



“The Kingdom – Fellowship of Suffering”

“I want to know Messiah and the power of His resurrection and the Fellowship of Sharing in His Sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead.”
(Philippians 3:10)

“Dear friends, do not be surprised at the painful trial you are suffering, as though something strange were happening to you. But rejoice that you have fellowship with the sufferings of Messiah, so that you may be overjoyed when His glory is revealed. If you are insulted because of the name of Messiah, you are blessed, for the Spirit of glory and of Yahweh rests on you.” (1 Peter 4:12-14)

Because of the revulsion of the concept of martyrdom, how King Messiah YahShua envisioned the relationship of the Kingdom to His death is often ignored. Crucifixion is unsettling. Usually, a Kingdom is not established by the assassination of its King. Usually, if you **“Strike the shepherd...the sheep will be scattered...”** (Zechariah 13:7) In the many writings and teachings on the Kingdom, one rarely finds a teaching on the death of YahShua as something central to establishing the Kingdom.

Like Yochannan the Immerser, King Messiah YahShua anticipated opposition and rejection. The Prophet Isaiah saw ahead what was awaiting the Messiah: **“He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces He was despised, and we esteemed him not.”** (Isaiah 53:3)

Two people can live side-by-side and never really know each other because they move in two different circles of interest, influence and experience. But let them share the same suffering and they will become bound together by a “fellowship of suffering,” the deeper their shared suffering, the deeper the relationship.

King Messiah YahShua foresaw that He, like Yochannan, would end up dead for the message. And He knew it would be in the capital city that He would be martyred.

“I tell you the truth: Among those born of women there has not risen anyone greater than Yochannan the Immerser; yet he who is least in the Kingdom of Heaven is greater than he. From the days of Yochannan the Immerser until now, the Kingdom of Heaven has been forcefully advancing, and forceful men lay hold of it.” (Matthew 11:11-12)

“Because of this, Yahweh in His wisdom said, ‘I will send them prophets and apostles, some of whom they will kill and others they will persecute.’ Therefore this generation will be held responsible for the blood of all the prophets that has been shed since the beginning of the world, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah, who was killed between the altar and the Sanctuary. Yes, I tell you, this generation will be held responsible for it all.” (Luke 11:49-51)

“At that time some Pharisees came to YahShua and said to him, ‘Leave this place and go somewhere else. Herod wants to kill you.’

He replied, ‘Go tell that fox, “I will drive out demons and heal people today and tomorrow, and on the third day I will reach my goal.” In any case, I must keep going today and tomorrow and the next day—for surely no prophet can die outside Jerusalem!’” (Luke 13:31-33)

The Parable of the Tenants

This was the cryptic message of “The Parable of the Tenants”: “He then began to speak to them in parables: ‘A man planted a vineyard. He put a wall around it, dug a pit for the winepress and built a watchtower. Then he rented the vineyard to some farmers and went away on a journey. At harvest time he sent a servant to the tenants to collect from them some of the fruit of the vineyard. But they seized him, beat him and sent him away empty-handed. Then he sent another servant to them; they struck this man on the head and treated him shamefully. He sent still another, and that one they killed. He sent many others; some of them they beat, others they killed.

He had one left to send, a son, whom he loved. He sent him last of all, saying, “They will respect my son.”

But the tenants said to one another, “This is the heir. Come, let’s kill him, and the inheritance will be ours.” So they took him and killed him, and threw him out of the vineyard.

What then will the owner of the vineyard do? He will come and kill those tenants and give the vineyard to others. Haven’t you read this scripture: “The stone the builders rejected has become the capstone” Yahweh has done this, and it is marvelous in our eyes” (Psalm 118:22, 23)?

Then they looked for a way to arrest him because they knew he had spoken the parable against them. But they were afraid of the crowd; so they left him and went away.” (Mark 12:1-12)

King Messiah YahShua anticipated His death at the hands of the false rulers of Judea and the Roman occupiers as a result of offering, first the Jews and secondly the Lost Sheep of the House of Israel, the Kingdom.

“I have come to bring fire on the earth, and how I wish it were already kindled! But I have an immersion to undergo, and how distressed I am until it is completed!” (Luke 12:49-50)

“...[Messiah] said to his disciples, ‘The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. Men will tell you, “There he is!” or “Here he is!” Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation.’” (Luke 17:22-25)

Despised & Rejected For the Kingdom

King Messiah YahShua identified with the prophetic rejection of Israel by the nations because He too was being rejected by certain of the “Elders, High Priests and Rabbis of the Torah” that He knew would ultimately end in death. King Messiah YahShua was convinced that His role of ushering in the Kingdom was the very thing that would result in the persecution of that Kingdom.

He saw His death and He saw the coming ordeal for Israel. “From that time on YahShua began to explain to His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things at the hands of the Elders, High Priests and Rabbis of the Torah, and that He must be killed and on the third day be raised to life.

Kepha took Him aside and began to rebuke him. ‘Never, Sovereign!’ he said. ‘This shall never happen to you!’

YahShua turned and said to Kepha, ‘Get behind me, haSatan! You are a stumbling block to me; you do not have in mind the things of Yahweh, but the things of men.’

Then YahShua said to His disciples, ‘If anyone would come after me, he must deny himself and take up his crossbeam and follow me. For whoever wants to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for Me will find it. What good will it be for a man if he gains the whole world, yet forfeits his soul? Or what can a man give in exchange for his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in His Father’s glory with His angels, and then He will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in His Kingdom.” (Matthew 16:21-28)

“...you will be handed over to be persecuted and put to death, and you will be hated by all nations because of Me. At that time many will turn away from the Faith and will betray and hate each other, and many false prophets will appear and deceive many people. Because of the increase of wickedness, the love of most will grow cold, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved. And this full message of the Kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the End will come.” (Matthew 24:9-14)

“Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of Me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in Heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” (Matthew 5:11-12)

“Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets.” (Luke 6:22-23)

“At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people—everyone whose name is found written in the book—will be delivered.” (Daniel 12:1)

Martyred for the Kingdom

Messiah knew this would all culminate in the time of the End in the martyrdom of some of His latter-day disciples: **“And they overcame (conquered) HaSatan by the blood of the Lamb, and by the word of their testimony; and they were willing to give up their lives.” (Revelation 12:11)**

The word “martyr” comes from the Greek word **μάρτυς** “mártys”, which means “a witness” or “one who testifies”, especially “one who witnesses through his death”. Martyrdom in the Netzarim Faith is called *Kiddush HaShem*, meaning “Sanctification of the Name - Yahweh’s name” through suffering and/or death. Martyrs are following the example of King Messiah YahShua in offering up their lives as a sacrifice to bring about the Kingdom of Heaven for Yahweh’s namesake. The first Netzarim martyr, after Messiah YahShua, was the Hellenist Believer, Stephen **Στέφανος** (Ste’fānos, whose name means “crowned”). **“And they stoned Stephen, calling upon Yahweh, and saying, King YahShua, receive my spirit” (Acts 7:59)**. And those who suffer martyrdom are said to have been “crowned”. **“Do not be afraid of what you are about to suffer. I tell you, the devil will put some of you in prison to test you, and you will suffer persecution for ten days. Be faithful, even to the point of death, and I will give you the crown of life.” (Revelation 2:10)**

Even our first leader, who succeeded Messiah YahShua, Ya’akov haTzadik (James the Just – YahShua’s own brother) was martyred in 62 CE. Rabbi Toma (Thomas) confirms that Ya’akov was the succeeding leader of the movement, after YahShua, chronicling the words of the Messiah: “The disciples said to YahShua: We know that you will depart from us; who is it who will lead us?” YahShua said to them, ‘Wherever you have come from, go to Ya’akov haTzadik, for whom heaven and earth came to be.’” (*The Gospel of Thomas*, login 12) Rabbi Sha’ul lists Ya’akov with Kepha (better known as Peter) and Yochannan (John) as the three “pillars” of the movement (Galatians 2:9).

The Netzarim historian, Hegesippus said of Ya’akov haTzadik: “After the apostles, Ya’akov the brother of the King that was called the Tzadik was made head of the Assembly at Jerusalem...He prayed on behalf of the people, insomuch that his knees were reputed to have acquired the hardness of camels' knees.” (*De Viris Illustribus*, quotes Hegesippus' account of James from the fifth book of Hegesippus' lost *Commentaries*)

He was appointed President of the Sanhedrin at Jerusalem after Nikdimon ben Gurion (Nicodemus) abdicated due to the crucifixion of YahShua. Between the instillation of governors, the false High Priest Ananus ben Ananus took advantage of this lack of imperial oversight to assemble an illegal council who condemned Ya’akov on the charge of breaking the Torah.”

Again, according to Hegesippus, certain of the council came to Ya’akov for help in putting down the Netzarim movement. The record says: “They came, therefore, in a body to Ya’akov, and said: ‘We plead to you, restrain the people: for they are gone astray in their opinions about YahShua, as if he were the Messiah. We plead to you to persuade all who have come here for the day of the Passover, concerning YahShua. For we all listen to your opinions; since we, as well as all the people, bear your testimony that you are a Tzadik, and do not show partiality to anyone. Will you, therefore, persuade the people not to entertain erroneous opinions about YahShua: for all the people, and we also, listen to your opinion. Take your stand, then, upon the Temple Mount, that from that elevated spot you may be clearly seen, and your words may be plainly audible to all the people. For, in order to attend the Passover, all the tribes have congregated here, and some of the Gentiles also.

To the council members’ dismay, Ya’akov boldly testified that Messiah “Himself sits in Heaven, at the right hand of Majesty, and shall return on the clouds of Heaven.” *The council members then said to themselves*, “We have not done well in getting this testimony out of him concerning YahShua. But let us go up and throw him down, that the people may be intimidated, and not believe him.

The council members “...threw down the Tzadik... [and] began to stone him: for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned, and knelt, and said: ‘I pray, Yahweh Almighty our Abba, forgive them; for they know not what they do.’”

And, while they were stoning him to death, one of the priests, the sons of Rechab, of Rechabim family, to whom testimony is borne by Jeremiah the prophet, began to cry aloud, saying: 'Stop what you're doing, the Tzadik is praying for us.' But one among them, one of the fullers, took the staff with which he used to wring out the garments he dyed, and hurled it at the head of the Tzadik.

And so he suffered martyrdom; and they buried him right then, and the memorial erected to his memory still stands, near the Temple. This man was a true witness to both Jews and Hellenists that YahShua is the Messiah." (Fragments from the Acts of the Assembly; Concerning the Martyrdom of Ya'akov, the Brother of the King, from Book 5)

"Blessed is the man who perseveres under trial, because when he has stood the test, he will receive the crown of life that Yahweh has promised to those who love him." (James 1:12)

The popularity of Ya'akov haTzadik and the illegality of his death triggered the First Jewish-Roman War that ended in the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple as predicted by King Messiah YahShua. **"Do you see all these great buildings?" replied YahShua. "Not one stone here will be left on another; every one will be thrown down. (This was said) As YahShua was sitting on the Mount of Olives..." (Mark 13:2, 3)** So, is the power of the death of a saint. **"What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to Me from the ground."** (Genesis 4:10)

There may have been others besides Stephen and Ya'akov that were martyred, since the Apostle Rabbi Sha'ul, acknowledged persecuting the Netzarim before his conversion (Acts 8:1; 9:1). Tertullian wrote that "the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Movement," implying that the martyrs' willingness to offer up their lives for the message leads to the conversion of others. ("The Blood of Martyrs: Unintended Consequences of Ancient Violence" by Joyce Ellen Salisbury)

"Through [Yahweh] and for His name's sake, we received grace and apostleship to call people from among all the nations to the obedience that comes from faith." (Romans 1:5)

Like Rabbi Sha'ul taught, martyrdom is a gain that only those who have lived for Messiah can fully appreciate. **"For to me to live is Messiah, and to die is gain." (Philippians 1:21)**

Let's be clear, a martyr is a Believer who is killed for maintaining the Faith, *knowing* that this will almost certainly result in imminent death (though without intentionally seeking death). It is not someone with a "death wish." Death is the price you pay to give testimony for Messiah as King. True martyrdom is motivated by love of the King and His Kingdom. **"And though I bestow all my goods to feed the poor, and though I give my body to be burned, and have not love, it profits me nothing." (1Corinthians 13:3)** We do not seek death, of itself, merely to die. If the Holy Spirit leads you to flee, then you are not being led to seal your testimony with martyrdom. **"Then let them which be in Judaea flee into the mountains." (Matthew 24:16)**

Take, for instance, the "Two Witnesses": **"I was given a reed like a measuring rod and was told, 'Go and measure the Temple of Yahweh and the altar, and count the worshipers there. But exclude the outer court; do not measure it, because it has been given to the Gentiles. They will trample on the holy city for 42 months. And I will give power to My Two Witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth.' These are the two olive trees and the two lampstands that stand before the Sovereign of the earth.**

If anyone tries to harm them, fire comes from their mouths and devours their enemies. This is how anyone who wants to harm them must die. These men have power to shut up the sky so that it will not rain during the time they are prophesying; and they have power to turn the waters into blood and to strike the earth with every kind of plague as often as they want.

Now when they have finished their testimony, the beast that comes up from the Abyss will attack them, and overpower and kill them. Their bodies will lie in the street of the Great City (Jerusalem), which is figuratively called Sodom (burning) and Egypt (oppressions), where also their King was crucified. For three and a half days (each day for a year of Messiah's ministry) men from every people, tribe, language and nation will gaze on their bodies and refuse them burial. The inhabitants of the earth will gloat over them and will celebrate by sending each other gifts, because these two prophets had tormented those who live on the earth.

But after the three and a half days a breath of life from Yahweh entered them, and they stood on their feet, and terror struck those who saw them. Then they heard a loud voice from Heaven saying to them, 'Come up here.' And they went up to Heaven in a cloud, while their enemies looked on.

At that very hour there was a severe earthquake and a tenth of the city collapsed. Seven thousand people were killed in the earthquake, and the survivors were terrified and gave glory to the Elohim of Heaven." (Revelation 11:1-13)

As an end-time Netzarim, you can also know when you are about to enter the fellowship of the martyrs. **"And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for**

a little season, until their fellow servants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.” (Revelation 6:11)

Rabbi Sha’ul knew the time of his martyrdom: “I only know that in every city the Holy Spirit warns me that prison and hardships are facing me.” (Acts 20:23)

“Why are you weeping and breaking my heart? I am ready not only to be bound, but also to die in Jerusalem for the name of King YahShua.” (Acts 21:13)

“For I am already being poured out like a drink offering, and the time has come for my departure. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” (2 Timothy 4:6, 7)

Rabbi Kepha knew the time of his martyrdom: “I tell you the truth, when you were younger you dressed yourself and went where you wanted; but when you are old you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will dress you and lead you where you do not want to go.’ YahShua said this to indicate the kind of death by which Kepha would glorify Yahweh. Then He said to him, ‘Follow me!’” (John 21:18-19)

“I will always remind you of these things (of the Kingdom), even though you know them and are firmly established in the truth you now have. I think it is right to refresh your memory as long as I live in the tent of this body, because I know that I will soon put it aside, as our Lord Jesus Christ has made clear to me. And I will make every effort to see that after my departure you will always be able to remember these things.” (2 Peter 1:12-15)

Some are led by the Spirit to die – “You will be betrayed even by parents, brothers, relatives and friends, and they will put some of you to death.” (Luke 21:16) while the Remnant will be led by the same Spirit to flee to Petra – “...let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains, let those in the city get out, and let those in the country not enter the city.” (Luke 21:21)

“Yochannan (who was martyred by beheading) answered them all, ‘I immerse you with water. But one more powerful than I will come, the thongs of whose sandals I am not worthy to untie. He will immerse you with the Holy Spirit and with fire.’” (Luke 3:16)

Whether martyred or not, “Everyone will be salted with fire.” (Mark 9:42-49)

Can You Drink the Cup?

The night before He was crucified, we hear Messiah lament over Jerusalem like the prophet Jeremiah: “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing. Look, your House is left to you desolate. For I tell you, you will not see Me again until you say, ‘Blessed is he who comes in the name of Yahweh.’” (Matthew 23:37-39)

Messiah knew it was His actions that were bringing on to Israel the coming wrath: “Do not suppose that I have come to bring peace to the earth. I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to turn ‘a man against his father, a daughter against her mother, a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law - a man’s enemies will be the members of his own household.’” (Micah 7:6)

Anyone who loves his father or mother more than me is not worthy of me; anyone who loves his son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and anyone who does not take his crossbeam and follow Me is not worthy of Me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” (Matthew 10:34-39)

King Messiah YahShua described His mission in terms of the prophet Isaiah’s “Suffering Servant.” The picture of the suffering of our King is nowhere more perfectly displayed than in the prophecy of Isaiah 52:13-53:12. What is described here is the ideal Sufferer, the Suffering Messiah Who suffers on behalf of the Kingdom, the one sacrificed for the many.

“Behold, my servant shall prosper, he shall be exalted and lifted up, and shall be very high.” (Isaiah

52:13) Messiah YahShua was proclaimed to be the נֶצְרַר “Netzar” the branch from the Royal House of David. Messiah is the shoot who sprung up from the fallen Davidic dynasty. The Targum Jonathan paraphrases this passage as: “Behold my servant Messiah shall prosper; he shall be high and increase and be exceedingly strong.”

“As many were astonished at him- his appearance was so marred, beyond human semblance, and his form beyond that of the sons of men.” (Isaiah 52:14) Messiah YahShua was very badly beaten and according to this passage near unrecognizable.

“For he grew up before him like a young plant, and like a root out of dry ground; he had no form or comeliness that we should look at him, and no beauty that we should desire him.”

He had no beauty or majesty to attract us to him, nothing in his appearance that we should desire him.

He was despised and rejected by men, a man of sorrows, and familiar with suffering. Like one from whom men hide their faces he was despised, and we esteemed him not.

Surely he took up our infirmities and carried our sorrows, yet we considered him stricken by Elohim, smitten by him, and afflicted.

But he was pierced for our transgressions, he was crushed for our iniquities (Midrash Ruth Rabbah says: "Another explanation (of Ruth 2:14): He is speaking of King Messiah; 'Come over here (draw near to the throne). Have some bread (of the kingdom) and dip it in the wine vinegar,' (this refers to his chastisements), as it is said, 'But he was wounded for our transgressions, bruised for our iniquities; the punishment that brought us peace was upon him, and by his wounds we are healed.'")

We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and Yahweh has laid on him the iniquity of us all.

He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth; he was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers is silent, so he did not open his mouth.

By oppression and judgment he was taken away. And who can speak of his descendants? For he was cut off from the land of the living; for the transgression of my people he was stricken.

He was assigned a grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death, though he had done no violence, nor was any deceit in his mouth.

Yet it was Yahweh's will to crush him and cause him to suffer, and though Yahweh makes his life a guilt offering, he will see his offspring and prolong his days, and the will of Yahweh will prosper in his hand.

After the suffering of his soul, he will see the light of life and be satisfied; by his knowledge my righteous servant will justify many, and he will bear their iniquities.

Therefore I will give him a portion among the great, and he will divide the spoils with the strong, because he poured out his life unto death, and was numbered with the transgressors. For he bore the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors. (Isaiah 53:2-12)

"Who has believed our report? And to whom has the arm of Yahweh been revealed?" (Isaiah 53:1)

According to the Midrash: the "Suffering Messiah" would appear prior to the coming of the Kingdom; he will gather the children of Israel around him, march to Jerusalem, and there, after challenging the hostile powers, reestablish proper Temple-worship and proclaim his own dominion. And that's exactly what King Messiah YahShua did the last few weeks of His life. According to Eliyahu of Vilna, the main mission of the "Suffering Messiah" is to bring back the exiles and rebuild the Land and Rabbi Meir Leib ben Yechiel Michael Weiser ("MALBIM") (1809-1879 CE) says, the "Suffering Messiah" will be the leader of the Lost Ten Tribes. This He will do in the future.

"Then Yakkov (James) and Yochannan (symbolic of the tribes of Judah and Benjamin), beni Safedy, came to Him: 'Rabbi,' they said, 'we want you to do for us whatever we ask.'

'What do you want Me to do for you?' he asked.

They replied, 'Let one of us sit at your right and the other at your left in your glory.'

'You don't know what you are asking,' YahShua said. 'Can you drink the cup I drink or be immersed with the immersion I am immersed with?'

'We can,' they answered. YahShua said to them, 'You will drink the cup I drink and be immersed with the immersion I am immersed with, but to sit at My right or left is not for Me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared.'

When the ten heard (symbolic of the Lost Tribes) about this, they became indignant with Yakkov and Yochannan. YahShua called them together and said, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the nations lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" (Mark 10:35-45)

"For just as through the disobedience of the one man the many were made sinners, so also through the obedience of the one man the many will be made righteous." (Romans 5:19)

Suffering into Sacrifice

How was the killing of Messiah establishing the Kingdom? To answer that we have to understand what a sacrifice is. To most people, "to sacrifice" means "to kill". But in the Scriptures, "to sacrifice" never meant simply "to kill". The killing of the animal was only a part of the *preparation* for the sacrifice. The killing was the offering. To "make an offering" means to offer to Yahweh the animal that has been chosen, slain, and otherwise prepared for sacrifice. If the Israelite worshiper chose the appropriate animal according to the Torah, brought it at the appointed time to the place, where Yahweh placed His name (Deuteronomy 12:11), presented it to the priest anointed with the

holy oil, and killed it before him, and followed every other precept required by the Torah, there would still be no sacrifice unless and until the slaughtered animal was accepted by Yahweh. Sacrifice does not occur until Yahweh accepts the offering. *The offering of the animal on the altar became the sacrifice when the Father accepted the offering.* And everything that preceded that act, including the slaying of the animal, was only part of the preparation for the sacrifice.

“Every High Priest is selected from among men and is appointed to represent them in matters related to Yahweh, to offer gifts and sacrifices for sins.” (Hebrews 5:1)

This principle holds true with the sacrifice of Messiah. His death on the Tree was not itself the sacrifice. The crucifixion was the last, gruesome bit of preparation for His sacrifice, which took place after He arose from the dead and ascended into Heaven, where he offered himself to Yahweh for the sins of the world. If Messiah YahShua had ascended into Heaven before His death, He would have had nothing to offer to Yahweh for the sins of the world. The sacrificial Lamb had to *first* be slain and *then* offered to Yahweh for sin. It was necessary that King Messiah YahShua, as High Priest, have something to offer to Yahweh for man’s sin when He presented Himself to Yahweh. (Hebrews 8:3)

On Yom Kippur (the Day of Atonement), Israel’s High Priest entered with the blood of goats and calves into the Holy Temple built by men’s hands to make an atoning sacrifice for the nation (Leviticus 16), but **“Messiah is not entered into the holy places, made with hands, which are figures of the true, but into Heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of Yahweh for us....Neither by the blood of goats and calves, but by His own blood He entered in.” (Hebrews 9:24, 12)**

If the story of YahShua had ended with the crucifixion, no atonement for sin would have been accomplished. **“If Messiah be not risen, then is our preaching vain . . . and, if Messiah be not raised, your faith is vain; you are yet in your sins.” (1Corinthians 15:14, 17)** YahShua did not ascend into Heaven because His atoning work was finished; rather, He ascended as our High Priest – the Melchizedek - to finish His atoning work.

“Yahweh said to Him, ‘You are my Son; today I have become your Father.’ (Psalm 2:7) And He says in another place, ‘You are a priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek.’ (Psalm 110:4)” (Hebrews 5:5, 6)

“The High Priest carries the blood...into the Most Holy Place as a sin offering...” (Hebrews 13:11)

There, in the holiest place of Heaven, YahShua **“appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (Hebrews 9:26).** It was this presenting of Messiah YahShua’s offering at the Mercy Seat of Yahweh in Heaven, and Yahweh’s acceptance of it, not just His horrible death – the offering, which purchased our redemption.

“...Messiah did not enter a man-made Sanctuary that was only a copy of the true one; He entered Heaven itself, now to appear for us in Yahweh’s presence. Nor did He enter Heaven to offer Himself again and again, the way the High Priest enters the Most Holy Place every year with blood that is not his own. Then Messiah would have had to suffer many times since the creation of the world. But now He has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of Himself.” (Hebrews 9:24-26)

“...when this Priest had offered for all time one sacrifice for sins, He sat down at the right hand of Yahweh.” (Hebrews 10:12)

Man needed a witness that YahShua’s sacrifice was accepted by the Father because the event took place in Heaven, where no man could see. There had to be a trustworthy witness. For those seeking the truth, Yahweh has provided something which can be used as a sign to show the way, something which bears irrefutable record to the fact that the offering of Messiah YahShua as the **“Lamb that takes away the sin of the world.” (John 1:29)**, the **“lamb without blemish and without spot”**, was accepted by the Father as propitiation for our sins and that He **“made that same YahShua both King and Messiah.” (Acts 2:36)** In 1John 5:6, we read, **“It is the Spirit that bears witness because the Spirit is truth.”**

The disciples, obediently waiting in Jerusalem, learned that YahShua had made His sacrifice and that it had been accepted only when the Father sent His Witness of it on Pentecost morning, **“And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance.” (Acts 2:4)**

Once you understand this you can understand the “Passion Prophecies.”

“He then began to teach them that the Son of Man must suffer many things and be rejected by the Elders, High Priests and Rabbis of the Torah, and that He must be killed and after three days rise again. He spoke plainly about this, and Kepha took him aside and began to rebuke Him.” (Mark 8:31-32)

“YahShua did not want anyone to know where they were, because He was teaching His disciples. He said to them, ‘The Son of Man is going to be betrayed into the hands of men. They will kill Him, and after three days He will rise.’ But they did not understand what He meant and were afraid to ask Him about it.” (Mark 9:30-32)

“They were on their way up to Jerusalem, with YahShua leading the way, and the disciples were astonished, while those who followed were afraid. Again He took the Twelve aside and told them what was

going to happen to Him. ‘We are going up to Jerusalem,’ He said, ‘and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the High Priests and Rabbis of the Torah. They will condemn Him to death and will hand him over to the Gentiles, who will mock him and spit on him, flog him and kill him. Three days later He will rise.’” (Mark 10:32-34)

King Messiah YahShua’s own action: “Then YahShua went into the Temple of Yahweh and drove out all those who bought and sold in the Temple, and overturned the tables of the money changers and the seats of those who sold doves. And He said to them, "It is written, "My house shall be called a House of Prayer,' but you have made it a "den of thieves.'" Then the blind and the lame came to Him in the Temple, and He healed them. But when the chief priests and scribes saw the wonderful things that He did, and the children crying out in the temple and saying, "Hoshanu ben David!" they were indignant and said to Him, "Do You hear what these are saying?" And YahShua said to them, "Yes. Have you never read, "Out of the mouth of babes and nursing infants you have perfected praise"?" (Matthew 21:12-16)”

King Messiah YahShua interpretation of the Passover Seder celebrating the offering of Messiah: “And as they were eating, YahShua took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, "Take, eat; this is My body." Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins. But I say to you, I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's Kingdom.’” (Matthew 26:26-29)

King Messiah YahShua saw the Temple in need of a cleansing so He offered Himself as a revolutionary fulfillment of the Torah’s sacrificial system. In other words YahShua – the Lamb of Yahweh – offered Himself up as the sacrificial offering to Yahweh so that Yahweh would forgive the sins of Israel and restore the Commonwealth.

King Messiah YahShua understood that by offering Himself up for Israel He was ushering in the Kingdom of Yahweh.

“Heirs of Yahweh and co-heirs with Messiah, if indeed we share in His sufferings in order that we may also share His glory.” (Romans 8:17)

“Be careful to follow every command I am giving you today, so that you may live and increase and may enter and possess the land that Yahweh promised on oath to your forefathers. Remember how Yahweh your Elohim led you all the way in the desert these forty years; to humble you and to test you in order to know what was in your heart, whether or not you would keep His commands. He humbled you, causing you to hunger and then feeding you with manna, which neither you nor your fathers had known, to teach you that man does not live on bread alone but on every word that comes from the mouth of Yahweh.” (Deuteronomy 8:1-3)

Rejoice; Suffering Brings the Kingdom!

Yahweh says: “See now that I myself am He! There is no Elohim besides me. I put to death and I bring to life, I wound and I heal, and no one can deliver out of My hand.” (Deuteronomy 32:39)

“If the Holy One, blessed be He, is pleased with a man, He crushes him with painful sufferings. For it is said: **“And Yahweh was pleased with [him, hence] and caused him to suffer” (Isaiah 53:10)**. Now, you might think that this is so even if he did not accept them with love. Therefore it is said: To see if his soul would offer itself in restitution. Even as the trespass-offering must be brought by consent, so also the sufferings must be endured with consent. And if he did accept them, what is his reward? He will see his seed, prolong his days. And more than that, his knowledge [of the Torah] will endure with him. For it is said: The purpose of Adonai will prosper in his hand. ... It has been taught: R. Simeon b. Yohai says: The Holy One, blessed be He, gave Israel three precious gifts, and all of them were given only through sufferings. These are: The Torah, the Land of Israel and the World to Come.” (Talmud Berachot pg. 5a)

The concept that there should be rejoicing because one is suffering is new; yet it was shortly to be tested in the lives of the early disciples and recorded in Acts 5:41. It was then that the Netzarim Movement began to share the sufferings of Messiah. As time went by it also became clear why suffering was a necessary part of the process of reconciling Israel to Yahweh. YahShua was “**perfected**” by His sufferings. (Hebrews 4.15, 16; 5.8-9)

Rabbi Sha’ul understood experientially what the “**fellowship of Messiah’s suffering**” really is: “**Are they servants of Messiah?** (I am out of my mind to talk like this.) **I am more. I have worked much harder, been in prison more frequently, been flogged more severely, and been exposed to death again and again. Five times I received from the Jews the forty lashes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, I spent a night and a day in the open sea, I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my own countrymen, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false**

brothers. I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.” (2 Corinthians 11:23-27)

On another occasion Rabbi Sha’ul was made to understand the “Temptation of Messiah” in the wilderness when he spoke **“To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of haSatan to torment me.”** Rabbi Sha’ul went on to say, **“Concerning this I pleaded with Adonai three times, to take it away from me. And He has said to me, ‘My grace is sufficient for you: for my power is made perfect in weakness.’”** By way of conclusion, Rabbi Sha’ul wrote, **“Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, in injuries, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses, for Messiah’s sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong.” (2 Corinthians 12:7-10)**

Through it all, Rabbi Sha’ul was learning. He was learning by experience. He was learning the meaning, the significance, the value of suffering. **“I press on, if so be that I may lay hold on that for which also I was laid hold on by Messiah YahShua.” (Philippians 3:12)**

Rabbi Sha’ul had caught the vision, he understood the meaning of suffering, the meaning of his own suffering. He became ready to **“lay hold on”** the meaning of all his suffering and trouble, which is to know, **“the fellowship of [Messiah’s] suffering,”** even to the extent of martyrdom if called, in which he will be **“conformed unto [Messiah’s] death.”**

“No discipline seems pleasant at the time, but painful. Later on, however, it produces a harvest of righteousness and peace for those who have been trained by it.” (Hebrews 12:11)

Why Me?

In the grim night hours of my biggest trial, I asked the same question, “Why Me...What have I done to deserve this? Where is Yahweh in this? Is He simply watching and doing nothing? Is He enjoying watching us cry? Was I not good enough for Yahweh to intervene?” Hiding behind “it’s a mystery,” or “we can’t understand,” or “it’s all for the best” is, in my opinion, worse than unsatisfying, because it requires either blaming the victim or denying truth. Let’s be candid, the reason you’re asking these questions is because you feel a sense of betrayal and abandonment – toward your Heavenly Father! Job felt the very same thing!

“The arrows of the Almighty are in me, my spirit drinks in their poison; Elohim’s terrors are marshaled against me.” (Job 6:4)

May I be frank, thinking nothing bad is going to happen to you because you’re a Believer is like climbing into a rodeo arena and expecting the bull not to charge because you are a vegetarian.

It’s what you do next that defines whether you’re in the Kingdom or out. A true child of Yahweh does what any child would do, draw your Father into your suffering, knowing that with one spoken word He can end it. I believe that people misunderstand the nature of divine "power" as coercive which I regard as a theological mistake, a religious disaster, and a source of emotional and ethical torment. He never promised us there would be no trials, only that He’d be with us to the end. He is the Author of creation. Everything that happens in creation happens first to the Creator. When you are violated He is violated. Here’s what hinders us from grasping this truth: we do not view our suffering as an assault on the Kingdom; but rather, as an assault on us. We take it personally.

“If only there were someone to arbitrate between us, to lay his hand upon us both, someone to remove Yahweh’s rod from me, so that His terror would frighten me no more. Then I would speak up without fear of Him, but as it now stands with me, I cannot.” (Job 9:33-35)

“For Yahweh so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish but have eternal life.” (John 3:16)

Since, King Messiah YahShua, the Express Image of Yahweh (Colossians 1:15), is our High Priest, and we are His body, is not our suffering actually His suffering? In the squeeze of Gethsemane (the wine press) both you and Messiah YahShua experienced the same thing - betrayal and abandonment.

On the gallows, the Messiah cried out: אֱלֹהֵי אֱלֹהֵי לָמָּה שָׁבַקְתָּנִי "Elahi, Elahi, lama savachtani?"—which means, **“My El, My El, why have You forsaken me?” (Matthew 27:46)**

When Rabbi Sha’ul was persecuting the Netzarim Movement I wonder how many early Believers pled for King Messiah YahShua to get involved in their suffering. Little did they know that Messiah YahShua was involved and did ultimately confront Rabbi Sha’ul with the question, **“Sha’ul, Sha’ul, why do you persecute Me?” (Acts 9:4).** Notice, it wasn’t, “Why do you persecute my people; but rather, **“why do you persecute Me?!”**

“...being found in appearance as a man, [Messiah] humbled Himself and became obedient to death—even death on the gallows!” (Philippians 2:8)

I have said all of this to prove this vital truth: King Messiah YahShua, and vicariously Yahweh became like you in suffering so that you in turn can become like Him in suffering – that’s what a “Fellowship of Suffering” is.

“But we see YahShua, Who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because He suffered death, so that by the grace of Yahweh He might taste death for everyone.

In bringing many sons to glory (Everything is made after its kind. (Genesis 1:11, 12)), it was fitting that Yahweh, for Whom and through Whom everything exists, should make the author of their salvation perfect through suffering. Both the One who makes men holy and those who are made holy are of the same family. So YahShua is not ashamed to call them brothers. He says, ‘I will declare Your name to My brothers; in the presence of the congregation I will sing Your praises.’ (Psalm 22:22) And again, ‘I will put My trust in Him.’ (Isaiah 8:17) And again He says, ‘Here am I, and the children Yahweh has given Me.’ (Isaiah 8:18) Since the children have flesh and blood, He too shared in their humanity so that by His death He might destroy him who holds the power of death—that is, the devil—and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels He helps, but Abraham’s descendants (the Majority – Genesis (Genesis 22:16-18; 48:4). For this reason He had to be made like His brothers in every way, in order that He might become a merciful and faithful High Priest in service to Yahweh, and that He might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because He Himself suffered when He was tempted, He is able to help those who are being tempted.” (Hebrews 2:9-18)

King Messiah YahShua, Yochannan the Immerser, Ya’akov HaTzadik, and Rabbi Sha’a’ul were rejected and executed for their beliefs, when they meet on that great resurrection day they all will have the fellowship of that kind of suffering.

Have you been betrayed? You’ll know King Messiah YahShua in the fellowship of that kind of suffering.

Have you lost friends? You’ll know King Messiah YahShua in the fellowship of that kind of suffering.

Have you been separated from your family? You’ll know King Messiah YahShua in the fellowship of that kind of suffering.

Have you ever been stripped of your dignity? You’ll know King Messiah YahShua in the fellowship of that kind of suffering.

Stop dreaming of the “Sweet by and by” when all suffering is over. **“...the Kingdom of Yahweh is among you.” (Luke 17:21)** The object is not less suffering, but rather, a better relationship with Yahweh. It’s in knowing Him and becoming more like our Messiah that a better you is resurrected.

When I saw our beloved Sis. Glenda, the mother of our sister congregation in Australia who struggled with what became a terminal illness, I saw Yahweh very busy throughout her struggle—in moments of laughter and song, in the “Fellowship of Suffering” that bound us all as a community and kept her feeling connected through her very last minutes, in the determination to be there with and for Maurie, her husband and the family throughout and beyond the ordeal. I never expected Yahweh to guarantee an outcome or suspend His will. I did expect to find Yahweh in the steady constant lure toward good choices and responsibility. And in that Yahweh did not disappoint.

“...we know that in all things Yahweh works for the good of those who love Him who have been called according to His purpose. For those Yahweh foreknew He also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified.

What, then, shall we say in response to this? If Yahweh is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all—how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom Yahweh has chosen? It is Yahweh Who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Messiah YahShua, Who died—more than that, Who was raised to life—is at the right hand of Yahweh and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Messiah? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: ‘For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered.’ (Psalm 44:22) No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of Yahweh that is in Messiah YahShua our King.” (Romans 8:28-39)

Remember, whether it’s someone working to recapture their reputation from the thievery of lies or some crisis unique to your own life, keep this in mind that what is happening to you now, happened to Messiah first. You are privileged to enter into His “Fellowship of Suffering.” You are coming to know Him in ways impossible by any other means.

“I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us.” (Romans 8:18) The “Fellowship of Suffering” really is an over-conquering Kingdom!

