

OIM UPDATE

October 2012

Between the end of September and beginning of October this year, the annual Fall high holidays of the Lord were commemorated by many thousands of Messianic people across the world. This included Jewish Believers in Yeshua, and it also included an expanding number of non-Jewish Believers, who have been embracing their Hebraic Roots. Our family has been among those non-Jewish Believers who have become a part of the Messianic movement, since our introduction to this unique faith community in 1995. It has been a great joy for our family to be following the ways of God more fully, as we understand the significance of *Rosh HaShanah/Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, Sukkot, Shemini Atzeret, Simchat Torah*, and their many associated customs and traditions. *Our walk with Yeshua the Messiah has truly been enriched.* And, if we are truly being conformed to His image, then participating in the appointed times, is certainly something all Believers should consider and commit themselves to be doing!

In preparation for *Rosh HaShanah/Yom Teruah*, during the preceding month of Elul and in anticipation of the Ten Days of Awe leading up to *Yom Kippur*, I was diligently searching the Scriptures for answers to a thought provoking question that keeps coming to mind: "Why did the Israelites bury Joseph's bones in Shechem?" For a number of weeks, I have been led to conduct intensive word studies on bones, gates, trees, altars, Shechem, Samaria, Mount Gerizim, Mount Ebal, and a variety of related terms, places, and people found in the ancient texts. Quite frankly, the research has been extremely exhilarating, and in time it will hopefully bear some fruit, perhaps in an article of far too much length for this newsletter.

One morning, as I read and perused the Book of Job, I was struck by the sin of pride, and how it can subtly manifest itself in even the most righteous of people seeking the Holy One of Israel. For without much debate, Job was and is considered one of the most righteous, God-fearing followers of the Almighty. A study of pride ensued, which prompted me to write this month's lead article entitled, "**Spiritual Pride: A Messianic Dilemma.**" This deals with some of the entrapments which can plague our community of faith, primarily because it appears we are attempting to adhere better to the commandments of God and are in tune with His plan more completely.

Hopefully this month, we had the opportunity to visit some of you in person, as Margaret and I took some time to look for a new home in the Dallas area. Your continued prayers for the sale of our current home in Kissimmee, Florida are still desired, so that our expected house sale and following move and transition back to the Lone Star State will be seamless.

We are grateful for those of you who appreciate the key work that **Outreach Israel** and **TNN Online** continue to do, by financially supporting the **Theological Defense Trust** and **Prison Outreach Ministry**. Your faithful and heartfelt actions to invest in our efforts to bring Biblically sound, loving, written materials to the Messianic community of faith, *is vitally important.* The maturation we believe

that the Lord desires for today's Messianic people is paramount to fulfilling His mission for salvation history. This past year has been most critical for the future, as we have currently readied twenty-six paperback and eBook titles, with various others in their final stages of completion, as well as some new things on the drawing board. We joyfully recognize that the work of the ministry is never completed—as it seems that there is always something to do!

May the Holy One continue to bless you mightily, as you partner both prayerfully and financially with our ministry efforts!

Advancing His Kingdom, until the restoration of all things...

Mark Huey

SPIRITUAL PRIDE

a Messianic dilemma

by Mark Huey

For various reasons, despite spiritual and endemic **human pride** being one of the most discussed negative and natural characteristics of people in the Holy Scriptures—there is a tendency for people to avoid the subject, perhaps because it ventures far too close to revealing what truly can, and often does, reside in the deceiving hearts of human beings (Jeremiah 17:9). Consequently, as the Fall high holidays of the Lord ensue and come to a conclusion this month, a fair assessment of how pride, arrogance, and conceit can and do unsuspectingly manifest—in so many undetected ways, just might be beneficial to examine—given our widely expanding Messianic faith community, and especially those who are participating more knowledgeably in these Biblical commemorations for the first few times.

I have noticed how it is not just the novice attendees to convocations of the appointed times, who need to consider the wily, God-opposing symptoms, and spiritually damaging consequences of prideful thoughts and behavior (i.e., Proverbs 3:34; 16:5, 18; Psalm 138:6). There are also many seasoned Messianic Believers I have encountered, who should have already matured beyond many of the elementary principles of the oracles of God (Hebrews 5:12)—who tend to take “pride” in always being “right” about when, how, and where various gatherings should be conducted. After all, the presence of a spiritual “know-it-all” pride has been around a long time. James addressed it in his epistle, as he summarized some of the quarreling and conflicting behavior due to wrong motives among the brethren. He emphasized the need for Messiah followers to humbly submit and draw near to God, avoiding the human proclivity to judge others:

“What is the source of quarrels and conflicts among you? Is not the source your pleasures that wage war in your members? You lust and do not have; so you commit murder. You are envious and cannot obtain; so you fight and quarrel. You do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask with wrong motives, so that you may spend it on your pleasures. You adulteresses, do you not know that friendship with the world is hostility toward God? Therefore whoever wishes to be a friend of the world makes himself an enemy of God. Or do you think that the Scripture speaks to no purpose: ‘He jealously desires the Spirit which He has made to dwell in us’? But He gives a greater grace. Therefore it says, ‘GOD IS OPPOSED TO THE PROUD, BUT GIVES GRACE TO THE HUMBLE [Proverbs 3:34, LXX].’ Submit therefore to God. Resist the devil and he will flee from you. Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded. Be miserable and mourn and weep; let your laughter be turned into mourning and your joy to gloom. Humble yourselves in the presence of the Lord, and He will exalt you. Do not speak against one another, brethren. He who speaks against a brother or judges his brother, speaks against the law and judges the law; but if you judge the law, you are not a doer of the law but a judge of it. There is *only* one Lawgiver and Judge, the One who is able to save and to destroy; but who are you who judge your neighbor?” (James 4:1-12).

In considering this instructional admonition, James stated that God earnestly desires His Spirit to dwell in His own, who refuse to seek friendship with the world, an obvious negative course that will result in enmity with God and a bevy of unanswered prayers and requests. Those who do such things are liable to arrogant and superior thinking. As I see it, those who are not indwelt by God’s Spirit, and may be presumed followers of Yeshua the Messiah—can certainly include those who are studying God’s Torah and attempting to

fulfill many of its commands. These people may be observing the weekly *Shabbat* and appointed times, eat kosher, and concern themselves with other outward practices—but internally the way they think and act are entirely contrary to the intention of God. *They have a definite conflict between their carnal nature and things of the Spirit*, and are not as useful for His Kingdom as they should be. The overwhelming weight of Scripture indicates that the Holy Spirit will *only* lead, if a person humbly chooses to submit to God's will—in drawing near to Him through a cleansing of hands, purifying of heart, and a single-minded desire to be a useful vessel walking in the power of His Spirit (Psalm 24:3-6; Romans 8:1-14).

While the Holy Scriptures from Genesis to Revelation are replete with examples of how pride is abhorred and dealt with by the Lord, since this article addresses the challenges of various proud behavior and attitudes in the Messianic community of faith, perhaps turning first to a Torah passage will set the stage for further consideration. After all, one of the hallmarks of observing a Messianic lifestyle is being committed to studying and considering the foundational messages contained in Moses' Teaching. Hence, recorded in Deuteronomy 9, as the Ancient Israelites were on the plains of Moab preparing to conquer the Promised Land toward the end of their forty-year sojourn—Moses forcefully reminded the people that it was *not* their own righteousness which would allow them to possess it, but rather the promised word of the Lord:

“Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard *it said*, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak?’ Know therefore today that it is the LORD your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the LORD has spoken to you. **Do not say in your heart when the LORD your God has driven them out before you, ‘Because of my righteousness the LORD has brought me in to possess this land,’ but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD is dispossessing them before you. It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but *it is* because of the wickedness of these nations *that* the LORD your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the LORD swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Know, then, *it is* not because of your righteousness *that* the LORD your God is giving you this good land to possess, for you are a stubborn people”** (Deuteronomy 9:1-6).

Moses made it abundantly clear that it was due to the wickedness of the nations occupying Canaan, coupled with the promises that the Lord made to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—that He would give the Land to Israel to possess. And, he notably had to remind his listeners that they were a stubborn people.

In reading the balance of Deuteronomy 9, one finds a reiteration of how this rebellious people provoked the Lord almost to their own destruction, without the intercession of Moses' pleas. Witnessed here is a profound warning to the Ancient Israelites—and by extension to all followers of the Holy One of Israel today—that the reception of God's blessings, and even simply the understanding to follow His ways, is never due to a personal righteousness that tends to foster pride, **but it is always the result of His providential sovereign will.**

The fact that today's Believers in Yeshua are those who have been born from above, and are to be led by the Spirit into a fuller understanding that the whole counsel of God from Genesis to Revelation, is merely God's unmerited favor upon people. Messianic Believers should never be caught arrogantly criticizing or putting down others, especially their evangelical Christian brothers and sisters—because their (superior) knowledge has resulted in following various instructions, in contrast to others who are not presently fol-

lowing such things. This is something which widely manifests itself during the annual appointed times, as many Christians are berated by Messianics for not participating in the Biblical feasts, or worse, are unfairly accused of being involved in some sort of paganism. It may never even occur to such Messianic people, because of their arrogance, that they themselves might have various shortcomings and limitations, given how they observe the Biblical holidays. For, it is only when the Messiah finally returns, and rules and reigns from Jerusalem, that He will then let everyone know what the absolute proper way is to commemorate not only the feasts, but also how to appropriately walk in all His ways. But because people tend to be blinded by the bright lights of human pride—thinking that they know best—this spiritually debilitating and arrogant attitude, must first be identified before a solution can even be considered.

The widespread challenge which we are encountering has been present ever since the creation of man, who was endowed with a freewill to exercise God-given talents and abilities, while being commissioned to multiply and exercise dominion over the Earth (Genesis 1:28-30). Unfortunately present has also been a widescale inclination for people to conclude that it is only by their *own* innate power, strength, ingenuity, foresight, or cleverness—that various accomplishments are reached. Such a limited, mortal way of thinking about successes and triumphs, in whatever realm, logically leads to a sense of achievement which can result in prideful attitudes. The wisdom imparted by the Book of Proverbs defines a major difference between those who rely upon their own prideful strength leading to destruction—versus those who humbly commit their works to the Lord, recognizing that only by His grace will their plans be established. Note in this proverb the emphasis on fear and trust in the Lord is seen throughout:

“The plans of the heart belong to man, but the answer of the tongue is from the LORD. All the ways of a man are clean in his own sight, but the LORD weighs the motives. Commit your works to the LORD and your plans will be established. The LORD has made everything for its own purpose, even the wicked for the day of evil. **Everyone who is proud in heart is an abomination to the LORD; assuredly, he will not be unpunished. By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil.** When a man's ways are pleasing to the LORD, He makes even his enemies to be at peace with him. Better is a little with righteousness than great income with injustice. **The mind of man plans his way, but the LORD directs his steps.** A divine decision is in the lips of the king; his mouth should not err in judgment. A just balance and scales belong to the LORD; all the weights of the bag are His concern. It is an abomination for kings to commit wicked acts, for a throne is established on righteousness. Righteous lips are the delight of kings, and he who speaks right is loved. The fury of a king is *like* messengers of death, but a wise man will appease it. In the light of a king's face is life, and his favor is like a cloud with the spring rain. How much better it is to get wisdom than gold! And to get understanding is to be chosen above silver. The highway of the upright is to depart from evil; he who watches his way preserves his life. **Pride goes before destruction, and a haughty spirit before stumbling.** It is better to be humble in spirit with the lowly than to divide the spoil with the proud. He who gives attention to the word will find good, and blessed is he who trusts in the LORD” (Proverbs 16:1-20).

When one couples the wisdom imparted in this proverb with other wisdom proverbs, the solution to avoiding or at least combating the tendency for pride to bubble up in the human heart, is a healthy fear of the Lord:

“By lovingkindness and truth iniquity is atoned for, and by the fear of the LORD one keeps away from evil” (Proverbs 16:6).

“Do not reprove a scoffer, or he will hate you, reprove a wise man and he will love you. Give *instruction* to a wise man and he will be still wiser, teach a righteous man and he will increase *his* learning. **The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom, and the knowledge of the Holy One is understanding.** For by me your days will be multiplied, and years of life will be added to you. If you are wise, you are wise for yourself, and if you scoff, you alone will bear it” (Proverbs 9:8-12).

Notice that the fear of the Lord is not only to keep away evil, but that it is the beginning of wisdom leading to a genuine knowledge of the Holy One, which brings understanding. So, if a person knows by faith and simple observation of the created order that there truly is a God, the impetus to know Him should be present without reservation. He or she should naturally immerse themselves in the truth of the Word, gaining wisdom by understanding the lovingkindness of the Almighty and His ways. This will unsurprisingly lead people to revere or fear God more through time, and experience Him in many different ways. The level of genuine fear of the Lord will overcome any spiritual pride which might be developing in a person’s heart. However, although the Scriptures implore God’s people to fear Him over and over again—a genuine fear of the Lord is often offset by pride and the human inclination for individuals to think more highly of themselves (Romans 12:3). This can even be true of born again Believers who have been granted the presence of God’s Spirit, and have been imparted with various spiritual gifts. The Apostle Paul was one who admonished ancient Believers to present themselves as living, holy, sacrifice, not thinking as the world, demonstrating themselves in service one toward another:

“Therefore I urge you, brethren, by the mercies of God, to present your bodies a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, *which is* your spiritual service of worship. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove what the will of God is, that which is good and acceptable and perfect. For through the grace given to me I say to everyone among you **not to think more highly of himself than he ought to think;** but to think so as to have sound judgment, as God has allotted to each a measure of faith” (Romans 12:1-3).

In Romans ch. 12, Paul reminded his ancient readers that everyone is allotted a measure of faith, and he then proceeded to list some of the spiritual gifts present among them, and issues some sound advice on how to operate in the giftings which have been given to different members of the Body of Messiah. In light of the admonition found in James considered earlier, note that with all of the different gifts functioning properly, Paul continued like James to remind his fellow Believers about the imperative to maintain humility when dealing with others. In fact, rather than becoming wise in one’s own estimation, wanting to always be “right”—it is far more beneficial and important to maximize the spiritual functions of the Body, being at peace with all, by not engaging in some of the evil machinations which lead to grumbling and complaining (cf. James 4:1):

“For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Messiah, and individually members one of another. Since we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us, *each of us is to exercise them accordingly:* if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness. *Let love be* without hypocrisy. Abhor what is evil; cling to what is good. **Be devoted to one another in brotherly love; give preference to one another in honor; not lagging behind in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, persevering in tribulation, devoted to prayer, contributing to the needs of the saints, practicing hospitality. Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse. Rejoice with those who rejoice, and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind to-**

ward one another; do not be haughty in mind, but associate with the lowly. Do not be wise in your own estimation. Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, 'VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY [Leviticus 19:18].' says the Lord. **'BUT IF YOUR ENEMY IS HUNGRY, FEED HIM, AND IF HE IS THIRSTY, GIVE HIM A DRINK; FOR IN SO DOING YOU WILL HEAP BURNING COALS ON HIS HEAD [Proverbs 25:21-22].'** **Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good"** (Romans 12:4-21).

If the Body of Messiah today could really take these words of Paul to heart—and be devoted to one another in brotherly love, giving preference to one another in honor, not lagging behind in diligence, be fervent in spirit, serve the Lord, rejoice in hope, persevere in tribulation, be devoted to prayer, contribute to the needs of the saints, and practice hospitality—there would be very little, if any, possibility of spiritual pride arising. Imagine people blessing rather than cursing those who persecute them, or not paying back evil for evil to anyone, and respect what is right in their human interactions. By truly fearing the Lord and knowing His ways, and realizing that He declares, "VENGEANCE IS MINE, I WILL REPAY"—an entire host of problems would be widely eliminated—and the controversies, strife, division, and discord which are a byproduct of spiritual pride, could be minimized.

So, upon witnessing many of the superfluous issues which get debated without resolution, and many of the controversies (cf. Titus 3:9) that foster havoc in the Messianic community of faith—is it possible that some "religious" spirits have entered into the camp, which need to be tested by the Word (1 John 4:1)? An ancient pattern from the First Century was an attempt by some legalistic people to burden recent non-Jewish Believers, ordering them to be circumcised and keep the Law to be saved (Acts 15:1, 5)—and likely via their own faulty interpretation at that. The Apostle Peter instead directed how all people were saved by the grace of Yeshua:

"And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Yeshua, in the same way as they also are" (Acts 15:8-11).

Peter's emphasis was on being saved by the grace of Yeshua, and walking in the knowledge of the Holy One. While later Apostolic writings further clarified the purposes of the Torah down through salvation history—followers of the Messiah need to humbly confess and realize that above all, the redemption accomplished by the blood sacrifice of Yeshua, is the most critical understanding to receive. This acknowledgement should be so overwhelming, that a willful desire to gratefully love and serve Him with all of one's heart, mind, soul, and strength will come. But lamentably, the incidence of prideful behavior is far too rampant among (claiming) Believers from all persuasions. Regarding the Messianic community of faith, with a return on the part of many to properly remembering Seventh-day Sabbath and the appointed times—not to mention much of the outward "gear" that is a part of the Hebrew or Jewish Roots movement—the tendency for many to become arrogant, surfaces in various visible ways, which are apparent to any astute observers.

Rather than going into details, simply consider the appropriate epitome of pride being dealt with. Spiritual pride is something that tends to be so cleverly concealed, that the entire Book of Job was sovereignly composed by the Lord, to reveal the insidious nature of pride, and how it often takes severe consequences to unearth what is buried deep in the hearts of people. If you take the time to read the revealing account of Job's trials and life experiences, you should discover that the primary motivation for the Lord permitting Satan to sift Job, was to allow Job to ultimately confess his sin of pride and repent of it.

Notice in the following selection from the book, the statements of Job to God, which indicate his arrogant attitude about all of his human accomplishments:

“Then Job answered, ‘In truth I know that this is so; but how can a man be in the right before God? **If one wished to dispute with Him**, he could not answer Him once in a thousand *times*. Wise in heart and mighty in strength, who has defied Him without harm? *It is God* who removes the mountains, they know not *how*, when He overturns them in His anger; who shakes the earth out of its place, and its pillars tremble; who commands the sun not to shine, and sets a seal upon the stars; who alone stretches out the heavens and tramples down the waves of the sea; who makes the Bear, Orion and the Pleiades, and the chambers of the south; who does great things, unfathomable, and wondrous works without number. Were He to pass by me, I would not see Him; were He to move past *me*, I would not perceive Him. Were He to snatch away, who could restrain Him? Who could say to Him, ‘What are You doing?’ God will not turn back His anger; beneath Him crouch the helpers of Rahab. **How then can I answer Him, and choose my words before Him? For though I were right, I could not answer; I would have to implore the mercy of my judge.** If I called and He answered me, I could not believe that He was listening to my voice. For He bruises me with a tempest and multiplies my wounds without cause. He will not allow me to get my breath, but saturates me with bitterness. *If it is a matter of power*, behold, *He is* the strong one! And *if it is a matter of justice*, who can summon Him? **Though I am righteous, my mouth will condemn me; though I am guiltless, He will declare me guilty. I am guiltless; I do not take notice of myself; I despise my life.** It is *all one*; therefore I say, ‘He destroys the guiltless and the wicked.’ If the scourge kills suddenly, He mocks the despair of the innocent. The earth is given into the hand of the wicked; He covers the faces of its judges. *If it is not He*, then who is it?” (Job 9:1-24).

Although Job acknowledged the awesome power of God, present is also the not-so-subtle statement that in Job’s own heart, he actually believed that he was guiltless and righteous before the Holy One. In his despair, he even challenged what the Lord was allowing to occur in his life, which did not get fully resolved until much later in the book, after much counsel, and ultimately the Lord forcefully speaking to him:

“**Then the LORD said to Job, ‘Will the faultfinder contend with the Almighty? Let him who reproves God answer it.’** Then Job answered the LORD and said, ‘Behold, I am insignificant; what can I reply to You? I lay my hand on my mouth. Once I have spoken, and I will not answer; even twice, and I will add nothing more.’ Then the LORD answered Job out of the storm and said, ‘**Now gird up your loins like a man; I will ask you, and you instruct Me. Will you really annul My judgment? Will you condemn Me that you may be justified? Or do you have an arm like God, and can you thunder with a voice like His? Adorn yourself with eminence and dignity, and clothe yourself with honor and majesty. Pour out the overflowings of your anger, and look on everyone who is proud, and make him low. Look on everyone who is proud, and humble him, and tread down the wicked where they stand. Hide them in the dust together; bind them in the hidden *place*.** Then I will also confess to you, that your own right hand can save you” (Job 40:1-14).

After having read the words of Job found in Job chs. 29-32, the overwhelming righteousness of this “good” man, and all of his good works, confirms that the Holy One was not overly concerned about the physical trials that He allowed Satan to do to him (Job ch. 1-2). So as the Lord prepared to later describe the pride of Behemoth and Leviathan, He facetiously asked Job some rhetorical questions, which were obviously meant for Job to dwell on his own pride issues. Thankfully, when one finally gets toward the end of Job, after the Lord spoke to him about who He truly is and what He has done, Job finally confessed and repented of this hidden sin in his heart. Job’s circumstances reverted back to be

blessed by the Almighty, rather than enduring more heartbreaks:

“Then Job answered the LORD and said, ‘I know that You can do all things, and that no purpose of Yours can be thwarted. Who is this that hides counsel without knowledge? Therefore I have declared that which I did not understand, things too wonderful for me, which I did not know. ‘Hear, now, and I will speak; I will ask You, and You instruct me.’ I have heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now my eye sees You; therefore I retract, and I repent in dust and ashes” (Job 42:1-6).

Job’s reaction to all of the advice he had received, as well as the severe, revealing word of the Lord Himself, was to finally admit that he had thought extremely highly of himself and his good works, and did not deserve the trials he was enduring. But in comparing himself to the Almighty and his limited understanding of all that he was unaware of, Job was humbled to the point where he ultimately confessed and repented of his sin of pride—understanding that a genuine fear of the Lord’s omniscient ways to deal with it was by His grace. Hence, reading and contemplating the Book of Job are highly recommended for each of us—because if spiritual pride is welling up in our hearts, this example of how the Holy One dealt with pride should usher in a genuine fear of the Lord, the beginning of wisdom (Proverbs 9:10).

Spiritual pride is ugly, and often bereft with “religious” spirits which masquerade as the Holy Spirit. Possessing wisdom in discerning the difference between what is of God, and what is counterfeit, is critical. The Apostle John instructs Believers to “test the spirits,” to overcome the deceiving spirits (1 John 4:1), because greater is He who is in us than he who is in the world (1 John 4:4). In Ecclesiastes, Qohelet succinctly summarized what God’s people should be doing, if their lives are going to be useful:

“In addition to being a wise man, the Preacher also taught the people knowledge; and he pondered, searched out and arranged many proverbs. The Preacher sought to find delightful words and to write words of truth correctly. The words of wise men are like goads, and masters of *these* collections are like well-driven nails; they are given by one Shepherd. But beyond this, my son, be warned: the writing of many books is endless, and excessive devotion to books is wearying to the body. The conclusion, when all has been heard, is: fear God and keep His commandments, because this *applies* to every person. For God will bring every act to judgment, everything which is hidden, whether it is good or evil” (Ecclesiastes 12:9-14).

Qohelet concluded that genuinely fearing God and keeping His commandments are the ultimate objectives of living a life which is pleasing to Him. Of course, to accomplish those goals, one must have faith in what the Holy One has declared down through the ages through His chosen vessels, because as Scripture states in many different ways, “without faith, it is impossible to please God” (Hebrews 11:6), with the juxtaposition that “faith without works is dead” (James 2:18-26). For many people, sorting out the delicate relationship between faith, works, and living properly, in conjunction with God’s will, is a full time occupation. *For many of us, it requires daily perseverance, and submitting ourselves in prayer and meditation before the Lord.*

My fellow Messianic Believers, be warned about this insipient dilemma! If spiritual self-righteousness has slipped into your heart, it must be dealt with through confession and repentance, by believing by faith in God’s Holy Word. In so doing, hopefully what the Father has intended for the Messianic community to accomplish for His Kingdom will be done, as the Messianic restoration of all things, led by the Holy Spirit, humbly proceeds to accomplish the sovereign will of the Holy One of Israel!