

ONE TORAH FOR ALL

Zerubbabel ben Emunah
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Factions Among Us

Qorintyah Aleph (1st Corinthians) 1:12-13

12 Now this I mean, that each one of you says, "I am of Shaul"; or "I am of Apollo"; or "I am of Kepha"; or "I am of Mashiach".

13 Is Mashiach divided? Was Shaul crucified for you? Or were you immersed into the name of Shaul?

Our Creator created this world as a place for His bride Israel to dwell. As Shaul so succinctly puts it, there is only one body of Mashiach.

Ephesians 4:4

There is one body, and one Spirit, even as also you were called in one hope of your calling;

However, Satan has from the beginning done everything that he could to destroy the bride of Mashiach. Part of his plan was to divide and conquer. This happened after king Sh'lomo (Solomon) died and his son R'chav'am (Rehoboam) became king in his place. This king acted with foolishness, and as a result the kingdom of Israel was split into two houses, Yehudah and Israel (AKA the house of Ephrayim). After this division took place, Satan entered the picture and caused them to be in animosity with one another. They have been at war with, and killing one another since that time.

One of the purposes of Mashiach Yeshua coming was to reunite these two houses back into one kingdom.

Ephesians 2:16

and might reconcile them both in one body unto Elohim through the cross, having slain the enmity thereby.

What Shaul is describing here is that the two houses, Yehudah (Judah) and Ephrayim, needed to be brought back together because Mashiach put to death the animosity between these two

fighting factions so that this could happen. However, it has not yet happened in reality. In fact, what has happened has been the further fracturing of the bride of Mashiach.

As we see in our opening passage, just as it was in Shaul's day so it is in our day. People are still following men. Rather than all following Mashiach Yeshua, His followers are divided into factions, with one group following one man, and others following another man, and still others following a different man; and on and on it goes.

I remember several years ago applying for the position as the head rabbi of a congregation. This congregation followed the teachings of a certain man. I knew right away that this was not the right place for me. They were simply not open to what Scripture said unless this other man was teaching it. All of us have our imperfections and none of us have it completely figured out. This is why we need to be so very careful not to follow man, but to follow Mashiach Yeshua, while walking side by side. You do not need to follow a man and I do not need people following me or what I teach. My desire is to teach you how to follow our Master in a manner that is wholly pleasing to Him. We must do this without being divided into factions as we have been in the past and continue to be to this day.

Ma'aseh (Acts) 6:1

Now in these days, when the number of the disciples was multiplying, there arose a murmuring of the Hellenistic Jews against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministrations.

For the purposes of this study it does not really matter who these two groups were. What we need to see, is that from the time of Mashiach more factions began to arise and cause division in the body of Mashiach. This is not pleasing to our heavenly Father as these factions are a work of the flesh and not of His Ruach (Spirit).

Galatians 5:19-21

19 Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these: fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness,

20 idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousies, wraths, factions, divisions, parties,

21 envying, drunkenness, reveling, and such like; of which I forewarn you, even as I did forewarn you, that they who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of Elohim.

From the first century to the fourth the factions in the body of Mashiach split into two main groups: Christians and Netzarim (Nazarenes), with the Christian group actually working to annihilate the Netzarim; and they nearly did so, driving the few Netzarim underground into hiding. There were certainly more factions than this during that time, but these two were the main ones.

Then the Christian group further fragmented during the Reformation into Protestants and Catholics. Both of these groups have continued to fracture into literally thousands of denominations. In these last two thousand years the number of factions has multiplied. And as

we observe the body of Mashiach today as we come into the latter days, the number of those factions is continuing to increase.

Now with the Hebrew Roots movement in full swing, this fracturing is continuing to happen and has even intensified as the perception of many is that the return of Mashiach is near and the desire to be in the “right” group has intensified. So the fighting among groups and individuals has increased and intensified as groups and leaders battle for followers and financial support.

Sadly, this desire of His people who He is calling to know and to do the truth is used by unscrupulous men to manipulate people into following them and giving them financial support. Many so-called leaders today in this movement are actually fostering the spirit of factions among us.

Qorintyah Bet (2nd Corinthians) 12:20

For I fear, lest by any means, when I come, I should find you not such as I would, and should myself be found of you such as ye would not; lest by any means there should be strife, jealousy, wraths, factions, backbiting, whisperings, swellings, tumults;

Now the context of this passage is that Shaul is admonishing those in Qorintyah that they should be ashamed of acting the way they were acting, because if he should come to visit them, would they really want Shaul to find them in such a condition as he describes in the above passage? No, of course not!

Let us apply this passage in a slightly different way as well, not doing the passage any harm at all, but actually applying it at a much deeper level. Would there be any one among us who would want to be found acting as one being described in the above passage at the coming of Mashiach Yeshua? No, of course not! Then don't you think that it is time to lay down the animosity between brothers and sisters and extend the love of Mashiach to all brothers and sisters regardless of what labels have been attached to them? Sometimes those labels are wrongly attached by others or even by us. Labels simply serve as a means to further divide us.

It is a sad note that those who attack us most are not those of the world; but rather, those attacks often come from those who claim to follow Mashiach by whatever name or label they use. One person even had a bumper sticker made for his car proclaiming this sad state of affairs.

God protect me from your followers

Now we may chuckle at this, but the truth is that this is not really all that funny. And the reason that it is not really funny is that there is way too much truth contained in this bumper sticker. The person who had this bumper sticker made and then put on his car was insightful and honest enough to admit that there is way too much fighting going on among the followers of Mashiach.

Yochanan (John) 13:35

“By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you have love one to another.”

Brothers and sisters in Mashiach, it is not about being right and proving it and forcing that personal belief on others! There is way too much of this going on today. When was the last time that you demonstrated the love of Mashiach Yeshua to someone with whom you disagreed?

Qorintyah Aleph (1st Corinthians) 11:17-19

17 But in giving you this charge, I do not praise you, because you come together not for the better but for the worse.

18 For first of all, when you come together in the assembly, I hear that divisions exist among you; and I partly believe it.

19 For there must be also factions among you, so that they that are approved may be made manifest among you.

One of the purposes that YHWH has in allowing these factions to exist at present in His body is so that He can see, as well as to show to all others, who really are His followers and who are those who are only pretenders. The trials and pressures of life will cause whatever is inside of a man to manifest itself for all to see, whether that be good or bad. Then that person has a decision to make as to what he will do with it if what is being manifest is not to the honor of YHWH our Elohim. He can ask YHWH to help him change his actions or he can reason it away and attempt to justify his actions to himself and others. If a person chooses to do the latter, then that which is manifested as not bringing glory and honor to YHWH our Elohim will grow and become worse and worse until it completely consumes the person.

Each one of us should ask ourselves the question: “What do my actions say about me?”

Gilyana (Revelation) 22:11

He that is unrighteous, let him do unrighteousness still; and he that is filthy, let him be made filthy still; and he that is righteous, let him do righteousness still; and he that is holy, let him be made holy still.

The path one chooses to walk will mold a person more and more as he travels that path. If it is the path of righteousness, then such a person will become more and more righteous. However, if a person chooses to walk the path of unrighteousness, then he will become more and more unrighteous the further he walks on that path. Unrighteousness is equivalent to lawlessness. Lawlessness is the same as Torahlessness.

Romans 6:16

Do you not know that to whom you present yourselves as servants unto obedience, his servants you are whom you obey; whether of sin unto death, or of obedience unto righteousness?

Whatever one chooses to obey, not only is that his master, but he will become like his master as well.

Matithyah (Matthew) 10:25

“It is enough for the disciple to be as his teacher, and the servant as his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebub, how much more they of his household!”

As a person becomes the path that he chooses to walk, these things will naturally be made manifest for all to see. So if one is sowing the seeds of factions and divisions, then he too will experience this as a result of one reaping what he sows.

Matithyah (Matthew) 12:34

“You offspring of vipers, how can you, being evil, speak good things? For out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks.”

I know, I know, there are those who will want to argue and bring up that sometimes love needs to be tough. While this is true, that tough love still must be done in love, not out of frustration or anger. If it is done from frustration or anger, then it will not have the desired effect, for the person on the receiving end will know without any doubts that you are frustrated and angry with them and that person's reaction will be anything but what is desired, ending in a division between brothers.

Now the person who was being tough will often throw up his hands and depart stating that he did what he could but the other person would not receive it. But in all honesty, how could that person receive it when the other resorts to character assassination and name calling? Honestly, would you receive such words from another? And if it is the other person who resorts to such things and you respond in like kind, of what value is that? How is that showing the love of Mashiach?

Matithyah (Matthew) 5:43-48

43 “You have heard that it was said,

You shall love your neighbor, and hate your enemy;

44 but I say to you, love your enemies, and pray for them that persecute you;

45 that you may be sons of your Father who is in heaven; for He makes His sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the just and the unjust.

46 For if you love them that love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the publicans do the same?

47 And if you salute your brethren only, what do you do more than others? Do not even the Gentiles do the same?

48 Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.”

Mashiach Yeshua has called us to walk a higher path than what the world walks. If we allow them to pull us down to their level of interaction, then what more are we doing than they? Are we not called to be like Mashiach? To be sure!

Matithyah (Matthew) 7:12

“All things therefore whatsoever you would that men should do unto you, even so you do also unto them; for this is the Torah and the prophets.”

Is it any wonder that there are such factions among His people considering the way that they are treating one another? Brothers and sisters, it is truly shameful. Now there are two things in particular that need to be brought to our attention that does nothing but further divide us. One of those things is what you as an individual believe. The second is the declaring during debate that the Ruach Qodesh (Holy Spirit) is our Teacher. At first, one may not see why these things cause divisions and factions among us. But as we examine them, YHWH willing, your eyes will be opened and thus this activity can stop and YHWH can begin to bring us together in Mashiach in the manner in which He has already provided to be done.

Amos 3:3

Shall two walk together, except they have agreed?

Many have used this verse as an excuse to separate from another because of a disparity of beliefs. Because one person did not accept and believe exactly the same thing as another, a faction developed and a split occurred. Many times this division happened with great animosity present between the parties.

Let me state this as clearly and as strongly as possible. I do not care one iota what you believe! I really don't. Furthermore, you should not care what I believe! Now this is going to be difficult for some to see and understand at first, because this is one of the root causes of nearly all factions: beliefs.

Did you know that there is not one statement in Torah, the Tanak, or the Brit Chadasha (NT) that indicates in any manner whatsoever that one will be judged upon what he believes? Not one! Now I know that you did know that one will be judged upon what he has done and what he has not done. Mashiach clearly taught us this in Matithyah 25 in His explanation of the separation of the sheep and the goats. The sole criteria of this separation will be what they have done or not done. It will not be based upon right and wrong beliefs!

Ya'aqov (James) 2:19

You believe that Elohim is one; you do well; the demons also believe, and shudder.

You see, the demons have a right belief system. Does it do them any good? No! Will it do them any good on the Day of Judgment? No! Who cares what you believe? Frankly, I don't and neither does YHWH our Elohim! So stop already with trying to convince others that what you believe is right. They don't care what you believe!

If you have read very many studies of this author, then you know that I never write about what to believe and what not to believe. What I always write about is how to live a set-apart life,

how to walk the life of righteousness, how to live a life keeping Torah, His commandments, and His Statutes, and hearing and obeying His Voice; this is what I write about.

When I am in a discussion with another person and that person begins telling me what they believe, at that point I am ready to leave the conversation. Why? Because when a person brings up their beliefs there is nothing I can say to that person to help them. There is nothing that such a person is open to hearing at that point.

However, I am willing to discuss Scripture till the cows come home. I can and have on many occasions discussed Scripture all night long. While we may not completely understand everything written in Scripture, it is always right. Scripture is the written authority that we can all agree on, even if we do not fully understand all that is written. What we will never agree on is what each one of us believes. Let us agree to walk together because we all have made the decision to keep and do all of His commandments and to hear and obey His Voice. This is what unifies us: our actions, the decision to walk together. Walking is an action, not a belief!

Now to further help us in our understanding of why this focus upon beliefs causes factions and divisions, we need to see that it is not what one believes; but rather, what one does that matters. Words are cheap, and if not backed up by a righteous life mean absolutely nothing. Here is where we can begin to focus and come together, by actually loving one another; by focusing upon the way that we live our lives every day. It is by focusing on how we keep the feasts of YHWH; on how we keep His Shabbatot. In short, it is by helping one another to love and serve YHWH our Elohim so that He is pleased with all of us. This does not mean that each and every person must keep the Shabbat and keep the feasts of YHWH in exactly the same manner. YHWH has given us latitude in keeping many of His commandments. We need to be able to do the same thing and give latitude to others in the way we live a righteous life in His eyes.

Now I know that there are those who will say, "But teacher, don't we need to have right beliefs to have right actions?" This statement reveals a western mindset. It reveals that one must have right beliefs before he can have righteousness in his life. But I direct your attention once again back to Ya'aqov 2:19. Does this right belief by the demons bring righteousness into their lives? No!

The truth is that it is right actions which bring right beliefs; not the other way around. If you do right, eventually you will think right. It will not happen overnight, but it will happen eventually. Those who wait for a perfect understanding of a particular commandment of YHWH before they obey it are stuck in a western mindset and will remain there until they choose to step out in faith and obey YHWH's commandment simply because YHWH said so. The understanding will come through the obedience. Let us obey His Voice in all matters regardless of whether we understand or not. Is He not our heavenly Parent? To be sure! Are we not His earthly children? To be sure! Are not the children to obey their parents? To be sure! Sometimes it is appropriate to ask 'why' so that we can learn and grow. However, sometimes we just need to do it because He said so.

Shemot (Exodus) 15:26

and He said, "If you will diligently hear and obey the Voice of YHWH your Elohim, and will do that which is right in His eyes, and will give ear to His commandments, and keep all His statutes, I will put none of the diseases upon you, which I have put upon the Egyptians; for I am YHWH that heals you."

Please note that YHWH states that we need to obey His Voice and keep and do all of His commandments and statutes. This is what we are to do. Just simply believing this will get a person absolutely nowhere good! If the obedience is not there, then what evidence is there to see that one loves YHWH with all his heart, mind, and being? There is no evidence without obedience.

Ya'aqov (James) 2:18

But someone may well say, "You have faith, and I have works; show me your faith without the works, and I will show you my faith by my works."

Regardless of one's level of obedience, that is, whether one has been obeying YHWH for a long time or just starting out, we are all brothers and sisters in Mashiach who strive to obey every word that proceeds from His mouth!

Yochanan (John) 14:26

"But the Comforter, even the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He shall teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all that I said unto you."

Another action that causes division between brothers, is when a conversation is going on and one party feels his position is slipping and losing ground and he resorts to stating that the Ruach Qodesh (Holy Spirit) is his teacher. Excuse me?! Well I should hope so, but when one makes such a statement he is strongly implying that this is not so for the other party. Shame on you!

Mashiach clearly taught us all that it is the Ruach Qodesh who teaches all of us who follow Him. The Ruach Qodesh teaches each one of us according to where we are in our understanding and what we are capable of learning at any given moment. He customizes His teaching for each one of us to where we are in understanding at any given moment and what we need, and according to our position in the body of Mashiach as well as according to our abilities.

How dare one intimate that another follower of Mashiach is not being taught by His Spirit. The truth is that this statement borders on blasphemy of His Spirit. The only reason that such a thing is spoken is a selfish attempt to gain the upper hand in a discussion. But it does nothing except to reveal that one's position is weak and he knows it. Instead of using such a weak attempt to invoke the Almighty to shore up one's argument, what each one of us needs to do is to submit to His Word in all things. None of us truly desires to be wrong or to hold onto wrong beliefs. But sometimes one has invested a lot of time and emotions in a given position and to

think that it is wrong is sometimes difficult to accept. However, if a position is wrong, then who wants it anyway? Not I! And I should think that you shouldn't, either. But as we pointed out above, it is not about beliefs anyway. It is about living a righteous life.

Let us remember the lesson of our father Avraham. Did not YHWH Himself command Avraham to go and offer up Yitzchaq as a burnt offering? To be sure! This was the correct path for Avraham to walk. But YHWH never intended for Avraham to be successful in that action. For YHWH would at the very last moment change the direction of Avraham's obedience to YHWH.

Perhaps, what you have been told by YHWH in the past was simply for a season. Perhaps it was to move you forward in your obedience to Him and now that obedience is to move in a different direction. Each one of us needs to be completely open to the leading of His Spirit, which sometimes comes through the presence of an adversary. Look how many times YHWH sent a pagan king to afflict Israel because He needed to get their attention.

Brothers and sisters in Mashiach, please consider your position in Mashiach carefully and faithfully. He is speaking to you as well as to your brothers and sisters in Mashiach. He is also speaking through them to you. Are you listening to and testing every single word? If not, why not? Are we not commanded to do such things?

ABBA YHWH, continue to sharpen us that we may live more and more righteously in Your eyes; in the name of Mashiach Yeshua. Amein.

Shabbat Shalom

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