is on deed. It is deed, not just faith.

I was sitting eating with an Orthodox friend recently and an interesting conversation ensued. I had mentioned that I had noticed in the newspaper Orthodox Jews being described as believers—one who was running for office stated, “Israel needs a believer in the position of Prime Minister.” I found this interesting, as previously I had thought that was a term used only to describe Christians. My friend responded, “Most Jews are believers. The more important thing to know is are they are practicing Jews.”

That reminded me of my friend, the late Dr. Bernard Resnikov. He once said to me: “Becky, I don’t understand Christians. I’ve been to many inner-faith meetings and the Christians stand around talking about what they believe. It isn’t that way in Judaism. If I read in my Bible about *Shabbat* (the Sabbath) and want to understand it better, I go to my neighbor who practices *Shabbat*, and ask him to share his insights. If he isn’t keeping *Shabbat*, why would I bother to ask him what he believes about it?”

These two conversations illustrate a common stream of thought in Judaism. The conceptual truths of Judaism and its values mean little unless they are translated into a way of life.

Halaka...
a map from the start
to finish of one’s
journey to help us
keep straight on the
road of life.



Secular Believers

In Israel, many Jews who are defined as secular actually do believe in God. But, since they are not practicing Jews, they are considered secular. Yaakov Kirschen, the well-known cartoonist who draws the Dry Bones Political cartoons, once told a Bridges For Peace Solidarity Mission that he had been reading the book of Ezekiel and it was like reading the newspaper. He was fascinated by the fact that Bible prophecy is being fulfilled. He went on to say, “I’m having a crisis of unbelief.” He would define himself as secular, but in many conversations over the years, I know that Yaakov reads the Bible, and believes in God—but, he is not willing to live the lifestyle Judaism requires.

Growing up in a church environment, I know that this is not just a Jewish problem. Many believe but are unwilling to live the way God prescribes. Sadly, many attend church on Sunday, but their lives during the week are barely distinguishable from the world around them.

Walk In Love, Light, and Wisdom

As I read Ephesians chapter five, I was struck by the word **walk**. Three times in this chapter, Paul tells the Ephesians to walk or live their lives in a particular way. I see a theme of *halaka* running throughout this chapter. Remember Paul defined himself as “*circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee*” (Philippians 3:5). Paul was trained by Gamliel, one of the greatest rabbis, and was himself a learned Jewish theologian. This concept was very familiar to him.

In this passage, Paul chooses to highlight love, light, and wisdom. In each instance, he then contrasts the positive with negative. The exhortation found in these passages is very practical. It is all about action, not just theory. The believer who follows the advice written here will be exhibiting his faith in practical ways.

Let’s take a look at how Paul, inspired by the Holy Spirit, says we, as believers, should live (walk out) our lives.

Love

“Therefore, be imitators of God as dear children. And walk in love, as Christ (Messiah) also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet smelling aroma. But fornication and all uncleanness or covetousness, let it not even be named among you, as is fitting for saints; neither filthiness, nor foolish talking, nor coarse jesting, which are not fitting but rather giving of thanks. For this you know, that no fornicator, unclean person, nor covetous man, who is an idolater, has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things the wrath of God comes upon the sons of disobedience. Therefore do not be partakers with them.” (Ephesians 5:1–7).

As believers, we are called to imitate God, as children do their beloved parents. Since God is love, it follows, that learning to **walk** in love is imperative for Christians. Matthew Henry, in his commentary says, “This puts a great honor upon practical religion, that it is the imitating of God. We must be holy as God is holy, merciful as He is merciful, perfect as He is perfect. But there is no one attribute of God more recommended for imitation than that of His goodness. Be you imitators of God especially in His love” (Henry).

Francis Foulkes, another commentator emphasizes, “The constancy with which love is to be demonstrated is indicated by the use of the word **walk**. Love is to characterize the Christian’s daily progress along the road of life” (Foulkes).

Over the years, I have many times heard that Christianity is a religion of love and grace and that Judaism is a religion of law and judgment. After living in Israel for nearly 17 years, I can tell you that it is not so cut and dried. As Christians we are called to walk in love, and grace, but we also have “laws” or prohibitions, with judgments attached, as in the Ephesians 5 passage.

In Judaism, love of God and fellowman is a central theme. The *Shma*, the most widely known Jewish prayer or proclamation, says: “*Hear, O Israel: The Lord our God, the Lord is one! You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your strength*” (Deuteronomy 6:4–5). The rabbis teach Jews to love their fellow man in a series of laws and teachings called *mitzvot she-bain adam lehavero* (literally, good deeds between man and his fellow). Rabbi Donin when talking about kindness cites the verse, “...but you shall love your neighbor as yourself” (Leviticus 19:18).



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“The constancy with which *love* is to be demonstrated is indicated by the use of the word **walk**.”

When Yeshua (Jesus) was asked by a lawyer (an expert in Mosaic Law) what he must do to inherit eternal life, Yeshua asked him, “*What is written in the Law? What is your reading of it?*” The lawyer responded by reciting, “*You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and your neighbor as yourself.*” (Luke 10:26–27). He was quoting Deuteronomy 6:5, and Leviticus 19:18. Yeshua responded by saying, “*You have answered rightly, do this and you will live*” (Luke 10:28). On another occasion, Yeshua was asked by a scribe what the greatest commandment was and He quoted these same two Scriptures—see Mark 12:29–31.

Christianity did not spring forth in a vacuum. Yeshua, the disciples, the apostles and most of the writers of the New Testament were all Jewish, and their teaching reflects that.

After enjoining the Ephesians to be imitators of God and walk in love, Paul contrasts this with some sins and ways of walking out life that are contrary to the walk of love. All indicate a love and indulgence of self, rather than a love of God and fellow man.

Light

*"For you were once darkness, but now you are light in the Lord. **Walk** as children of light (for the fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness, righteousness and truth), finding out what is acceptable to the Lord. And have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to speak of those things which are done by them in secret. But all things that are exposed are made manifest by the light, for whatever makes manifest is light. Therefore He says: 'Awake, you who sleep, arise from the dead, and Christ [Messiah] will give you light'" (Ephesians 5:8-14).*

Darkness and light are contrasted here, with darkness indicating not just physical darkness, but spiritual deadness. We are to walk in light or live our lives in the light.

Paul speaks to the Ephesians as Gentiles who formerly had no access to the light of God. *"Therefore remember, that you, once Gentiles in the flesh—who are called Uncircumcision [Gentiles] by what is called the Circumcision [Jewish] made in the flesh by hands—that at that time you were without Christ [Messiah], being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. But now in Christ Jesus [Messiah Yeshua] you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ [Messiah]" (Ephesians 2:11-13).*

As Gentiles, the Ephesians did not have the rich background in the Scriptures that Paul had. When Paul reminded them that they were darkness, he was reminding them of their paganism, sin and idolatry. Without Yeshua's sacrificial gift, they would never have been transformed from darkness to light. As Christians, we have been brought near to the commonwealth of Israel and became partakers of the covenants only through the sacrificial gift of Yeshua, our Jewish Messiah, who has brought us out of darkness into light.

This transformation from darkness to light is not passive. We have to make a decision to walk in light.

Yeshua told us to be lights. *"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven"* (Matthew 5:14-16). Notice again, the action required here—*"your good works."* The light of our faith in God should shine out of our lives in the form of good works or action; we must walk in light.

What exactly does a light do? A light shines. When you turn on a light in a dark room, the darkness is dispelled. Our lifestyle should radiate with the light of God, and testify of His presence in our lives.

We tell our staff in Jerusalem that it is important that they take this word to heart. For nearly 2000 years, the Jewish people have not seen Christianity as a shining light. Rather, they experienced rejection, persecution, or attempts to convert them to Christianity. I have noticed that, as a people, the Jews have a great fear of annihilation. I have identified from years of observation; through conversations, written materials, and media expression, that annihilation is viewed as taking three basic forms.

1. Death: Hitler tried to annihilate the Jewish people and succeeded in killing 1/3 of all Jews in the holocaust.

2. Assimilation: If Jewish people marry outside of their faith, the chances are that children born to the mixed union, will not be Jewish, and eventually the Jewish people would cease to exist.

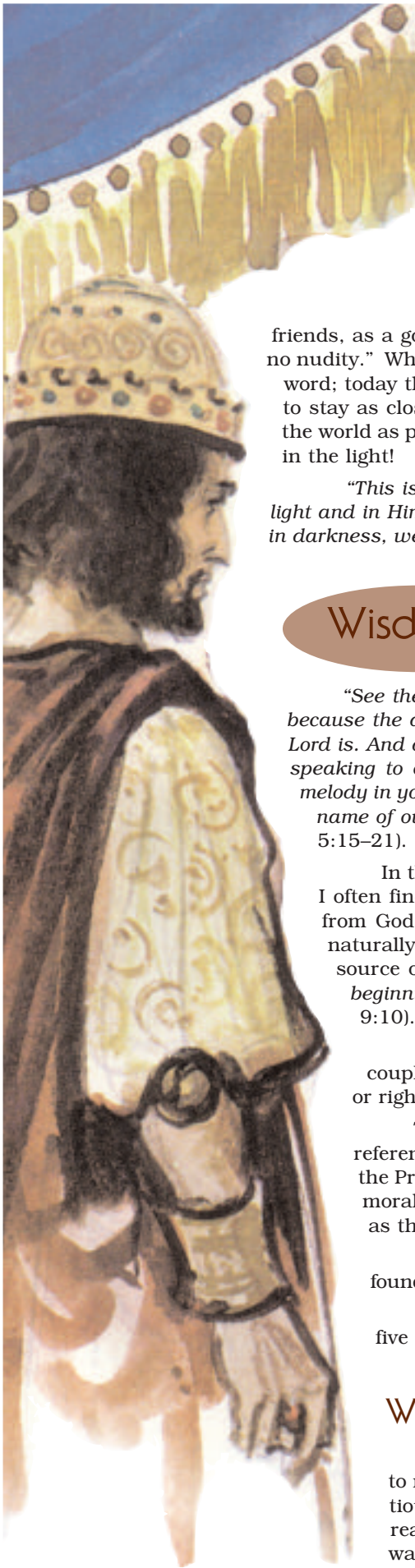
3. Conversion to Christianity: The rabbis teach that if a Jewish person converts to Christianity they are no longer Jewish. Some Jewish families hold funerals for family members who convert to Christianity.

Whenever we are around Jewish people, it is important that we, as Christians, allow our light to shine. God has called Bridges for Peace to help change attitudes. We work to change attitudes in our own Christian community; encouraging Christians to love, pray for, and bless



This transformation from darkness to light is not passive. We have to make a decision to walk in light.





the Jewish people, the family of our own dear Savior. We also are working to change the attitude of Jews concerning Christians by allowing our lives to shine, and by letting our good works be seen, for the glory of God. As we walk in light, the darkness will be dispelled.

The world we live in today, is attempting to merge light and darkness. Actions declared sinful by the Bible and unacceptable to society just 50 years ago, are now increasingly accepted by modern society. Abortion, homosexuality, sex outside of marriage were all once viewed as unacceptable and, today, are seen as the norm. Television depicts homosexuals in nearly every program as normal, nice people who live an acceptable alternative lifestyle. Standards of holy living in the Church have also seen compromise. Christians today watch movies and afterward describe it to their friends, as a good movie, by saying something like, "There were only a few cuss words, and no nudity." When "Gone With the Wind," first aired, Christians were scandalized by one curse word; today that movie would not cause any heads to turn. It seems that, instead of trying to stay as close to God and His ways as possible, many Christians try to stay as much in the world as possible and still remain a Christian. But, this is not God's way. We are to **walk** in the light!

"This is the message which we have heard from Him and declare to you, that God is light and in Him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth" (1 John 1:5-6).

Wisdom

"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be unwise but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not be drunk with wine, in which is dissipation; but be filled with the Spirit, speaking to one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody in your heart to the Lord, giving thanks always for all things to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, submitting to one another in the fear of God" (Ephesians 5:15-21).

In this passage, wisdom is contrasted with foolishness. In my leadership position, I often find myself asking God to give me wisdom. Many people depend on me to hear from God and make good, wise decisions. I know that foolishness comes much more naturally than wisdom, so I constantly and repeatedly acknowledge that God is the source of all wisdom. I seek Him and have learned that, *"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding"* (Proverbs 9:10).

Webster's Dictionary defines wisdom as knowledge of what is true or right coupled with good judgment. The wise person is able to judge properly what is true or right.

The Hebrew word for wisdom is *hokmah* (חכמה). The most common usage is in reference to wisdom in daily living. This is the sense of the word as used throughout the Proverbs, which teaches that true wisdom involves not only intelligence, but also moral integrity. Because a sinful life is ultimately self destructive, wisdom is extolled as the only path to a full and fruitful life (Proverbs 3:13-26).

The source of wisdom is God. By wisdom He numbered the clouds (Job 38:37), founded the earth (Proverbs 3:19), and made the world (Jeremiah 10:12).

What practical things can we do to ensure we walk wisely? The Ephesians five passage gives us some very good direction.

Walk Circumspectly

We need to exercise discretion and prudence. Discretion means we are able to make decisions according to our own judgment. Prudence is being wisely cautious in practical affairs. In contrast, the foolish man is hasty in his actions, often reacting rather than thoughtfully responding. One who walks circumspectly watches his path to avoid contact with undesirable influences, which might draw him off the path.

Redeem the time

Each of us has been given the exact same amount of time. In this respect, we are all equal. We each have 168 hours a week. It is our choice how we use them. The older I become, the more I realize how precious time is. Every hour invested righteously will reap a harvest with God's blessing. Every hour frittered away is gone forever, never to be redeemed. In the midst of the darkness of this world, it becomes even more important to use our time carefully. We must take advantage of opportunities to do God's will. We should do all we can to advance God's purposes on the earth, for the "days are evil."

Understand God's Will

God wants to bless us with wisdom. When God asked Solomon what he wanted from Him, he asked for wisdom. God was so pleased with his request that He not only granted Solomon wisdom but honor, riches and power as well. We are encouraged in the Word to seek after wisdom. *"If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask of God, who gives to all liberally and without reproach, and it will be given to him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind"* (James 1:5-6).

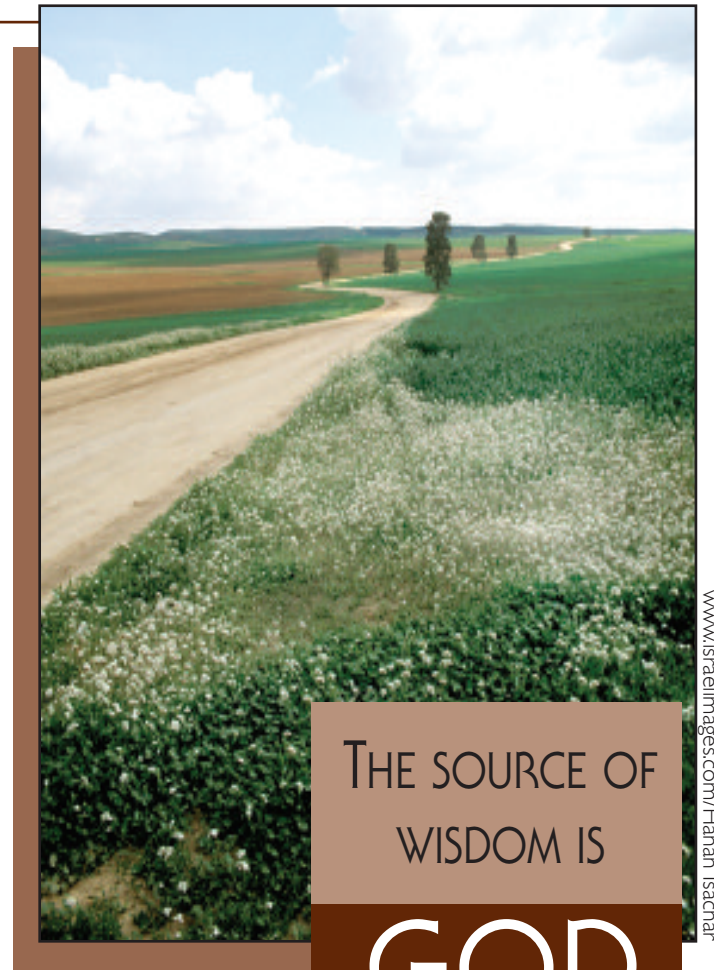
Most believers desire to know and follow God's will. This is not a matter of a feeling or emotion. It is a mental and heart understanding that is discerned through Scripture, prayer and fellowship with the Lord. In this passage, Paul tells the readers to be filled with the Spirit. As we are full of God's Spirit, we will increase in understanding His will. The tense of the Greek word used here indicates that the filling is a moment by moment repeatable action. So we could say, "Be continually filled with the Spirit." It is not a one-time experience.

Notice that Paul contrasts being full of the Spirit with being full of wine to the point of being drunk. I have been around a few drunks in my life, and my experience is that people under the influence of strong drink lose control of themselves and often make poor decisions. When we are controlled by the Spirit, the result is wisdom. When we are controlled by drugs or alcoholic beverages, foolishness or worse is the outcome.

Spirit Filled Living

The world we live in is full of temptations, sin masquerading as normal, acceptable behavior and opportunities to compromise abound. So, God, in His wisdom, has given us the Holy Spirit to lead us and give us power to be His representatives in the midst of an evil age. Those, who are filled with the Spirit, will show fruit in their lives. Paul tells us in this passage some of the ways in which a spirit-filled person will act. It is practical advice to help us to walk in Him on a daily basis.

- 1 We are to encourage and edify one another singing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs.
- 2 We are to have a joyful heart, out of which flows spontaneous praise in song to the Lord. I love to work at the Bridges for Peace International Headquarters in Jerusalem. I have wonderful co-workers who constantly have a song of praise in their hearts. It is very common for the sounds of praise and worship to float down the halls as one or another passes through.
- 3 We are to be thankful for all things. Even when unpleasant, painful things happen to us, we can be thankful that God is with us in the midst of them and recognize that He is able to even bring good out of disaster.
- 4 We are to submit to one another in the fear of God. There is no human being without weakness. Each of us is susceptible to temptation. The wise person recognizes his area of challenge and asks others to help him. We all need to be accountable to other believers. Within our trusted circle, we need to find those with whom we can be vulnerable and transparent. We need to humbly confess our sins one to another and submit to another in the fear of the Lord.



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Faith and Action

I am thankful that my Jewish friends challenge me to think about the connection between faith and practice. They probably don't realize it, but another Jewish man, James, said similar things!

"...be doers of the word, and not hearers only deceiving yourselves...What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, and one of you says to them, 'Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,' but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead. But someone will say, 'You have faith, and I have works. Show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe there is one God. You do well. Even the demons believe—and tremble! But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead?'" (James 1:22, 2:14–20).

My father, Dr. David Allen Lewis, used to paraphrase James' words and say, "belief without action is deception!"

Yeshua's Sermon on the Mount is grounded firmly in Jewish thought. He insists; "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who **does** the will of My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 7:21).

God is calling us to be doers of His word. Let's choose to walk in love, light, and wisdom. Let us choose to walk in fellowship with God. Faith with works will allow God's glory to shine throughout the world.

Blessings from Jerusalem,



By Rev. Rebecca J. Brimmer
International President and CEO



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Scriptures taken from the New King James Version, unless otherwise noted.

Many pastors, Bible teachers, and laypeople have written and asked if they can use these notes for preaching and teaching. The answer is a resounding "yes"! It is our hope that the information contained herein will be disseminated over and over again, whether through the spoken word or by photocopying and redistributing these teachings. "For out of Zion shall go forth the law, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Isaiah 2:3).

