

16. Israel – the Thorn in the Flesh of the World (Part 1)

“Then the foremen of the sons of Israel came and cried out to Pharaoh, saying, ‘Why do you deal this way with your servants? There is no straw given to your servants, yet they keep saying to us, ‘Make bricks!’ And behold, your servants are being beaten; but it is the fault of your own people.’

“But he said, ‘You are lazy, very lazy; therefore you say, ‘Let us go and sacrifice to the LORD.’ SO GO NOW AND WORK; FOR YOU WILL BE GIVEN NO STRAW, YET YOU MUST DELIVER THE QUOTA OF BRICKS.’ The foremen of the sons of Israel saw that they were in trouble because they were told, ‘You must not reduce your daily amount of bricks...’” (Exodus 5:15-18 Emphasis added.)

The abusive, insanely unreasonable expectations and interactive dynamic of the pharaoh that this text reveals, accurately express the endless plight Israel must always endure as she strives for survival in this world. No other people group has ever been in the same position. Worldly leaders continue and carry forward, from generation to generation, the unreasonable, abusive contempt of the pharaoh. They keep ‘changing the rules,’ always forcing her to take the most disadvantageous position. They have done everything in their means to destroy her, but no matter what they try to do...Israel endures, perseveres, and will not go away. It would be fascinating to conduct a random survey and ask 1000 people this question:

“What do Israel and the Jewish people mean to you?”

Would we not receive a vast array of conflicting opinions? Over the millennia, ever since the days of Moses, Israel has been a thorn in the world’s flesh! The responses to that question would range from nonchalant uncaring shrugs to knee-jerk gut reactions of ecstatic approval...ranging all the way to irrational antagonism and murderous, genocidal malicious rage.

But what about Yeshua’s disciples; what viewpoint should they embrace? Should they join the world’s leaders, or reflect what news commentators say or swallow the pontifications heard from podiums in university lecture halls? No, of course they shouldn’t. Worldly people follow their own perspectives, senses, wits and opinions. They are all trying to ‘make sense’ of incredibly deep spiritual realities and mysteries that are beyond their decapitated ability to fathom. The world fails to take to heart the warning God gave to us all:

“Let the wicked forsake his (decapitated) way and the unrighteous man his (Head-less) thoughts; and let him return to the LORD, and He will have compassion on him, and to our God, for He will abundantly pardon. For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,’ declares the LORD. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts.

“For as the rain and the snow come down from heaven, and do not return there without watering the earth and making it bear and sprout, and furnishing seed to the sower and bread to the eater; so will My (living) Word be which goes forth from My mouth: It will not return to Me empty, without accomplishing what I desire, and without succeeding in the matter for which I sent it.” (Isaiah 55:7-11 Amplification and emphasis added.)

Do you get that? No matter what our limited human thoughts and suspicions may lead us to assume, God is thinking on a completely different level and operating in ways that would not occur to us. So He’s not relying on us to accomplish what He has in mind. His living creative Word and powerful Holy Spirit are the only ones that occupy His ‘wavelength’; so only they will be able to carry out His will...to Perfection.

Disciples must keep this in mind at all times. So we should learn and hold to and embody the viewpoint God reveals and expresses through His written Word. We know that God’s view of Israel will be diametrically opposed to the commonly held worldly views. His views are embedded within the Bible. And He categorizes worldly, radically independent views and thoughts as ‘Egypt!’ So disciples-in-training must learn to swim against the current of ‘public opinion.’ They must forsake and leave Egypt and its ‘wisdom’ and its ways behind! They must also be detoxified and ‘deprogrammed’ of their former Egyptian viewpoints, opinions, habits and addictions! They must die to ‘Egypt’ so they can be free to be grafted into the Blood Covenant Root of the eternal bond God’s Word has with Israel and become part of the spiritual Commonwealth God has entrusted to her care as an eternal Inheritance! (See Ephesians 2)

So, to think, react and live as one with God’s living Word, we must acknowledge, respect and uphold the Eternal Covenant He made with Israel and see her as our Lord, the Messiah of Israel, sees her! (See 1 Corinthians 2.) So I offer for your consideration, the fruit of my personal meditations. I’ve tried to gather some glimmers of understanding from the awesome depths of what God embedded in His written Word. Disciples must know what Israel means to our God, for ultimately, His is the only view and judgment that matter. So I pray that this piece will be a help, as you try to arrive at your own understanding. May it accurately and authentically reflect God’s revealed viewpoint as it really is.

Let’s begin by understanding this: God’s living Word (the Lord and Master you’ve been called to embody) created Israel and set her apart for His personal service.

“Now then, if you will indeed obey My Voice and keep My Covenant, then you shall be My own possession among all the peoples, for all the Earth is Mine; and you shall be to Me a Kingdom of Priests and a Holy Nation...” (Exodus 19:5-6a)

God broke Egypt’s yoke and stripped it away from Israel. He freed her so that she could become His personal, exclusive disciple nation. God’s Word prepared Israel to be the matrix or ‘womb’ from which He would eventually emerge when it was time for Him to become human and emerge as Israel’s Messiah! So His Eternal Covenant relationship with her is the ‘Root’ into which all Jewish and non-Jewish people that will be saved must allow God to graft them! In God’s sight, Israel is not just ‘one of the gang’...one

more nation among many others. She is part of God's unique Salvation Root and will thus always be His sole possession. God selected her to be the Bride of His living Word! His Word is responsible for her. He was sent to create and maintain this mysterious enigma that has become a perpetual *'thorn in the flesh'* of the fallen world's system...for Himself! So although what I'm sharing is only my opinion, I hope you'll be able to see that what I've derived comes out of what is embedded within God's written Word.

The Veiled Eyes of Israel and of the Church

The 'gleanings' I've gathered concerning this tremendous mystery, emerge from a variety of Bible texts. Here are a few:

The Torah: Genesis-Deuteronomy; 2 Samuel 7; the Psalms; Isaiah 2:49; 35:11:2; 41:8; 42:1 43:10; 49:3-6; 52:13-15; 53; 59:21; 61-66; Jeremiah 31; Ezekiel 36, 37-47; the book of Hosea; Joel 2; Zechariah 14; Matthew's Gospel; Mark 1:11; Luke 2; 3:22-38; 4:18, 19, 21; Romans 9-11; Ephesians 2; Philippians 2:5-11; 2 Timothy 3:10-17; 1 Peter 2:4-6; the book of Revelation, and quite a few others.

Because we are all still *'en route'* to the Ultimate Fulfillment of God's Plan for Creation, many pieces of the 'fulfillment puzzle' have yet to be put in their proper places. So, confusion, speculation and debate continue. Jewish people struggle, as much as anyone, to understand and define themselves in every generation. But as I ponder various texts, a strong suspicion arises in my mind. It leads me to believe that God has not forsaken His physical, original Israel and moved over to another purely spiritual, non-Jewish Israel. I believe He will always be faithful to the Israel He chose in the beginning and in His awesome almighty perfection, He will fulfill to perfection, every promise He made to her patriarchs and sealed in the Blood of His beloved Son.

Any errors and misconceptions you encounter in this are entirely mine. But I offer this meditation as an invitation...for you to pray over. Ponder the Covenantal and Messianic promises God reveals through His Israelite prophets, wisdom writers and apostles. Ask our Master what **He** wants you to know and understand regarding His people. And see what you come up with as you abide with Him in His Spirit-transmitted Resurrection Presence. You may benefit by beginning with this Messianic text that I find to be especially thought-provoking. Its first sentence gives an exalted view of the Messiah, but in the next breath, Isaiah introduces a vastly different, contradictory view:

Isaiah 52:13-15 – *“Behold, My Servant will prosper; He will be high and lifted up and greatly exalted. Just as many were astonished at you, My people, so His appearance was marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men. Thus He will sprinkle many nations; kings will shut their mouths on account of Him; for what had not been told them they will see, and what they had not heard they will understand.”*

This text is immediately followed by what may be the most famous and, to many Jewish people, most troubling gut wrenching Messianic text of all – *Isaiah 53*. The prophet is writing to his own Israelite brethren. He tells them the Suffering Messiah-Servant of God

will appear among them in due time. But he also reveals that when He finally does appear among them, Israel will reject this pain-filled Servant and turn away from Him.

What really captures my attention is that God, through Isaiah, links and equates, in the same breath, two separate rejections: 1) the world's rejection of Israel, and, 2) Israel's rejection of God's *'Suffering Servant.'* Let's look at these two co-related phrases from Isaiah once more. The first phrase of the second sentence is introduced by the words, *'Just as,'* and it is linked to the second phrase by the word *'So.'* What happens in the first phrase is made to be equivalent to what happens in the second phrase. They are like two ends of the same 'stick.'

"JUST AS many were astonished at you, My people, SO His appearance was marred more than any man and His form more than the sons of men." (Isaiah 52:14 Emphasis added.)

Isaiah seems to be saying that Israel will receive the same violently negative response from the world that she herself gives to God's Word who will be a Suffering Servant when He first arrives! History is rife with examples of the very negative attitudes and violent persecutions that have been directed against Israel by various peoples of the world. They heap abuse on her although God created her to serve for their eternal well being! At the same time, we've also seen the Suffering Servant of Isaiah, Messiah Yeshua, being continually rejected by Israel. So, Israel receives the same rejection from the rest of the world that she continues to direct against Him...just as Isaiah said.

As it has turned out, regardless of which form Father chooses by which to reveal His living Word to them, whether it be in the form of thunder, lightning and fire from atop Mount Sinai, or a cloud pillar or column of fire in the wilderness, or through the prophets or the written Word or any other form in which God's Word has appeared throughout Israel's history (even when He appeared in human form as Rabbi Yeshua of Nazareth), most Israelites habitually reject Him to one degree or another! Notice how Israel reacted to Him at Sinai:

*"All the people perceived the thunder and the lightning flashes and the sound of the trumpet and the mountain smoking; and when the people saw it, they trembled and stood at a distance. Then they said to Moses, **'Speak to us yourself and we will listen; but let not God speak to us, or we will die.'** Moses said to the people: 'Do not be afraid; for God (through His living Word) has come in order to test you, and in order that the fear of Him may remain with you, so that you may not sin.' So the people stood at a distance, while Moses approached the thick cloud where God was." (Exodus 20:18-21 Emphasis added.)*

Israel just could not bring herself to dare to step forward to connect with God's Word personally and directly. Instead she chose to look to Moses... and hide behind him and any other human go-betweens she could find. They settled for a system run by human intermediaries. The go-betweens interact with God in their place. They take the place of

God's living Word. And very often, throughout their history, many Israelites have even refused to listen to their intermediaries!

So Isaiah was inspired to reveal that God will co-relate the treatment Israel gives to His living and written Word, with the treatment He will allow the world to heap upon her! (For example, see Deuteronomy 28) So, the Word and His Bride are permanently linked in a variety of ways and levels, including this mutually shared rejection and suffering. Can you see a pattern here? As Israel rejects God's Word, so will the world reject Israel. But...when Israel completely embraces and becomes one with God's Word, the world will completely embrace and be one with Israel! This is what I believe God is saying. Somehow, this linkage is pre-planned as an essential ingredient in God's awesome Plan of Salvation. He isn't surprised, shocked or deterred by the way things are between Israel and His Word. He's the one that told us it would be this way!

Because of the negative reactions and rejection Yeshua and Israel both receive, the 'appearance' or reputation of each is wounded, disfigured and twisted. Yeshua's reputation and appearance are disfigured in Israel's sight, and Israel's reputation and appearance are disfigured in the mind and heart of the Gentile World. And so the prophecies of God reveal that not until the end comes, will the two be perceived on Earth the way they really are in God's will and purpose. Remember what God said:

"...My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,' declares the LORD. 'For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts...' (Isaiah 55:8-9)

Israel, My Beloved

So until the time of ultimate Fulfillment arrives, the appearances and reputations of the Husband and the Bride will remain united in this mutual disfigurement, rejection and pain. Yeshua will be hurt by Israel and Israel will be hurt by the fallen world that surrounds her. So what is God doing with this? How does it fit into His strategy and plan of Salvation? Well, as God's living Word, Israel's Husband has said:

*"...If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple. Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple." (Luke 14:25-27 *Emphasis added.*)*

It seems as if Yeshua is taking Israel through Disciple Boot Camp, first. He is letting her experience at a gut-wrenching level, her oneness with God's crucified living Word. They are like two ends of the same redemptive Covenant rod or staff. The Eternal Covenant united them to each other, forever. God sent His living Word to propose marriage (the disciple lifestyle) to Israel. And, through Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, she accepted! In typical Mid-Eastern Hebrew fashion, Israel became the 'Betrothed' spouse of God's living Word. From that moment, the written Torah became their 'Ketubah' (Marriage Contract) and their Blood Covenant bond was established forever.

That makes them like two ends of God's Covenant rod or staff. God (Father, Son and Holy Spirit) abides at one end of that Staff, in His eternal Heavenly dimension. And Israel, regardless of what her current ever-changing time and space conditions and situations may be on Earth, abides at the other, earth-bound end of the Covenant Staff. The Covenant 'yokes' them together forever. Eternity and Infinity are linked to Time and Space. Heaven is connected to Earth because God, through His living Word, is one with Israel. So although the changeless Perfection of God abiding at His end of the Covenant rod never changes, and Israel's earthly, time and space situations and conditions are always Sin-corrupted, chaotic, dangerous and very imperfect...nevertheless, the two are one forever! What belongs to the 'Perfect Husband' belongs to the 'Imperfect Bride.' What affects the Imperfect Bride is the Perfect Husband's responsibility. Out of His Perfect Covenant Love, He is committed to deal with her needs and care for her eternal well being...to the death! No matter what it costs Him or what He must suffer to meet her needs, the Husband is committed by Blood Oath to cover her and meet her every need with His eternal Perfection. That is what God reveals about Himself in the Torah and Tanach, through His Covenant interaction with Israel:

"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. I will establish My covenant between Me and you, and I will multiply you exceedingly.'" (Genesis 17:1-2)

"But Zion said, 'The LORD has forsaken me, and the Lord has forgotten me.'

"Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget, but I will not forget you. Behold, I have inscribed you (made a Covenant cut) on the palms of My hands; your walls are continually before Me. Your builders hurry; your destroyers and devastators will depart from you. Lift up your eyes and look around; all of them gather together, they come to you.

"As I live," declares the LORD, you will surely put on all of them as jewels and bind them on as a bride. For your waste and desolate places and your destroyed land—surely now you will be too cramped for the inhabitants, and those who swallowed you will be far away." (Isaiah 49:14-19)

"Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on Earth. For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is our Life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in Glory." (Colossians 3:1-4 Emphasis added.)

The daily news always contains examples of Gentile contempt and violent, malicious acts against the Jewish people and the recently-formed State of Israel. Obviously the Israelites, like all other humans, are far from perfect. But their union with God doesn't depend on their state, condition or performance. It depends on God's Perfect Nature and eternal, infinite, Covenant Fidelity! So although the world rejects them, God will never leave or forsake His chosen people.

Yoked Together According to the Covenant Plan of God

So the world will continue to reject Israel, even as she continues to reject and persecute and disown Yeshua and their Jewish brethren who dare to believe in and embrace Him as their Messiah. It has been this way since Yeshua walked the earth in the flesh. His Jewish disciples always endure the pain of the contempt and rejection that Jewish people heap upon them on account of their love and devotion to Yeshua. In many cases, even their own parents and family members reject and disown them! Despite this, God abides at one end, the Heavenly end, of the Covenant 'rod'...and corporate Israel abides at the other. They are united forever...one inseparable unit...despite Israel's animosity against God's living Word and His disciples of the Renewed Covenant!

For now, let's consider the contempt Israel habitually inflicts on Yeshua and His disciples, especially the Jewish ones. Israel thinks of and treats them with the same rejection and contempt that the rest of the world keeps heaping on her! But remember that Isaiah warned us that this is how it was going to be:

“Who (in Israel) has believed our message? And to whom (among God’s Chosen People) has the Arm (Messiah) of the LORD been revealed? For He (Messiah) grew up before Him (His Father) like a tender shoot, and like a root out of parched ground; He has no stately form or majesty that we (Israelites) should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom (Israelite) men hide their face. He was despised, and we (sons of Jacob) did not esteem Him. Surely our griefs He Himself bore, and our sorrows He carried; yet we ourselves (His own people) esteemed Him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted. But He was pierced through for our (Israel’s) transgressions, He was crushed for our (Israelite) iniquities; the chastening for our well-being fell upon Him. And by His (God’s Passover Lamb’s) scourging we (Jews) are (redeemed and) healed!” (Isaiah 53:1-5 Amplification and emphasis added.)

The Messiah's apostle John confirmed what Isaiah said:

“There was the true Light (God’s living Word) which, coming into the world, enlightens every man. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own (chosen people), and those who were His own did not receive Him.” (John 1:9-11 Emphasis added. See also Isaiah 6:8-13; Matthew 13:10-17)

Since our Messiah's atoning death, resurrection and ascension, most of God's chosen people continue to fulfill Isaiah's prophecies to this day. So apparently, God had an awesome strategy in mind by arranging things this way:

“Brethren, sons of Abraham's family, and those among you who fear God, to us (Messianic Jews) the message of this Salvation has been sent. For those (unbelieving Jews) who live in Jerusalem, and their rulers, recognizing neither Him nor the utterances of the prophets which are read every Sabbath, fulfilled these by condemning Him. And though they found no ground for putting Him to death, they asked Pilate that He be

executed. When they had carried out all that was written concerning Him, they took Him down from the cross and laid Him in a tomb. But God raised Him from the dead!” (Acts 13:26-30 Emphasis added.)

Despite the awesome promises God’s living Word made to Abram in Genesis, and to Israel throughout the Tanach about how He would bless and protect Abraham’s descendants, many Jewish people have rejected God’s living Word! Despite the warnings of Moses in Deuteronomy 18:15-18 and despite the eerily precise way Isaiah and Hosea and other prophets warned that they would reject and betray God’s Word, most Jewish people avoid those texts as well as the pertinent Messianic texts of Isaiah and others like them. And so Yeshua and His Chosen People...continue to fulfill the Scriptures! Why do so many of Yeshua’s own people insist on rejecting Him? Do their knee-jerk negative reactions and habitual avoidance of the issue shed any real light on this mystery? Do their avoidance tactics do anything to disprove Yeshua’s claims or make Him and His disciples go away? No, of course they don’t. Nevertheless, Jewish people continue to studiously ignore these pertinent, heart-piercing Scriptures in favor of the rabbinical Messiah-rejecting judgments, explanations and religious traditions. And others favor the totally secular, God-less world view of the Gentile societies they adopt as they assimilate and try to hide themselves in the crowds that teem within this fallen world.

But to avoid and ignore Moses and Isaiah and their other prophets does not resolve the burning issue of Yeshua. Nor does it stop God from exposing what they’re doing and clarifying the Truth revealed in His written Word, about Yeshua, His living Word and Son. Israel’s modern reactions only remind us of the terror of God’s living Word she manifested in the book of Exodus, when God’s living Word appeared to her in another form, at Mt. Sinai.

Over the centuries Israel has kept her distance from the living Word and looks instead to human religious leaders that train people to follow their judgments, traditions and writings...as coming from God Himself. But these teachers are very selective in the way they deal with, or ignore and exclude, significant portions of the psalms and the prophets God entrusted to their care. The rabbinical teachings and traditions that came into play long after Yeshua, are actually used as a wall of partition to separate the people from God’s living Word and prevent them from receiving what His Father sent Him to be and to do, on their behalf. But remember, God ordained that this would be this way. There is a purpose behind it and God warned us in advance that this is the way it would be!

“...He (Messiah Yeshua) has no stately form or majesty that we (Jews) should look upon Him, nor appearance that we should be attracted to Him. He was despised and forsaken of men, a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief; and like one from whom men (of Israel) hide their face. He was despised, and we (Jews) did not esteem Him...”

Stephen dared to remind some of his contemporary fellow Jews of this...knowing they would kill him for daring to say it:

“You men who are stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears are always resisting the Holy Spirit; you are doing just as your fathers did. Which one of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? They killed those who had previously announced the coming of the Righteous One, whose betrayers and murderers you have now become; you who received the Law (Torah) as ordained by angels, and yet did not keep it!” (Acts 7:51-53)

Do you remember how, in Genesis, the brothers of Joseph reacted to God’s living Word after He had appeared to and communicated with Joseph, in his dreams? When Joseph conveyed God’s Word to them, they hissed and recoiled like disturbed serpents! But I believe their rejection of Joseph was a prophetic revelation given by God...to let us know how the Jewish brothers of Yeshua (Messiah Son of Joseph) would one day react to Him!

But some may think: *‘of all people, how can Yeshua’s own brothers not recognize Him? Were they not entrusted by God to protect and observe the Torah and the prophets and the wisdom writings that reveal and proclaim Him to the world?’* Yes, the Jewish people were entrusted with the oracles and covenants of God. But, from my perspective, the excruciatingly painful and unrelentingly bloody history they have continuously endured has forced them to obsess over their own ethnic survival. And when you’re continually forced to go into *‘survival mode,’* it’s easy to lose sight of the enormous world-redeeming commission God entrusted to you as His chosen people, to be His redemptive – *‘Light to the Gentile World.’*

Because they’ve had to be so preoccupied with survival, many have lost sight of how desperately the world needs to be saved by the living Word of the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob! The living Word worked through Joseph not only to save his family from starvation during the famine, but also to save all the Gentiles who lived in Egypt and surrounding areas! The Word is here to save the entire world...through the instrumentality of His chosen people! And so because many of His chosen people are currently rejecting Him, Yeshua, who is their eternal Covenant Representative and High Priest and Messiah...continues to ‘do the job’ alone...from God’s end of the Covenant Rod...in His Bride’s place...and in her name! No matter what happens, in His sight, She is His Bride...and they are one.

Stumbling Stones in the Path of Faith

Can you blame Israelites of today for being this way? If you always had to worry about the next inquisition or pogrom and endure gut-wrenching anxiety that fills you with feelings of rejection and paranoia and the need to keep looking over your shoulder...ever *‘on the alert,’* developing ever-more sophisticated survival techniques, tactics and devices, would you be emotionally geared to care deeply about the salvation of the very people that are doing whatever they can to annihilate you, and the people you love? Would you place the wellbeing of such malevolent enemies above that of your own?

So despite the obvious alienation that exists between Israel and Yeshua on one level, I keep seeing the ‘Covenantal Rod’ or ‘Yoke’ that keeps them perpetually united. A Blood Covenant unity in God’s sight cannot be broken or divided! So that everlasting union

between them forces me to see something that seems to be working at a much deeper level. If you see them as two ends of one Covenant Rod or Staff, you see Yeshua as one with Israel and Israel as one with Yeshua. And since God warned us of the temporary alienation that would exist between them, we have to look beneath the surface appearances...and search deeper and probe further. At that deeper level, they appear to be doing something else...something beautiful and mysterious. They are like a multi-faceted redemptive instrument being plied by the hand of Almighty God!

At that level they work together beautifully, with awesome wisdom and synchronized harmony. The rejections they suffer at their respective ends of the Covenant Staff or Yoke are actually a redemptive 'tool,' a 'strategy' that beautifully fulfills God's Plan of Salvation for the whole world! In God's Covenant heart and mind, His Word will always be one with Israel, no matter what rebellious demons or disobedient Jewish and Gentile humans may try to do to separate them. No created thing or being will ever be able to tear asunder what God has eternally joined together...to Himself!

"After these things the Word of the LORD (YESHUA) CAME TO ABRAM IN A VISION, SAYING, DO NOT FEAR, ABRAM, I am a Shield to you; your reward shall be very great." (Genesis 15:1 Amplification and emphasis added.)

'Just as many were astonished at you My people, so His appearance was marred more than any man...' (Isaiah 52:14)

"Who will separate us from the love of Christ? Will tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? Just as it is written,

*"FOR YOUR SAKE WE ARE BEING PUT TO DEATH ALL DAY LONG;
WE WERE CONSIDERED AS SHEEP TO BE SLAUGHTERED."*

"But in all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other created thing, will be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in (His living creative Word) Christ Jesus our Lord." (Romans 8:35-39)

Why have so many billions of Gentiles been able to recognize and embrace Yeshua (Jesus) as their Messiah and be saved by Him throughout the centuries, while so many of His own people remain aloof and react to the sound of His Name with bitter hostility? What a mystery this is! It is a mystery because Scripture clearly tells us that God is behind what we see happening between Yeshua and Israel. For example, notice what the apostle Paul, a Messianic Jew, and a hand-picked apostle of Yeshua, said to Gentiles in Rome who had accepted Yeshua's claim to be Israel's long-awaited Messiah:

*"For I do not want you, brethren, to be uninformed of this mystery—so that you will not be wise (arrogant and self-righteous) in your own estimation—that **a partial hardening has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in; and so all Israel***

will be saved; just as it is written, 'The Deliverer will come from Zion; He will remove ungodliness from Jacob. This is My Covenant with them, when I take away their sins.'
 "From the standpoint of the gospel they are enemies for your sake, but from the standpoint of God's choice they are beloved for the sake of the fathers; for the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable. For just as you (Gentiles) once were disobedient to God, but now have been shown mercy because of their disobedience, so these (unbelieving Jews) also now have been disobedient, that because of the mercy shown to you they also may now be shown mercy. For God has shut up all (Jews and Gentiles alike) in disobedience so that He may show mercy to all!" (Romans 11:25-32 Amplification and emphasis added.)

So again we see that God has one Gospel for all of mankind. He treats them all the same.

"Opening his mouth, Peter said: 'I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man (Jew or Gentile) who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him. The Word which He sent to the sons of Israel, preaching peace through (in the appearance of) Jesus Christ (He is Lord of all)..." (Acts 10:34-36 Amplification and emphasis added.)

Here are more texts that touch upon God's Eternal Covenant and His promise to remove Israel's sins in the future...despite their age-long rebellion in refusing to embrace the living Word that He sends to save all Sin-corrupted fallen flesh:

*"As for Me, this is My covenant with them,' says the LORD: 'My Spirit which is upon you (Israel), and **My words which I have put in your mouth** (through your Covenant union with my living Word, Messiah Yeshua) shall not depart from your mouth, nor from the mouth of your offspring, nor from the mouth of your offspring's offspring,' says the LORD, **'from now and forever.'**" (Isaiah 59:21 Amplification and emphasis added.)*

*"They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me (as I reveal Myself through My living Word and Spirit), from the least of them to the greatest of them,' declares the LORD, **'for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.'**" (Jeremiah 31:34 Amplification and emphasis added.)*

Elsewhere, Paul wrote:

"Therefore having such a hope, we use great boldness in our speech, and are not like Moses, who used to put a veil over his face so that the sons of Israel would not look intently at the end of what was fading away. But their minds were hardened; for until this very day at the reading of the old covenant (Torah) the same veil remains unlifted, because it is removed in Christ. But to this day whenever Moses is read, a veil lies over their heart; but whenever a person turns to the Lord (in the New or Renewed Covenant), the veil (that Sin placed over their eyes) is taken away." (2 Corinthians 3:12-16 Amplification and emphasis added.)

Rejection Seen Through Covenant Eyes

I've come to believe that the rejection Yeshua receives from Israel and the rejection Israel receives from the Gentile world truly are two ends of the one Covenant Staff or Rod. That linkage demonstrates that despite what the weak, extremely limited, Sin-corrupted flesh of Israel may assume or do, Yeshua and His Covenant Bride are inseparable in God's sight. The hardening of Jewish hearts against Messiah Yeshua is the mirror-image of the hardening of the heart of the Gentile world against the Jewish people! The suffering of rejection forges and links together the two ends of this redemptive instrument. And God uses it to save the Gentiles who will repent of their Sin and receive their Salvation from Israel's Messiah.

Just as there is a veil over Israel's eyes with regard to her Messiah, so is there a veil that causes '*a partial hardening*' in the hearts of Christian and non-Christian Gentiles, against Israel and the Jewish people. The Gentile world (religious or otherwise) fails, or refuses, to see Israel's true significance and importance as God's instrument for their salvation. So Israel is perpetually wounded and her reputation terribly disfigured and distorted in the view of the world. And that remains the case as long as Yeshua is wounded and His image and reputation are disfigured and distorted in the eyes of Israel! The world cannot see Israel, nor can Israel see Yeshua in the same light that God through His written Word, reveals each one to be! In that sense, the veil that blinds Gentiles to Israel's true God-given significance corresponds to the veil that prevents Israel from realizing that God's living Word has appeared in the flesh as her Messiah, Yeshua. She can't see Him as His Heavenly Father sees Him. And the world can't see Israel as God sees her. What this proves is that all descendants of fallen Adam are spiritually blind and we all need God to open our eyes so that we may finally see His entire vista of Reality as it really is.

So these two veils are working together, by God's design, to enhance and expedite the ongoing salvation of non-Jewish peoples from every tribe, race, era and culture. Paul implies that God causes Israel's blindness. He also clearly states that this blindness will last '*until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in...*' So as long as the time frame for the salvation of the Gentiles continues, God will keep most of Israel in the background... at a distance from Yeshua. But there's an awesome purpose behind this. Israel's bias against Yeshua will continue to keep her away from Him – **so that Gentiles by the billions will not be barred from coming to Yeshua for salvation because of their age-old anti-Jewish bias and prejudicial contempt!** **Because Israel keeps so far away from Him, the Gentiles see Yeshua as one of their own!**

In God's Wisdom, these rejections work simultaneously to expedite the salvation of countless numbers of Gentiles. This is why Yeshua and Israel are yoked together in their mutual affliction. They suffer this agony for the sake of the world and its salvation. The Husband (God's living Word) and the Bride (Israel) endure the same pain – rejection and exclusion. Israel rejects her Messiah and excludes herself from the glory of knowing Him in His Fullness, and the world rejects Israel and remains excluded from the glory of sharing in and being grafted into the fullness of Israel's God-given covenantal legacy, spiritual commonwealth and God-given Blessing. God's awesome wisdom and mercy

make it possible for the door of salvation to remain open to the Gentile world as the fulfillment of God's enormous Salvation Plan progresses toward the ultimate fullness and full-bloom Completion of the Salvation Saga that is yet to be fully consummated.

As this mysterious salvation process continues on behalf of the Gentile World, Yeshua's Righteous Covenant Representation and Finished Atonement are protecting Israel...even while she rejects Him! Yeshua's Covenantal Covering has a 'lightning rod' effect. He protects Sin-full, undeserving Israel by absorbing the full wrath of God in her place. Her Messiah protects Israel, even as she keeps rejecting Him – so that the repentant Gentiles can keep coming to Him for Salvation. So in this sense, God is doing exactly the same thing, to and for each group. But He does it in two different ways, for each group.

*“...I am eager to preach the gospel to you also who are in Rome. 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.**” (ROMANS 1:15-17 EMPHASIS ADDED.)*

As Yeshua protects her, Israel is at the same time, serving as a lightning rod for Yeshua! God keeps her separated from Yeshua. And as she remains apart from Him, she keeps drawing the brunt of the world's contempt for, and rejection of her 'Jewishness,' away from her Messiah and onto herself! This is how Israel, wittingly or unwittingly, protects her Protector! She diverts the very powerful negative force of Gentile Anti-Semitic contempt and rejection away from Him, even though He is – **The Ultimate Jew of all Jews and the Messiah King of all of Israel!**

Because Israel distances herself from Yeshua, Gentiles don't see Him as being part of her. That makes it possible for much of the Gentile world to love and bond with the Husband, even as they turn their backs on His Bride! This is how God works around the crippled, maimed, Sin-corrupted woundedness and brokenness that we all suffer as a result of Adam's fall and its horrible decapitation consequences. In this sense the biased Gentiles also have a 'partial hardening,' a veil over their eyes that prevents them from seeing Yeshua in all of His Fullness, as He really is. When they see Him, they cannot see how utterly 'Jewish' and in love with His Bride He truly is, or how eternally devoted to her He will always be. Their inbred Gentile rejection of Israel filters that Messiah part of Him out of their perceptions. To them, *He is not 'one of them (a Jew).'* *He is 'one of us (a Gentile).'* And the veil that is over Israel's eyes forces her to assume the same thing with reverse effect: *He is not one of us (a Jew)...He is one of them (a Gentile)!*

What a mysterious and awesome paradox! Gentiles feel contempt for Jews, and blame them for everything that goes wrong in the world...while billions of them fervently worship and honor **The Jew of all Jews!** The non-Jewish peoples see absolutely no contradiction in such behavior! Their veil blinds them so much to the true, full meaning of Israel that most of them even ignore and avoid the New Covenant Messianic apostolic Jews who share the faith they themselves have in Yeshua and who also proclaim Him to

be their Messiah! So truly, it can be said that God has placed veils over the eyes of both groups, for His own redemptive purposes.

Our Bridegroom and His Beloved Bride

Can this really be the way that God commissioned Yeshua, His Word, and Israel, the Word's Bride, to work together and accomplish their common, world redeeming task? Is this how the Bride of the Lamb is joined together with Yeshua, in His crucifixion and death? And is this the way God has positioned them...so that they could watch and protect each other's back? Is this the way God expedites His plan of salvation and how, despite their failings and disabilities, the Children of Abraham, Isaac and Israel continue to be a supernatural, multi-leveled fountain of blessing on behalf of the entire Gentile World?

*“And I will bless those who bless you, and the one who curses you I will curse. **And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed!**” (Genesis 12:3 ***Emphasis added.***)*

If this is the way it truly is, then we would do well to look deeper into what is taking place between the Husband and His Bride and ponder what keeps causing Israel's heart to remain hardened against and distant from Yeshua. From what we've discussed already, we might be able to see that it's possible that her rejection of Him may actually be a revelation of how intimately God has united Israel to His Living Word and united His Living Word, to Israel!

The suffering, rejected living Word of God and the suffering, rejected Jewish People that the Word of God created for Himself are, in their sufferings, mirror images of each other...two ends of the same Blood Covenant Atonement Rod. God sent His Son to identify with Israel so much, that Israel is the Betrothed of God's Living Word. She is forever joined to Him through her forefathers and patriarchs. The living Word of God brought Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and the patriarchs of the 12 tribes, into God's Eternal Covenant. Then, in accordance with the written Torah that reveals Him, the living Torah, Yeshua, eight days after His birth, was Himself circumcised into that same Covenant. His circumcision blood was mingled with the circumcision blood of Israel's forefathers. In this way, Israel became like a woman betrothed to God's living Word. The fathers responded to the proposals and advances of God's Word, who then became Israel's Husband! This union, from betrothal to ultimate consummation, is eternal. It began to be consummated by the mixing of the Blood of the Ultimate Passover Lamb on the Cross, with the circumcision blood of Israel's fathers. That confirmed the fact that Israel is forever one with her Messiah! Her Husband came to do whatever was necessary to redeem and reclaim her and take her back to Himself.

But there is more consummation yet to come. The world will not see the Fullness of the Consummation that God has in store for the Husband and Bride, until the time that God has allotted for the salvation of the Gentiles, finally comes to at an end. So for greater clarity and understanding let's review:

Because of this eternally intimate Covenant union and the perpetual ‘oneness’ and undying Loyalty and Faithfulness the Covenant requires and creates, Yeshua, God’s Lamb, became so united with Israel, that He is even one with and responsible for, Israel’s rebellion and Sin and infidelities! He legally became her ‘Azazel’ (Day of Atonement Scapegoat) upon whom all of her curses, guilt, shame and condemnation were heaped. The Covenant Passover Lamb of God took her Sinfulness upon Himself. He identified with Israel perfectly...on every level and in every aspect... so that He could take her Sin to the Cross and Father could strike Him down in her place with the full force and fury of His Divine Judgment and Justice. And in this way Yeshua protects His Bride from the wrath and Justice of God. This is how profoundly and intimately linked Yeshua is with His Bride Israel (See the prophetic interaction between the prophet Hosea and his unfaithful wife Gomer). Their Covenant union had to be established first. And then, God is able to graft believing Gentiles into the Covenant ‘Root’ that His union with Israel creates and to which the rest of the world can and must be joined.

In this awesome Blood Covenant sense, God through His Word, is in the process of making the many, into one. And so, despite her protests, Israel continues to bear the regenerated offspring of her Husband, the living Word of God, in and from her womb.

“So, having obtained help from God, I stand to this day testifying both to small and great, stating nothing but what the Prophets and Moses said was going to take place: that the Christ was to suffer, and that by reason of His resurrection from the dead He would be the first to proclaim Light both to the Jewish people (first) and (then) to the Gentiles!” (Acts 26:22-23 Amplification and emphasis added.)