



## **Yeshua (The Jewish Jesus): Torah Teacher, Fence Builder & Anger Manager**

*Yeshua went throughout all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the Kingdom, and healing all kinds of disease and sickness among the people. So a report about him spread throughout Syria. . . When he saw the crowds, he went up the mountain. After he sat down his disciples came to him. Then he began to teach them. (Matthew 4:23-25; 5:1-2a)*

Yeshua, the Jewish Jesus, taught in synagogues in Galilee and Judea. *He never entered a church.* His message was a Jewish message, *not a Roman Catholic or Protestant message.* He had to be invited by local synagogue leaders to teach there – *he didn't just charge in and start preaching.* His teachings focused on one subject -- "*The Kingdom of God*" – *not on converting Jewish people.* When his Jewish audience heard his words, they knew exactly what they meant:

- *The countdown to Great Day of Judgment had begun.*
- *They were in the same position as the last generation before the Great Flood.*
- *God told Noah to build an ark. Yeshua said God told him to build His Kingdom.*
- *Enter into God's Kingdom while you can – before it is too late!*

How did many followers of Yeshua respond? They began teaching their children Yeshua's interpretations of *the Jewish Scriptures.*" They knew the prophecy of Malachi 4:4-6 very well:

*"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant . . . Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the Great and Dreadful day of Yahweh. And he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse."*

Malachi's words echoed the reason God chose to wipe an entire generation from the face of the earth in days of Noah (Genesis 6:5-6):

*Yahweh saw how great the wickedness of humans had become on the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil all the time. Yahweh regretted that He had made humans on the earth!*

God placed the responsibility of developing and shaping the hearts of children in hands of their fathers and mothers – *and the leaders of the nation*. **People must be taught and repeatedly reminded how to think and do TOV (good)**. *The ultimate cause of the Great Flood was the failure of generation after generation to do this*. Instead, one family valued and glorified violence above human lives – *and their ideas and values infected the hearts of an entire generation*. Prophecies about an Anointed One (Christ) coming just before the Great Day of Judgment stressed the role of that person being a master teacher of the Torah. His arrival was a sign that the entire generation must become involved in making the inclinations of the thoughts of their hearts TOV (good) – *and the Anointed One would show them how*.

However, viewing “Jesus” as “*a master teacher of the Law of Moses*” is unknown to most Christians today. But that was why large crowds of Jewish people came to hear Yeshua teach. For them, the *Law of Moses* wasn’t a religious thing – *it was the law on the nation*. How it was interpreted impacted real life decisions in their homes and at the Temple. Many of Yeshua’s teachings are linked to first ten chapters of Genesis – *a series of stories that began with the creation of the Heavens and the Earth and ended with only Noah and his family as the only survivors of the Great Flood*. Keep this in mind as you listen to Yeshua’s words.

### **The Sermon on the Mount**

One of the most famous collections of Yeshua’s teachings is known as the *Sermon on the Mount*. There is no record of Yeshua writing down anything, so this is likely a remnant of oral teachings that was written down by someone else much later. It is very likely that every follower Yeshua knew those teachings by heart – *and probable taught them to their sons and daughters*.

*Yeshua began his teachings by blessing those gathered before him*. In Genesis 1 the Creator blessed the first two humans immediately after He created them. In the Hebrew, blessing someone “*empowers*” them to do the words of the blessing. Each blessing is linked to specific sections of *Jewish Scriptures*, which his audience knew by memory.

- *Blessed are the poor in spirit.* (Matthew 5:3)
- *Blessed are those who mourn.* (Matthew 5:4)
- *Blessed are the meek.* (Matthew 5:5)
- *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for **tzedaqah**.* (Matthew 5:6)
- *Blessed are the merciful.* (Matthew 5:7)
- *Blessed are the pure in heart.* (Matthew 5:8)
- *Blessed are the shalom makers.* (Matthew 5:9)
- *Blessed are those who pursue **tzedaqah**.* (Matthew 5:10)

The most important word in the **Flood Story** is **tzedaqah**. Noah is the first man in the Bible to do **tzedaqah**. It was Noah doing **tzedaqah** that caught God’s attention -- **and tzedaqah is why God saved Noah and his family**. Therefore, Jewish followers of Yeshua were not surprised to discover that **tzedaqah** is the most important word in the teachings of Yeshua – **and it will be those who do tzedaqah like Noah that will be saved on the Great Day of Judgment!**

## Doing Tzedakah Means Doing TOV (Good)

In the first story in *Genesis*, the Creator used the *TOV Standard* to measure seven acts of creation.

*Acts that protect and preserve lives; acts that make lives more functional and/or acts that increase the quality of life.*

Acts of tzedakah are acts that measure TOV.

## Did Yeshua Abolish or Destroy the Law?

Below are the words of the *King James Version* (Matthew 5:17-18):

*Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled.*

What do the underlined words mean? Do not be afraid to admit you don't know. I am going to let you in a little secret. Most readers of Jesus's words in English translation do not have a clue as to what they mean either. Our eyes scan across the words, but our brains do not understand what they mean. So, our brains just grab whatever seems to fit and moves on. Take another look at jot and tittle. *Did anything actually pop into your mind when you first saw them?* Below is a much more culturally accurate translation of the verses above:

*Do not think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets! I have not come to abolish, but to fulfill them. Amen!*

Yeshua actually said, "The Torah or the Prophets," instead of "the law or the prophets." "Torah and Prophets" are the names of the first two sections of books in the Jewish Bible. There is a third section called the Writings. *Why would anyone accuse Yeshua of "abolishing two entire sections" of his Bible? A story recorded in the *Babylonian Talmud* (Sanhedrin 116a-b) adds information we need to know in order to understand the meaning of "abolish."*

*"Now, a certain philosopher lived in his vicinity, and he bore a reputation that he did not accept bribes. They wished to expose him, so a woman brought him a golden lamp, and said to him, 'I desire that a share be given me in my [deceased] father's estate.' 'Divide,' ordered he.*

*R. Gamaliel said to him, 'It is decreed for us, Where there is a son, a daughter does not inherit.' [The philosopher replied], 'Since the day that you were exiled from your land the Torah of Moses has been superseded and another book given, wherein it is written, 'A son and a daughter inherit equally.'*

*The next day, R. Gamaliel brought him a Libyan ass. Said he to them, 'Look at the end of the book, wherein it is written, I came not to abolish the Torah of Moses nor to add to the Torah of Moses, and it is written therein, A daughter does not inherit where there is a son.'*"

The words R. Gamaliel quoted are those of Moses in Deuteronomy 4:2 – “You shall not **add to** the word which I am commanding you, **nor take away from** it, that you may keep the commandments of Yahweh your God which I command you.” For Yeshua, “abolish” meant “to take away from” by misinterpreting them! Below is what his Jewish audience heard:

*“Do not think that **I have come to misinterpret** the words of the **Torah** . . .  
I have not come to misinterpret, **but to correctly interpret them.**”*

Did you know the first example of “**destroying the Law**” is found in “the Story of the Garden of Eden”? Below is the commandment Yahweh gave Adam (Genesis 2:16-17):

*“From any tree of the garden you may eat freely; but from the Tree of the Knowledge of **TOV** (good) and **RAH** (evil) you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you shall surely die.”*

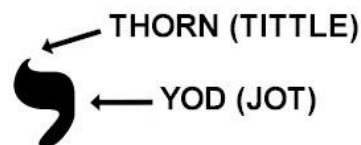
Now compare it to the commandment below that Eve was given:

*“From the fruit of the trees of the garden we may eat; but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, god has said, ‘You shall not eat from it and **you shall not touch it**, lest you die.’” (Genesis 3:2-3)*

Someone, most likely Adam, “**added**” the underlined words to Yahweh’s commandment. When Eve touched the forbidden fruit, nothing happened – *she didn’t die!* The words “you shall not touch it,” destroyed Yahweh’s commandment! Now let’s continue with Yeshua’s teaching.

*I tell you, until heaven and earth disappear, not the **YOD** or one **thorn** will by any means disappear from the **Torah** until everything is correctly interpreted.*

The word translated as “jot” in the King James Version should have been translated **YOD**. It is **the name of smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet**. The only thing smaller than a **YOD** is a “**THORN**” (*tittle*) --- a decorative mark scribes added to tips of Hebrew letters.



Yeshua used that example to highlight the point he was making.

*Not only am I not going to misinterpret the words of the Scriptures – I am not going to change even the smallest Hebrew letter or even a thorn on the tip of the smallest letter of any word in the Torah and the Prophets in my interpretations!*

Scribes, Sadducees and Pharisees were also interpreting those words too. Yeshua specifically warned the audience about two of those groups (Matthew 5:20):

*“Unless your **acts of tzedaqah** exceed the **acts of tzedaqah** of the **scribes** and **Pharisees**, you shall in no case enter into the Kingdom of God!”*

Scribes and Pharisees were probably the ones accusing Yeshua of “abolishing” the Scriptures. His response was to challenge them “to practice what they preach!”

## **Building Fences Around the Torah**

A very popular teaching method of the rabbis was called “*building fences around the Torah*.” It is mentioned in the *Mishnah* (Oral Law) Avot 1:1.

*They [the Men of the Great Assembly] would always say these three things: Be cautious in judgment, establish many pupils, and **build a fence around the Torah**.*

Yeshua uses this method a number of times in the *Sermon on the Mount*. Below is an example recorded in Matthew 5:21-22.

*“You have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘You shall not murder, and anyone who murders will be subjected to judgment.’ But I tell you that anyone who is angry with a brother will be subjected to judgment. Again, anyone who says to a brother, ‘**RAQA**,’ is answerable to the court. And anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of Gehinnon.”*

There is a lot things packed into just two verses. English readers are literally unable to see the lessons Yeshua taught. I will break the text down and reconstruct the Hebrew meanings of his words. When Yeshua says, “*You have heard that it was said to the people long ago;*” he is usually referring to words written in the *Torah*. Here he is specifically referring to two commandments:

1. “*You shall not murder.*” (Exodus 20:13)
2. “*Anyone who murders will be subjected to judgment” (a reference to Genesis 9:5b-6 -- *And from each human being, too, I will demand an accounting for the life of another human being. Whoever sheds human blood, by humans shall their blood be shed; for in the image of God has made mankind.*).*

By combining the two commandments he stresses these points:

*“Everyone knows that murder is a crime  
and that murders are tried by the justice system.”*

With those words he sets the stage for building his **first fence** – a fence around those two commandments. The purpose of the fence is to keep people from breaking them. The fence is a “*light commandment*” that will keep people from breaking the two “*heavy commandments*.”

*But I tell you this!  
Anyone who is angry with a brother will be tried by the **Bet Din** like a murderer!*

The **Bet Din** is the **House of Judgment** – *the courthouse*. How many visits would you have made to the courthouse if Yeshua’s words were taken literally? Everyone in the audience would have been taken down to the courthouse with you. Everyone in that Jewish audience knew exactly what Yeshua was referring to when **he connected anger to murder** – *Cain’s murder of his brother Abel! It will be that murder that ultimately leads to God’s decision to wipe humans from the face of the earth by the Great Flood!*

But, something that readers of English translations of the *Story of Cain and Abel*, is that God gave Cain this advice when He saw that Cain was angry – “If you do TOV (good) you will be able to master your anger and you will be accepted by God.”

*Protect and preserve Abel's life, make Abel's life more functional  
and increase the quality of Abel's life and you will master your anger!*

Cain chose to do the opposite of **TOV** (good) – **RAH** (evil) -- and his anger became his master! But Yeshua didn't stop with just one fence -- he built **a second fence**.

*Again I say to you!  
Anyone who (out of anger) says to a brother,  
'RAQA,' will be tried by the **Sanhedrin**!*

Yeshua's audience understands that this is a much more serious offense because Yeshua changed the court trying the case -- **Sanhedrin** instead of **Bet Din**. To put it terms familiar to us, the *Bet Din* is like a *Federal Court*, while the *Sanhedrin* is like the *US Supreme Court*. Why does saying one Hebrew word -- **RAQA** – make it a much more serious offense? Once again we turn to the *Babylonia Talmud* (*Taanit 20a-b*) for accurate information about the meaning of a word:

*"Our Rabbis have taught: A man should always be gentle as the reed and never unyielding as the cedar. Once R. Eleazar son of R. Simeon was coming from Migdal Gedor, from the house of his teacher, and he was riding leisurely on his ass by the riverside and was feeling happy and elated because he had studied much Torah. There chanced to meet him an exceedingly ugly man who greeted him, 'Peace be upon you, Sir.' He, however, did not return his salutation but instead said to him, 'RAQA, how ugly you are. Are all your fellow citizens as ugly as you are?'*

**RAQA** means “you useless and empty thing.” Rabbi Eleazar was a famous rabbi. He seems to be very contented and happy after studying the Torah with his teacher – and then he just happened to bump into the “exceedingly ugly man.” Why in the world did this message come out of the mouth of such a famous rabbi?

*You useless and empty thing, how ugly you are.  
Are all your fellow citizens as ugly as you are?*

Wow!!! Keep in mind that Eleazar was happy, not angry! Take another look at the end of the second heavy commandment Yeshua is building fences around – “for in the image of God has made mankind.” That sets the stage for the ugly man's response:

*“I do not know, but go and tell the craftsman who made me,  
'How ugly is the vessel which you have made.'”*

*Rabbi Eleazar immediately realized what he had done, dismounted from the ass, prostrated himself before the man and said, “I submit myself to you, forgive me.” The man replied: “I will not forgive you until you go to the craftsman who made me and say to him, 'How ugly is the vessel which you have made.'”*

*Rabbi Eleazar walked behind the ugly man until he reached his native city. His fellow citizens saw them coming and cried out, "Peace be upon you Teacher and Master!" The man responded, "Who are you addressing?" They replied, "The man who is walking behind you." Thereupon the man exclaimed: "If this man is a teacher, may there not be any more like him in Israel!" The people wanted to know why he said that and he told them what Rabbi Eleazar had done."*

*The citizens then said to man, "Nevertheless, forgive him, for he is a man greatly learned in the Torah." The ugly man replied: "For your sakes I will forgive him, but only on the condition that he does not act in the same manner in the future."*

The lesson taught by the second fence is this. *If you know that anger can lead to murder and still become angry with someone **remember that both of you are created in the image of God**. Do not say anything out of anger that challenges that!* But Yeshua didn't stop here either -- He built **a third fence** around the two commandments.

*And anyone who says (out of anger),  
'You **fool!**' will be in danger of the **fire of Gehinnon**.'*

His audience immediately recognized the seriousness of this offence because Yeshua changed the court again. "*The fire of Gehinnon*" is a reference to the highest court of all – *the Court of God*. There is no court higher than that. Once again this is an offence committed by speaking a word out of anger. Yeshua was referring to Psalm 14:1.

*The **fool** says **in his heart**, "**There is no God**."*

*Why is calling a person a "fool" such a serious offense? There are two reasons:*

- "**You fool**" means the person "**denies the existence of God in his heart!**"
- "**Knowing what's in another person's heart**" means **you claim to be an equal of God**.

### **Review of Yeshua's Fences on Anger**

1. *Remember that Cain's uncontrolled anger led to the murder of Abel – and that ultimately led to the Great Flood.*
2. *Remember God's instructions to Cain – if you do TOV when you are angry you can control it. Think, speak and do things that protect and preserve the person's life that you are angry with.*
3. *Remember that you and the person you are angry with are both created in the image of God. The presence of the Spirit of God is in both of you.*
4. *Remember that no one but God knows what is in both of your hearts.*
5. *Remember that God has empowered you to control and overcome anger.*

Below are some related teachings from the Jewish culture that Yeshua and his Jewish audience would have clearly understood. *Feel free to use them as fences too!*

*Three times the Torah asks us to love: twice, in Leviticus (19:18, 34), we are commanded to love human beings; then, in Deuteronomy, our love is directed toward God. Only after we have learned to love people can we come to love God. (Chasidic saying [Yeshua taught this too!])*

*However great the differences among men, their likeness to God is common to all of them, and it is this likeness which establishes the human in man. (Leo Baeck)*

*Be concerned about your own soul and your neighbor's body, not about your own body and another's soul. (Menachem Mendel of Kozk)* **BHC**

## January Memorials

*In Loving Memory*

**JULIE FALLIN  
KELSOE**

January 12, 1960  
January 19, 1990

*May you dwell under His wings  
in complete SHALOM forever!*

*In Loving Memory*

**HOMER  
MELTON (DOC) PITNER**

October 7, 1914  
January 10, 1971

*May you dwell under His wings  
in complete SHALOM forever!*

*In Loving Memory*

**AMOS DANIEL  
HAZELWOOD**

September 23, 1908  
January 25, 1969

*May you dwell under His wings  
in complete SHALOM forever!*

*In Loving Memory*

**GLADYS GERALDINE  
MYERS**

October 1, 1916  
January 29, 2009

*May you dwell under His wings  
in complete SHALOM forever!*

## **In Their Remembrance**

*May their memories inspire us to seek those qualities of mind and heart,  
which they shared when we walked life's journey together.  
May we help to bring closer to fulfillment their highest ideals and noblest strivings.  
May their memories deepen our loyalty to those things which we valued and shared -  
faith, love, peace and devotion. As long as we live, they too will live;  
for they are now a part of us, as we remember them.*

(Inspired from prayers found in Yitzhor Reflections - The New Mahzor - The Prayer Book Press)