The ENIGMA!

A Look At The Tension Between Judaism And Christianity.

I sit down to write today, having read an account from Israel of a 15 year old boy being severely injured when he opened what appeared to be a "Purim basket" left on the family doorstep.

The perpetrators of this heinous deed are at this time unknown. Yet there is a possible religious rationale for such an attack. The message of and concerning Yeshua, [Jesus] is actually hated by a minority group living in that troubled land, and this is a family seeking to serve Him.

So I would like to address an issue within this article, knowing that there are many here in England and elsewhere too, who might not easily understand where such believers as this lad, fit in-between Christianity and Judaism, nor exactly why this hatred may have been so expressed.

Being as we are a Messianic fellowship, a retort sometimes received when talking with Christians is, - I am not under Law, but under Grace! The inadequacy of such a response will be picked up on later within this article. Moreover, in Israel even 'keeping the Law,' may not 'cut any ice' with some there. But the issue of the divinity of the "Son of God" divides Jew from Jew, as it also did at the time of Saul [who became the apostle Paul.] People then got killed for believing in Yeshua!

Within the State of Israel, This issue remains a 'HOT potato' and for a small minority, a reason to hate those who believe that God has expressed Himself through a "Son," even though Messianic prophecies abound within their scriptures.

Therefore, one burning question there is - Can GOD have a Son? This question is examined in more detail within the article, "Concerning Jesus." You may find it very interesting.

I know the concept of the 'Trinity' is considered useful in understanding the 'functioning' of God, but it is in reality, like putting Him into a box. One of the many revealed attributes of God is that He is a God who saves. 'Salvation' in Hebrew, is Yeshua [Jesus.] Yet there is no requirement within scripture for a separate person to act on God's behalf! Isaiah 7: 13-14 stated God's intent:

Then he said, "Listen now, O house of David! Is it too slight a thing for you to try the patience of men, that you will try the patience of my God as well? "Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, a virgin will be with child and bear a son, and she will call His name ImmanuEl. **[With us– God]**

.. ..it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. [Col. 1:19-20]

Deuteronomy 6:4, is clear enough:
"Hear, O Israel! The LORD our God, the LORD is one! Therefore, Yeshua was and will be, God manifesting HIMSELF within a physical frame.

For this particular promised birth, was to be a sign from God HIMSELF! God was to sow Himself within the womb of a woman, but not by the conventional method. This is not like the stories from Greek mythology. Here God speaks:

"I will sow her for Myself in the land.
I will also have compassion on her who had not obtained compassion,
And I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!'
And they will say, 'You are my God!' " [Hosea 2:23]

The revelation throughout scripture is that of our Creator saying – I will enter this world Myself, and heal it including my wayward people - In the fulness of time.

In a nutshell, Judaism, in failing to recognise Yeshua as the Messiah, as the Supreme Expression of the ONE who made Himself manifest bearing the name – SALVATION, has missed out!

Christendom hasn't actually helped matters either, for in largely severing itself from its Hebraic roots and persecuting the Jewish people, it has put aside much that would be of help. Not least, the benefits that can still accrue to the Jewish people through their obedience; and thus, has partly incurred the animosity sometimes seen. For on the positive side, Judaism maintains, correctly in our view, that Torah, which contains God's commandments, laws, precepts and values, is valid and able to bless, even today.

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The Word of the Eternal God can be likened to an onion. The layers of revelation go deeper and deeper. Sometimes, we are even led to cry tears of repentance as The Eternal One speaks through it. For Scripture is not just printing on a page – It is Life, even that found within the 'Old Testament!'

The Psalmist was convinced of this also. Here is the first of the biblical psalms:

How blessed is the man who does not walk in the counsel of the wicked,
Nor stand in the path of sinners, nor sit in the seat of scoffers!
But his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.

He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water,
Which yields its fruit in its season and its leaf does not wither;
And in whatever he does, he prospers.

The wicked are not so, but they are like chaff which the wind drives away.
Therefore the wicked will not stand in the judgement, nor sinners in the assembly of the righteous.

For the Lord knows the way of the righteous,
But the way of the wicked will perish.

Nevertheless, within Christianity a misunderstood truth which appears within Romans, Galatians and Hebrews, has worked against us living the way of the above. What truth is that? We read:

For in it *[the gospel]* ***the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."*** [Romans 1:17]

This is not a 'New Testament' concept either, for it is stated within, and referred to from, the prophecy of Habakkuk:

"Behold, as for the proud one, His soul is not right within him;
But the righteous will live by his faith. [Habakkuk 2:4]

But in what way has this statement worked against our ***delight*** being ***in the law of the Lord,*** And the practice of ***in His law*** meditating ***day and night?*** A problem exists because so many equate faith with a leap in the dark, or wishful thinking. This however, is not the biblical portrayal of Faith. We would be better off today because of the way meanings of words change, to use the word – Trust. Hence, the righteous will live Trusting that He will Enable us to do that which is Right!

Being under Grace, means that we are granted some latitude all the time we are seeking to comply with Him in this.

You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone. [James 2:24]

So we have this premise that the righteous should live by faith, or trusting, appearing within both segments of the Bible. Within the context of Judaism, that would generally mean a trust that God would forgive them for their failings if they sincerely sought to keep His Law. However within the Christian world, the concept will generally be, that God will forgive one's failings because of what 'Jesus' did. [And so keeping the Law is no longer a necessity - 'Jesus' supposedly disposing of it when he died on the "cross."]

Hence problems can arise when Christians seek to 'convert' people, especially religious Jews. Because most of each will not fully understand what Yeshua actually did on that Roman stake!

Without getting into a heavy Bible study on the matter, please allow me to state what He did and why He could do it. Yeshua despite providing forgiveness through His death, did not cancel out every sin that we commit, past, present and future. What He did do was to remove the "curse of the Law" – *[Galatians 3:13.]* In other words the Death Penalty – Not the Law itself! Matthew 5: 17-20 is very plain on this:

"Do not think that I came to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I did not come to abolish but to fulfill. "For truly I say to you, until heaven and earth pass away, not the smallest letter or stroke shall pass from the Law until all is accomplished. "Whoever then annuls one of the least of these commandments, and teaches others to do the same, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever keeps and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.
"For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will not enter the kingdom of heaven.

Yeshua was Not a Christian, the founder of the religion that incorporates the name – Christ; He was a manifestation of the Father named SALVATION.
.. ..it was the Father's good pleasure for all the fullness to dwell in Him, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, having made peace through the blood of His cross; through Him, I say, whether things on earth or things in heaven. [Col. 1:19-20]

As such, He accomplished what a mere man could not. But getting rid of the 'Old Testament' was Not included!

"For I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. [Malachi 3:6]

The grass withers, the flower fades, But the word of our God stands forever. [Isaiah 40:8]

"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."
Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. [Rev. 22:12-14]

On the previous page, I quoted: ***For in it*** *[the gospel]* ***the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."***

Here is the context: Romans 1:16-17:
For I am not ashamed of the gospel, for it is the power of God for salvation to everyone who believes, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For in it the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, "But the righteous man shall live by faith."

….It is the <u>power of God for salvation</u> …. The Gospel, or more specifically, the saving death and resurrection Life of Yeshua, enables us to do and be what the psalmist talks about:

….***his delight is in the law of the Lord, and in His law he meditates day and night.***
He will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, Which yields its fruit in its season and
Its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers.

As part and parcel of this, we can read from Paul [Sha'ul], stating that we still have to work out our salvation, despite Yeshua's death on our behalf. I quote from Philippians 2: 12-13:

So then, my beloved, just as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who is at work in you, both to will and to work for His good pleasure.

Yet if the Christian erroneously believes it has all been Done for him or her, why would such a one seek to work it out?

God's Law is His value system. Moreover, it is our Blueprint for Living. So <u>it is no good saying – "I am not under the Law, I am under Grace" – Without understanding what that really means</u>! Being under Grace, means that we are granted life because of what Yeshua did, even though we might be somewhat singed? 1 Cor. 3:11-15 says:

For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds on the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it because it is to be revealed with fire, and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built on it remains, he will receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he will suffer loss; but <u>he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire</u>.

Some very sobering words have been spoken by our Saviour, here are some such:

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven will enter. "Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' "And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practise lawlessness.'
[Matthew 7:21-23]

You can argue all this away if you want to, but it is our conviction that doing the will of His Father is tied in with keeping His Laws, precepts, values etc., because they are Not done away with. They may not all be do-able at this time, but they have not been done away with. Moreover <u>to dismiss His instructions, is to engage in lawlessness, our religious zeal notwithstanding</u>! One day, The Eternal One through the expression of Yeshua, is returning to this world; then His Law/values will be practised again and His blessings will flow!

We have to walk according to His value system – The Torah, as best we can and as we are so enabled. The gospel message to the Jewish person who would try to do this, must include - <u>He Enables</u>! Yeshua's death replaced the animal sacrifices and makes it possible for us all to be given the wherewithal to obey what God has commanded. Indeed to walk as God required it of Abraham:

Now when Abram was ninety-nine years old, the Lord appeared to Abram and said to him, "I am God Almighty; Walk before Me, and be blameless. [Genesis 17:1]

<u>You see, all this is not just about responding to or obeying the Book. In reality, it is about obeying the God of the Book! A religion that does not encourage us to walk with Him, is of No value. It is like having an Empty jewel box!</u> Moreover, without Him we are heading <u>Backwards</u>!

Yeshua spoke to His disciples as follows: [John 12:25]

"He who loves his life loses it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it to life eternal.

"After a little while the world will no longer see Me, but you will see Me; because I live, you will live also. "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you. "He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him." [John 14:19-21]

Please note, Yeshua did not replace the commandments given before! In fact, a careful reading of His instructions will reveal to us that He takes what was previously given and applies it to our attitude, not just possible actions. All this is made very clear within the "Beatitudes" of Matthew Five and the teaching that follows them.

So are the commandments of God being obeyed at Heart level, by Jewish people? Are God's values displayed and disseminated, by Christians? And is this not an issue that is pertinent to us all? After all, who is blameless here? Some within Christendom, think that they replace Israel and the Jews in the purposes of God. But then if God's 'former' people can supposedly be 'cast off' because of unfaithfulness etc., what is our guarantee of final salvation? "Jesus" [just by Himself?] After all, in Yeshua's letters to the Seven Congregations, [Revelations 2 & 3] only to the Overcomer's, are rewards promised.

As reading through those chapters will remind us, Overcomer's, not only do the deeds of God, but also uphold and operate within, His value system – The Law! We may be no longer under, [burdened by] the Law, but that doesn't give us the option of ignoring this Blueprint for Living that has been given us. The apostle John further illustrates what it means to Overcome, in 1John 3: 1-3:

See how great a love the Father has bestowed on us, that we would be called children of God; and such we are. For this reason the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God, and it has not appeared as yet what we will be. We know that when He appears, we will be like Him, because we will see Him just as He is. And <u>everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure</u>.

Today, we are in a situation for which we are not responsible. Nevertheless something that Jude wrote, is relevant for us and also for some of you:

Beloved, while I was making every effort to write you about our common salvation, I felt the necessity to write to you appealing that you <u>contend earnestly for the faith which was once for all handed down to the saints</u>. [Jude 1: 3]

Whether we are saved as through fire, or whether we receive an Overcomer's reward, will be through the Grace of God either way. Nevertheless, it seems we have some scope here?

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Regrettably, much of the God given pre-"New Testament" 'baby' that would help us, has been thrown out along with the 'bath-water,' [religious practice] over the centuries.

Many Christians have rightly spoken about the great debt that Christianity owes the Jews, for the Bible and Jesus. Nevertheless and most regrettably, other practitioners of 'Christianity' have not always expressed gratitude to the Jewish people. Neither can it be said, that all, have His Laws in their inward parts.

Moreover, many presentations of "Jesus," are not Good News. Nor are they acceptable! For it is too often like, - "Accept Jesus - Forget Moses – Eat Pork!" Whereas the message should be, "Obey the commandments as given through Moses. As, you trust in Yeshua, He will enable you."

As a Messianic congregation, our vision and calling has become different from that of most churches. To the extent that Christians may view us with suspicion, and certain religious Jews would wrongly regard as a particularly obnoxious bunch of 'Christian' missionaries. Yet however, we believe that we can exist as a bridge between the "born-again" Christian and the People that they are now connected to. I refer here to Ephesians chapter 2, to which you could turn.

In this, it says that He [Yeshua,] is our peace. Now, if He is our Peace! Certain existing problems that lie between many, should not be there. Yet, antagonism comes from concepts previously mentioned, and such as the following:

"The New Testament does not designate a day of worship, so we are free to choose our own, preferring to remember the 'day of the Resurrection' as a Christian Sabbath!"

[Forgetting, that Sunday is spelt - SUNday, not SONday.]

The abandonment of the festivals that God gave as <u>His</u>, and the incorporation of pagan ones.

Moreover, seen in the light of Yeshua's apparent lack of action with regards to ancient Rome, and more recent events, why should Jews consider Christian affirmations of "Jesus" highly, or even own Him as one of their own? To make it worse, most of His followers don't even use His given name - Yeshua, or talk about Him, using it!

Over the centuries, Jewish thought and practice, has changed because of horrendous persecution and of course, because of the loss of the Temple.

<u>Additionally, the promised 'Day of the LORD,' has not yet come</u>!

There are difficult issues to be resolved therefore, and correct lifestyles to be established.

And these are difficult times! Because of what HaSatan is, he tries to prevent us living in obedience to God's requirements. We are apparently called by some, legalistic! Nevertheless, the question must be asked – Is it legalistic to love righteousness – God's way, and to hate iniquity? For that is the way of Yeshua!

The Law was/is inadequate of itself when concerned with the issue of Making us righteous, but it remains righteous itself. So we rely on Yeshua, the power of His Blood, and the leading of the Holy Spirit [the Ruach HaKodesh,] as we seek to remain in alignment with Torah. Because as Amos says: "How can two walk together, unless they agree?" [Amos 3: 3]

King David <u>was in agreement</u>, and reminds us that:

The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.
The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart.
The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.
The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgements of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.
More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold:
sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.
Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward. [Psalm 19: 7-11]

It may be legalistic to do 'religious stuff'. Nevertheless, can it be legalistic if we obey instructions from Torah, things that have Not been scrapped, things which are from God, - God's Stuff, if we are doing them with a loving heart? A 'Circumcised' heart? Yet Christendom says, and even real Christians due to a lack of understanding can also say, we are just being legalistic!

Yet, if God has said that man shall not live by bread alone but by His word, *[Deuteronomy 8: 3]* we should presume He means it. Regrettably, much of the Church fails to demonstrate convincingly that she believes this. We have Within much of the Church, an acceptance of sinful practices that were once condemned. What is worse, we now have "believers" walking around who without true repentance, say: "It's all covered by Grace."

We have virtually forgotten that God has expressed to us that He has zero tolerance of sin. We cannot presume, *[though many seem to,]* on God's forgiveness. As a result of our fudging, people now largely reject the concepts of sin and guilt. To talk about such things is to create a "potentially negative inner state" within people. And to so do, is considered very unhelpful!

Yet God's Grace didn't come cheap and we remind ourselves of this every week around the Lord's Table. We are hopefully aware of what happens to branches that don't produce fruit. Therefore, we remember that we are told: ***Remain in Me, and I will remain in you. -*** *From John 15*

Yeshua came out of His testing with a victory, after 40 days of living in a wilderness. We are still in our individual times of testing. Let's hope it doesn't take us 40 years to establish a walk with God wherein we learn that we cannot live by bread alone.

Sha'ul said to Timothy:

You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them, and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus. All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; so that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work. [2 Tim. 3: 14-17]

Be diligent to present yourself approved to God as a workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth. [2 Tim. 2:15]

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I, the Lord, do not change; therefore you, O sons of Jacob, are not consumed. [Malachi 3:6]

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"Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done. "I am the Alpha and the Omega, the first and the last, the beginning and the end."
Blessed are those who wash their robes, so that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter by the gates into the city. [Rev. 22:12-14]

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Scriptures are from the New American Standard Bible, and are used with thanks.