

The Call to Community & Body Life

Growing to Maturity

Chapter 5

The Congregation as the Manifestation of G-D's Spirit

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The Body of Messiah

- G-D desires to manifest His life and reality through the community of believers
- G-D chose Avraham to be the father of a great nation
- Israel is to be the living demonstration of G-D's power.
- Israel's triumph over all obstacles was to demonstrate that the G-D of Avraham was LORD of all.

Love & justice are demonstrated in relationships among people.

- Israel was to be a living demonstration of the truth through its
 - Just laws
 - Compassionate economic life
 - Unique religious system
- Nations would marvel at a people whose G-D was so great and whose laws were so just.

A Witness People

- G-D always intended for Israel to be a witness people.
- “For you are a people **set apart** as holy for ADONAI your G-D. ADONAI your G-D has **chosen you** out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be **His own unique treasure.**”
D’varim (Deuteronomy) 7:6

Failure and Success

- As a people, we have failed to live up to our calling as a witness people.
- But now as those whom have believed in the *Mashiach*, **we are empowered by the *Ruach HaKodesh* to be a living testimony.**
- Yeshua instituted the Body of Believers through *Shimon Kefa* (Matt 16:18-19)

HaShem Protects His Body

Yeshua prayed,

“Holy Father, guard them by the power of Your NAME, which you have given to Me, so that they may be one, just as We are One.”

Yochanan 17:11b

Threats to the Body

- The Universal Body cannot be destroyed (the gates of Hell will not prevail against it – Matt 16)
- But... the destruction of the Local Body is a capital offense, because *the gathered community is the place of the holiest manifestation of the Spirit on earth.*
- *Divisiveness is a tool of Satan.*

We are to be One

- *“I pray not only for these, but also for those who will trust in Me because of their word, **that they may all be one**. Just as You, Father, are united with Me and I with You, I pray **that they may be united with Us**, so that the world may believe that You sent Me.*
- *The Glory which You have given to me, I have given to them; **so that they may be one**, just as We are One --- I united with them and You with Me, **so that they may be completely one**, and the world thus realize that You sent Me, and that You have loved them just as You have loved Me.” Yochanan 17:20-23*

“Oneness”

- The success of the Body of Messiah as an expression of His Good News is completely dependent on the oneness of His people.
- This includes unity in
 - Families
 - The Local Body of Messiah
 - The Universal Body of Messiah

The First Messianic Jewish Community – Acts 2

- *“They continued faithfully in the **teaching of the emissaries**, in **fellowship**, in **breaking bread** and in **the prayers**.”*
- *Everyone was filled with awe, and many miracles and signs took place through the emissaries.*
- *All those trusting in Yeshua **stayed together** and had everything in common; in fact, they sold their property and possessions and **distributed the proceeds to all who were in need**.”*
- *Continuing faithfully and **with singleness of purpose** to **meet in the Temple courts daily**, and **breaking bread** in their several homes, they **shared their food in joy** and simplicity of heart, **praising G-D** and **having the respect of all the people**. And day after day the L-rd kept adding to them those who were being saved.” Acts 2:42-47*

Growth of the Body

- By Acts 21, despite persecution and scattering, we read:
- *“...You see, my brother, how many **tens of thousands** of believers there are among the Jews, and they are **all zealots for Torah**.”* Acts 21:20b

The Local Body

- The Local Body of Believers is the **tangible, visible manifestation** of the Universal Body of Messiah.
- The New Covenant teaches that we are all to submit ourselves to the spiritual covering of established elder authority.
 - Hebrews 13: 7 & 17
 - Galatians 6:1-2

Submit to Elder Authority

- Hebrews 13:7 Remember your leaders, those who spoke God's message to you. Reflect on the results of their way of life, and imitate their trust
- Hebrews 13:17 Obey your leaders and submit to them, for they keep watch over your lives, as people who will have to render an account. So make it a task of joy for them, not one of groaning; for that is of no advantage to you.
- Galatians 6:1-2 Brothers, suppose someone is caught doing something wrong. You who have the Spirit should set him right, but in a spirit of humility, keeping an eye on yourselves so that you won't be tempted too. 2 Bear one another's burdens — in this way you will be fulfilling the *Torah's* true meaning, which the Messiah upholds.

Our Spiritual Service

- Our sacrifice to the L-RD is our corporate praise and our responsible service to the local body.
- We should strive to build each other up to conform to the image of the Messiah.
- We should seek to help others to come to know G-D and His Son, Yeshua the Messiah.

Gypsy Believers...

- What about the freelance, uncommitted believer?
 - Moves from congregation to congregation
 - Little desire to invest himself into a local body
 - A “consumer”
 - Often critical of local bodies, judging one against another.
- To be a believer apart from the local body is not a Biblical option.
- Isolating yourself from the Local Body, and it's spiritual covering is DANGEROUS.
- *“He who separates himself indulges his desires and shows contempt for sound advice of any kind.” Proverbs 18:1*

Encourage One Another

- *“And let us keep paying attention to one another, in order to spur each other on to love and good deeds, **not neglecting our own congregational meetings, as some have made a practice of doing**, but, rather, encouraging each other. And let us do this all the more as you see the Day approaching.” Hebrews 10:24-25*

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Section C – The Marks of the Body

The Local Body: Identifying Marks

- Identifies itself as a congregation
- Regularly meets for worship, praise and teaching
- Immerses/baptizes new believers
- Led by recognized elder-leadership
- Keeps the Messiah as the Foundation (*not “activities,” social interests, or desire to be accepted by the greater Jewish/Christian Community*)

Biblical Praise & Worship

- Characterized by the life and joy expressed in the Psalms
- Freedom of praise balanced with decency and order
- *“But the time is coming - indeed, it’s here now - when the true worshippers will worship the Father spiritually and truly, for these are the kind of people the Father want worshipping Him. G-D is spirit; and worshippers must worship him in spirit and truth.”*
Yochanan 4:23-24

Varieties of Worship Expression

- Singing
- Musical Instruments
- Clapping of Hands
- Lifting of Hands
- Dancing
- Bowing & Kneeling
- Chanted prayers

Teaching

- The leaders of the Local Body **seek from the L-RD what He would have them teach** at a particular time.
- *We teach to meet the need.*
- **Learning together**, we share the same experience as a congregation and grow together in unity, at the proper pace.

The Mikveh

- Immersion (or Baptism) in the Mikveh, in the name of Yeshua, is commanded in Mathew 28:10 and Acts 2:38.
- It is a public confession of our faith in Yeshua the Messiah.

Commitment to Body-Life

- Staying close to one another
- Serving one another
- Practicing hospitality
 - “More than anything, keep loving each other actively; because love covers many sins. **Welcome one another into your homes** without grumbling.”
1 Kefa (Peter) 4:8-9
- Supporting one another financially

Finances

- Tithes vs. Offerings
- “Can a person rob G-D? Yet you rob Me. But you ask, ‘How have we robbed You?’ **In tenths and voluntary contributions.**
- **A curse is on you, on your whole nation, because you rob Me. Bring the whole tenth into the storehouse,** so that there will be food in My house, and put Me to the test, says ADONAI-Tzva’ot. **See if I won’t open for you the floodgates of heaven and pour out for you a blessing far beyond your needs.**
- For your sakes **I will forbid the devourer** to destroy the yield from your soil; and your vine will not lose its fruit before harvest-time, says ADONAI-Tzava’ot. **All nations will call you happy,** for your will be a land of delights, says ADONAI-Tzva’ot.” Mal’akhi (Malachi) 3:8-12

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Section B – Gifts & Ministries

Gifts that Build the Body

- Spiritual gifts are NOT self-serving...
- Gift from G-D are given to build the Body of Believers. So...
- Be *“Bodybuilders!”*

Gifts that Build the Body

- “For just as there are many parts that compose one body, but the parts don’t all have the same function; so there are many of us, and in union with the Messiah **we comprise one body**, with each of us belonging to the others. **But we have gifts that differ** and which are meant to be used according to the grace that has been given to us.
- If your gift is **prophecy**, use it to the extent of your trust; if it is **serving**, use it to serve; if you are a **teacher**, use your gift in teaching; if you are a **counselor**, use your gift to comfort and exhort; if you are **someone who gives**, do it simply and generously; if you are in a position of **leadership**, lead with diligence and zeal; if you are one who does **acts of mercy**, do them cheerfully.” Romans 12:4-8