



Y.E.A.



# WHAT IS FORGIVENESS?

By Johnny R. McCarty

## Scriptural Understanding

There are some admittedly difficult to understand passages in the Sacred Scriptures. However, there are far more passages that are clear and unambiguous in their meaning. The Scriptures need no interpretation because they interpret themselves. This becomes clear when one sees the various scriptures on each subject properly put together, as the Bible itself says, "here a little, and there a little" (Isaiah 28:10).

In order to understand all scripture properly, one must study the vague passages in the bright light of those clear, undeniable statements. Any interpretation of a difficult passage that contradicts a clear statement is thus a wrong interpretation; it is the "doctrine of men" rather than the Word of Yahweh. Yahshua clearly states the condition of those who teach and believe these false interpreta-

tions. "Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least Commandments, and teach others to do so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven." (Matthew 5:19) "And in vain they worship Me, teaching as doctrines the commandments of men" (Matthew 15:9). Therefore, we must diligently search the Scriptures and "hold fast that which is good" so our faith will not be "in vain."

## Prove It For Yourself

As you read through this article, have your Scriptures next to you. Look up and examine each passage referenced. Examine the other sources referenced, also. Pray for Divine guidance all the while. In other words, prove it for yourself. Don't just take my word as truth. Yahweh's Word is the only source of truth. I am merely

a tool He is using to reveal His word to you. When you admire a finely crafted piece of furniture, you don't marvel at the hammer and saw used to construct it. You recognize and acknowledge the talent and skill of the Master Builder.

I repeat, Yahweh commands us to "Test all things; hold fast what is good" (1 Thessalonians 5:21). When you are convinced of the truth of the matter, then take it into your heart and thank Yahweh, through Messiah, for revealing the truth to you. "Let each be fully convinced in his own mind" (Romans 14:5).

NOTE: Numbers in parenthesis are Strong's reference numbers. A "G" indicates the Greek dictionary and an "H" indicates the Hebrew.

## Man's Definitions

### Greek- *aphêsis*

[N.T. forgiveness] (noun) (Strong's 859) - a release, as from bondage, imprisonment, etc.; forgiveness, pardon, of sins; the letting them go, as if



they had not been committed. (*Thayer's Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament*).

**aphiemi**

[N.T. forgiven] (verb) (*Strong's* 863) - to let go, let alone, let be, to disregard; to let go or give up a debt by not demanding it. (*Thayer's*).

*eleos*

[N.T. mercy] (noun) (*Strong's* 1656) - active mercy, kindness or good will towards the miserable and afflicted, joined with a desire to relieve them, compassion. (*Thayer's*). "Is the outward manifestation of pity; it assumes need on the part of him who receives it, and resources adequate to meet the need on the part of him who shows it.

*charis*

[N.T. grace] (*Strong's* 5485) - goodwill, loving-kindness, favor; kindness which bestows upon one what he has not deserved;

**English-**

**Forgive**

To grant free pardon for or remission of an offense, debt, etc.; mercy.

**Forgiveness**

Act of forgiving; state of being forgiven. *Webster's Encyclopedic Unabridged Dictionary*, Gramercy Books, 1994.

Clemency

Kindness, mercy, forgiveness, leniency; usually relating to criminal acts.

**Y.E.A.**

*Black's Law Dictionary*, 6th Edition, West, St. Paul, MN, 1990.

Scriptural Definition

The above are man's definitions of "forgiveness" or "mercy." They are, in fact, excellent explanations of the concept. However, man has a very poor record in the true and proper application of the concept.

Notice that forgiveness is the "free pardon" of an offense, as if it "had never been committed." In other words, the person seeking forgiveness doesn't (indeed, can't) do anything to "earn" forgiveness. If one must earn remission of sins, then it is no longer forgiveness and grace but a salary or debt owed to the offender.

Let's examine forgiveness in the light of Yahweh's Word. We will find out what is involved in true righteous forgiveness. It's not difficult to understand. However, there is more to forgiveness than at first appears. Without the help of Yahweh, a human being can only give lip service to forgiveness. Yahweh requires much more than that.

**We Must Emulate Yahweh**

Contrary to popular belief, Yahweh does not allow us to determine how we exercise forgiveness. He requires us to emulate Him in the way we forgive someone.



"Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as Yahweh in Messiah forgave you"(Ephesians 4:31-32).

At this point, we must determine exactly what righteous forgiveness is. The Greek word, used in the New Testament, for forgiveness is *aph'esis*, which includes *eleos* or **active mercy**. The concept involves much more than sympathy in the popular sense or feeling pity for someone. It is possible to feel pity for someone without forgiving them. To more easily forgive someone, we must understand them.

**Yahshua Has Empathy For Us**

The English word that more readily encompasses the Scriptural concept is **empathy**. This is the intellectual and emotional identification with the feelings, thoughts, or attitudes of another person. In other words, getting into that person's mind to understand why he acts or feels the way he does; to experience what he is experiencing or has experienced. This requires a very deliberate act on our part.

This we rarely do. Most of us are concerned only with our own feelings and not those of others. When we feel sorry for someone, we do it from the outside, from our own limited perspective. To achieve true forgiveness, we



must make the effort to truly and completely empathize with the person asking our forgiveness. Doing this would make forgiving a person much easier and more meaningful. This is also exactly what Yahshua did when He still had the flesh and blood form of man.

“For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need” (Hebrews 4:15-16).

Everyone has different experiences as they go through life. If we make the effort to empathize with others, we can realize why someone acts as they do. Once we understand that, we can more easily extend mercy toward them, then true forgiveness is just one small step away. True, our understanding of another person's motives is not a requirement of our forgiving him; it just makes it easier to do so. When I speak of forgiveness, this is the type of empathy, active mercy and pardon to which I refer.

This does not require that we sit down for hours and learn all we can about the background, life, outlook and attitude of the people we intend to forgive. Yahweh, through Yahshua the Messiah, has already done that for us. We

## Y.E.A.

simply need to pray earnestly for His guidance and help through the Holy Spirit for the ability to forgive. We then apply this ability to those situations in which we must offer forgiveness.

Yahweh's Forgiveness is Conditional

Forgiveness of our sins is the cornerstone of the Good News of Yahshua. “Therefore let it be known to you brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins” (Acts 13:38). Forgiveness of our sins is required before we may have a part in the Kingdom of Yahweh. “I will deliver you from the Jewish people, as well as from the Gentiles, to whom I now send you, to open their eyes, in order to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan to Yahweh, that they may receive forgiveness of sins and an inheritance among those who are sanctified by faith in Me” (Acts 26:17-18). The forgiveness of our sins by Yahweh is through His unlimited mercy. “In Him we have redemption through His blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of His grace” (Ephesians 1:7). (See also Colossians 1:14.)

Yahweh promises that if we confess our sins to Him, repent of (turn away from) our sins and ask His forgiveness, He will give it. “If we con-



fess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us” (1 John 1:9-10). Yahweh requires us to **acknowledge** our sins then **ask** Him to forgive our sins before He will do it. If we don't ask, He will not forgive. The simple act of asking is an act, or work, of **faith**. We are exercising the **faith** that after we forgive others, then Yahweh will also forgive us.

There is one very important caveat in asking for our sins to be forgiven. We must realize that forgiveness of our sins is **conditional**. “**Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy**” (Matthew 5:7). “For if you forgive men their trespasses, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will your Father forgive your trespasses” (Matthew 6:14-15). This is one verse that should be memorized by and kept in the hearts of all who profess to be followers of Yahweh and Yahshua the Messiah.

Further, “**But go and learn what this means: ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice.’ For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance**” (Matthew 9:13). “**And whenever you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Fa-**



ther in Heaven forgive your trespasses” (Mark 11:25-26). (See also Luke 6:37; 11:4.)

Do you see it? Yahweh **requires** us to forgive the sins of those who sin against us **before** He will forgive our sins. Too many people don't heed this critical admonition. This makes the act of forgiveness a three step process on our part. 1) Forgive those who sin against us. 2) Acknowledge our own sins to Yahweh. 3) Ask Yahweh to forgive our sins. **ALL** of these are **acts**, or **works**, of **faith**. Notice, too, that the person sinning against us doesn't even have to ask for our forgiveness. We are to grant it whether they ask it or not. And we must give it **unconditionally**, just as Yahweh extends His mercy and grace towards us and forgives our sins.

This isn't just a suggestion. Yahweh commands it! **“Take heed to yourselves. If your brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and returns to you, saying ‘I repent,’ you shall forgive him”** (Luke 17:3-4). **“For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment”** (James 2:13). Yahweh will not extend mercy to any who refuse to show mercy to those who sin against them.

**“Then Peter came to Him and said, ‘Master, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I**

## Y.E.A.

forgive him? Up to seven times?”

**“Yahshua said to him, ‘I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. Therefore the kingdom of heaven is like a certain king who wanted to settle accounts with his servants. And when he had begun to settle accounts, one was brought to him who owed him ten thousand talents. But as he was not able to pay, his master commanded that he be sold, with his wife and children and all that he had, and that payment be made.**

**“The servant therefore fell down before him saying, ‘Master, have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’ Then the master of that servant was moved with compassion, released him, and forgave him the debt.**

**“But that servant went out and found one of his fellow servants who owed him a hundred denarii; and he laid hands on him and took him by the throat, saying, ‘Pay me what you owe!’**

**“So his fellow servant fell down at his feet and begged him, saying, ‘Have patience with me, and I will pay you all.’**

**“And he would not, but went and threw him into prison till he should pay the debt. So when his fellow servants saw what had been done, they were very grieved, and came and told their master all that had been done.**

**“Then his master, after he had called him, said to him, ‘You wicked servant! I forgave you all that debt because you begged me. Should you not also have had compassion on your fellow servant, just as I had pity on you?’ And his master was angry, and delivered him to the torturers until he should pay all that was due to him.**

**“So My heavenly Father also will do to you if each of you from his heart, does not forgive his brother his trespasses”** (Matthew 18:21-35).



*Continued on page 22  
Continued from page 21*

**“Therefore, as the elect of Yahweh, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another; even as Messiah forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things; put on love, which is the bond of perfection”** (Colossians 3:12-14).

The foregoing examples are plain, powerful statements of Yahweh. There is no way to rationalize or justify our way around them. Also, Yahweh doesn't allow us to put a limit on how many times we are required to forgive someone who sins against us. (Matthew 18:21-22)

It is undeniable, brethren, to be forgiven, we must first forgive. The many examples and exhortations of Messiah, the Apostles, and the early congregation bear true witness to this. They also show the extent to which we must forgive. Merely saying the words is **NOT** enough. We must forgive **in our hearts** and then extend the love of Messiah to those we've forgiven. Anything less is totally unacceptable.



Y.E.A.



# WHAT IS FORGIVENESS? PART II

## OUR FORGIVENESS MUST BE UNCONDITIONAL

When are we to forgive others? Some try to make their forgiveness conditional upon the other person showing “fruits” of change. They say that when “he has shown that he's really changed, then I'll forgive him.” Incredible as it may seem, some others go so far as to require you to follow their religious leader in addition to “displaying fruits of change”! This is quite simply wrong! In His discussion with Peter, Yahshua never once says that the “brother” asking for our forgiveness must “show fruits” of change or be a member of a particular religion or sect. The act of asking for forgiveness is itself a demonstration of change.

Paul faced this very problem when he was alive. “For it has been reported to me concerning you, my brothers, by those who are from Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you. Now I mean this, that each one of you says, “I follow Sha'ul,” “I follow Apollos,” “I follow Kefa,” and, “I follow Messiah.” Is Messiah divided? Was Sha'ul crucified for you? Or were you immersed into the name of Sha'ul? (1 Cor. 1:11-13 HNV). Paul rebuked those who divided the Congregation and caused contention. Requiring someone to believe exactly as you believe and to follow the same “leader” you follow before you will forgive him is completely wrong!

If Yahshua put this same kind of requirement on us, then **no one** would ever have his sins forgiven and enter the Kingdom of Yahweh. Yahshua says very clearly that we are to forgive someone each and every time they request it. Also, our forgiveness of a person must be true righteous forgiveness in the manner Yahweh forgives us. Just giving lip service doesn't meet the requirements. A Brother must forgive others “from his heart!” Anything less is disobedience to Yahweh.

There is no “gray area” when it comes to obeying Yahweh's Law. And what is Yahweh's Law? Messiah gives us the answer.

“Yahshua answered him, ‘The first of all the commandments is ‘Hear O Israel, Yahweh our Elohiym, Yahweh is one. And you shall love Yahweh your Elohiym with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your mind, and with all your strength.’ This is the first commandment. And the second like it, is this: ‘You shall love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no other commandment greater than these” (Mark 12:20-31).

Consider the first great commandment. The only way to keep this is to keep Yahweh's Law – **all of Yahweh's Law of Love**. Not just those parts which are convenient for us. Yahweh's Law says we must forgive those who sin against us before our sins will be forgiven us. By disobeying this Law, we break **all** of Yahweh's Law.

“If you really fulfill the Royal Law according to the Scrip-

ture, ‘**You shall love your neighbor as yourself,**’ you do well; but if you show partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the Law as transgressors. For whoever shall keep the whole Law, and yet stumble in one point, he is guilty of all. For He who said, ‘**Do not commit adultery,**’ also said, ‘**Do not murder.**’ Now if you do not commit adultery, but you do murder, you have become a transgressor of the Law. So speak and so do as those who will be judged by the Law of Liberty. For judgment is without mercy to the one who has shown no mercy. Mercy triumphs over judgment” (James 2:8-13).

Notice how it is impossible to break one part of Yahweh's Law without breaking it all. They are inextricably bound together. In effect, everyone is your “neighbor”, not just those “brethren” of your particular church, congregation or assembly. It is impossible to forgive only our friends and not our enemies and expect to be forgiven of our own sins. Doing this is breaking Yahweh's very clear Law on this subject.

## WE MUST FORGIVE ALL SINS

Another very important aspect of forgiveness is that Yahweh doesn't limit forgiveness to only certain types of sins. He will forgive us for **anything**. Yes, murderers, rapists, adulterers, sexual deviants, child molesters, thieves, robbers, homosexuals, idolaters, and **anyone**



## Y.E.A.



else will be forgiven when they follow Yahweh's law concerning forgiveness. "Assuredly, I say to you, all sins will be forgiven the sons of men, and whatever blasphemies they may utter" (Mark 3:28).

Even with the finality of that statement, Yahshua went on to say: "But he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit never has forgiveness, but is subject to eternal condemnation" - Because they said, 'He has an unclean spirit'" (Mark 3:29).

Here Messiah is speaking of someone who **knowingly** ascribes miracles of Yahweh, performed by the Holy Spirit, to demons or Satan. They must **knowingly** do this, if it is through ignorance, though still a sin, it will be forgiven them.

The sinner who is forgiven the most, will be more joyous and thankful when he is forgiven; the more love he will have for Yahweh the Father and Yahshua the Messiah. Be very careful, however, this **does not**, mean we should sin much just so we can be forgiven much! We must always strive to obey Yahweh and walk in the image of Messiah.

"And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that Yahshua sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind Him weeping; and she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped them with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed them with fragrant oil.

"Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw this, he spoke to himself, saying 'This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman this is who is

touching Him, for she is a sinner.'

"And Yahshua answered and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' So he said, 'Teacher, say it.'

"There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?"

"Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the one whom he forgave more.' And He said to him 'You have rightly judged.'

"Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped them with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, the same loves little'" (Luke 7:36-47).

Let's look at another example of forgiveness.

"Now early in the morning He came again into the temple, and all the people came to Him; and He sat down and taught them. Then the scribes and Pharisees brought to Him a woman caught in adultery. And when they had set her in the midst, they said to Him, 'Teacher, this woman was caught in adultery, in the very act. Now Moses, in the law, commanded us that such should be stoned. But what do You say?'

"This they said, testing Him, that they might have something of which to accuse Him. But Yahshua stooped down and wrote on the ground with His finger, as though He did not hear.

"So when they continued asking Him, He raised Himself up and said to them, 'He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first.'

"And again He stooped down and wrote on the ground. Then those who heard it, being convicted by their conscience, went out one by one, beginning with the oldest even to the last. And Yahshua was left alone, and the woman standing in the midst.

"When Yahshua had raised Himself up and saw no one but the woman, He said to her, 'Woman, where are those accusers of yours? Has no one condemned you?'

"She said, 'No one Master.'

"And Yahshua said to her, 'Neither do I condemn you; go and sin no more'" (John 8:2-11).

This woman was caught in the **VERY ACT** of committing adultery! But what did Messiah do? Did He condemn her? **NO!**

He humbled her accusers, the Pharisees, by pointing out the fact that they, too, had committed sins. Sins for which most probably had not asked forgiveness or even thought they needed forgiveness. In this particular case, He simply forgave her and told her to "sin no more." This is the example we should follow in our daily lives.

Perhaps the greatest example of forgiveness is that of Yahshua on the stake. He was suffering unimaginable agony and humiliation, yet, read what



He said. "Then Yahshua said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do'" (Luke 23:34).

If Messiah can forgive someone for torturing Him and murdering Him in the most painful and agonizing manner, shouldn't we be able to forgive someone who simply takes our possessions?

Or insults us? Or believes differently than we do? Or may even have been a prostitute?

### FORGIVENESS IN EARLY CONGREGATION

One of the most amazing acts of forgiveness in the early Congregation occurred very soon after Messiah's Ascension. It involved Saul of Tarsus.

Saul was a very eager persecutor of the early Brethren. "As for Saul, he made havoc of the congregation, entering every house, and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison" (Acts 8:3). He was even in charge when they stoned Stephen, an apostle, to death. "And they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul" (Acts 7:58). Saul, himself, says of that time, "For you have heard of my former conduct in Judaism, how I persecuted the congregation of Yahweh beyond measure and tried to destroy it" (Galatians 1:13).

Further, "Then Saul, still breathing threats and murder against the disciples of Yahshua, went to the high priest and asked letters from him to the synagogues of Damascus, so that if he found any who were of the Way, whether men or women, he might bring them bound to Jerusalem" (Acts 9:1-2).

## Y.E.A.

Here is a man who was killing and imprisoning followers of Messiah! Even trying to destroy the early congregation! What was the reaction of Messiah?

"As he journeyed he came near Damascus, and suddenly a light shone around him from heaven. Then he fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to him, 'Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting Me?'" (Acts 9:3-4). Yahshua Messiah, Himself, begins to work with Saul. Read what He told Ananias His task for Saul was going to be. "But Messiah said to him, 'Go, for he is a chosen vessel of Mine to bear My name before Gentiles, kings, and the children of Israel. For I will show him how many things he must suffer for My name's sake'" (Acts 9:15-16).

Yahshua Messiah very obviously **forgave** Saul of the sins he had committed against Him and the Brethren. Saul was baptized (Acts 9:18) and began to preach "the Messiah" in the synagogues (Acts 9:20). Of course the people that he formerly persecuted were a little distrustful at first. However, the important thing is that they, too, forgave Saul his past sins. Even those of murder! Friends, this is the type of example we are to follow.

Yahweh further promises that those whose sins are forgiven will be blessed. "Blessed are those whose lawless deeds are forgiven, and whose sins are covered; blessed is the man to whom Yahweh shall not impute sin" (Romans 4:7).

Withholding our forgiveness can very often cause a brother to lose hope and fall away from Yahweh. If this happens, who is to blame, the person asking for forgiveness or the person who would not forgive? "This pun-



ishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him"

(2 Corinthians 2:6-8). Saul makes an extremely important point in this passage. What he is saying is that SELF-FORGIVENESS is much harder than forgiving someone else. Someone may have sinned and been punished physically for that sin and be remorseful over having sinned or broken the law. Yet, if no one forgives him and **demonstrates** that forgiveness in actions rather than with mere words, then he could still be "swallowed up with too much sorrow." Saul is saying that we need the forgiveness of others in order to have the strength to forgive ourselves. We simply aren't strong enough to do it alone. Yes, the Holy Spirit gives us strength to endure and overcome many things; however, this is one area where the help of others is required, also. This is so in order to bring the Congregation closer together, to bond us into the "One Body."

Forgiveness is a work of faith, in that if we fail to do it, then we really lack faith. "What good is it, my brothers, if a man says he has faith, but has no works? Can faith save him? And if a brother or sister is naked and in lack of daily food, and one of you tells them, 'Go in peace, be warmed and filled;'



## Y.E.A.



and yet you didn't give them the things the body needs, what good is it? Even so faith, if it has no works, is dead in itself. Yes, a man will say, 'You have faith, and I have works.' Show me your faith from your works, and I, by my works, will show you my faith.'" (James 2:14-18) Forgiveness is food for the spirit just as bread is food for the body.

Yahweh says that when someone repents, is forgiven his sins, and receives the Holy Spirit so that he becomes one with Messiah, he is a new being. He is not the old person who may have committed many heinous sins. "Therefore, if anyone is in Messiah, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new" (2 Corinthians 5:17).

The person who now stands before you, awaiting your demonstration of love, is not, in the eyes of Yahweh and Messiah, the same person who committed those past sins. He is a new being, reborn through forgiveness and the Holy Spirit.

### WHY WE CANNOT FORGIVE

Most people, be they professing Believers or not, don't forgive those who sin against them. Why is this? Why do we continually disobey the plain word of Yahweh? There are several reasons.

### IT REQUIRES OBEDIENCE

Obedying Yahweh in this would mean having to obey Him in all things. Most of us are not ready to do this. There are too

many worldly pleasures we enjoy and aren't ready to give up. "And by this we know that we know Him, if we keep His Commandments. He that says, I know him, and keeps not His Commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him; but whoever keeps His word, in him the love of Yahweh has truly been perfected. By this we know that we are in Him; he that says he remains in Him ought himself also to walk even as He walked," (1 John 2:3-6).

### WE CAN'T BE A VICTIM

Forgiving others would mean we can't play the victim any longer; **and we love being the victim.** It's almost become the national hobby. Everyone claims to be a victim of some other person or organization. Being the victim gets us noticed and we gain sympathy from other so-called victims and professional apologists. There are few things we enjoy more than commiserating with each other and comparing "poor me" stories. "Everyone was against me when I was a child. They made me dress like a slob. They made me stay dirty. They made me skip school. They made me take drugs. They made me rob, rape and murder. (Insert crying and sobbing wherever it may be needed.) Can't you see that I'm a **victim** of the sins of society?"

Our Savior was mistreated much more than any of us. He was the victim of us all. He was sacrificed so that our sins could be forgiven us. "Like as many were astonished at You, (His visage was so marred more than any man, and His form more than the sons of men)," (Isaiah 52:14).

### WE LOVE TO HATE

When someone sins against us, it gives us the opportunity to hate. And along with loving to be a victim, we just love to hate someone. We revel in our hatred. By not forgiving, we can point to someone else and say, "His sins are greater than mine! My sins are 'not unto death,' but his sins are!" Our hatred becomes our comforter when we ourselves sin. It becomes our justification and sanctification for our own sins. We no longer need Yahshua Messiah to cover our sins with his precious shed blood! Our Hatred has done this for us! We no longer have to seek the forgiveness of our Heavenly Father, Yahweh! Our Hatred has forgiven us! Rather than putting on the spirit of Yahshua, we are now clothed with the spirit of Hatred!

Anything we now do is justified and forgiven by our Hatred. Greed. Selfishness. Rudeness. Malice. Racism. Betrayal. Disrespect. Murder. We deny ourselves no evil toward our hated brethren and fellow man. We take on the spirit of the Inquisition. "For we also were once foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving diverse lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, hating one another," (Titus 3:3). It is this Hatred, left unchecked, that will be used by Satan as a major driving force behind the Great Tribulation. "They shall put you out of the congregations, but an hour is coming when everyone who kills you shall think he is render-





ing service to Elohim,” (John 16:2).

## WE MUST TAKE RESPONSIBILITY

Closely related to the above is the fact that by forgiving, we would then have to take responsibility for our own actions and our own lives. This is the main reason most of us don't forgive each other. When we grant forgiveness, true forgiveness as Yahweh demands, we have just given up the right to use the other person's actions as an excuse for our own. We can no longer justify ourselves when we, in turn, sin against someone else.

“Well, if I hadn't been so mistreated by (fill in the blank) when I was (fill in the blank), then I wouldn't have (fill in the blank).” That phrase is repeated so often today that it has become the mantra of modern society. What we are really saying is, “It's not my fault! (Fill in the blank) made me (fill in the blank).”

Friends, Yahweh doesn't buy it. We each have a **choice** in everything we do. Each of us chooses the way we react to any given situation. Like it or not, Yahweh holds us accountable for those choices. “So then each one of us will give account

# Y.E.A.

concerning himself to Yahweh” (Romans 14:12). “But they shall give account to Him who is ready to judge *the* living and *the* dead,” (1 Peter 4:5).

## WHAT THIS MEANS FOR US

The choice is yours. You can both not forgive someone when he sins against you and then use his offense as an excuse for your own sins, or you can forgive others their sins and love them as neighbors and brothers.

The latter is the hardest for us to do. For when we do it, we must also accept full responsibility for our own sins. We have to stand spiritually naked before Yahweh and say, “Yes, Yahweh. I did it. My only excuse is that I'm a weak person. I made a bad choice. Please forgive me and grant me the strength not to sin in the future.”

Forgiving takes love, courage and character. It builds integrity and righteousness. All of these are requirements for being a true “child of Yahweh.” “Therefore, as the elect of Yahweh, holy and beloved, put on tender mercies, kindness, humility, meekness, longsuffering; bearing with one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a complaint against another,



even as Messiah forgave you, so you also must do. But above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfection. And let the peace of Yahweh rule in your hearts, to which also you were called in one body; and be thankful” (Colossians 3:12-15). “Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and tumult and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice and be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving each other, even as Yahweh also, in the Messiah, forgave you,” (Ephesians 4:31-32).

To recap: Yahweh requires us to forgive the sins of those who sin against us before He will forgive our sins. The act of forgiveness is a three step process on our part: 1) Forgive those who sin against us. 2) Acknowledge our own sins to Yahweh. 3) Ask Yahweh to forgive our sins. All of these are **acts**, or **works**, of **FAITH**. It is an act of faith, that after we have forgiven others, then Yahweh will fulfill His promise and forgive us of our sins. We are to grant forgiveness to others whether they ask it or not. Forgiveness is, therefore, both a gift of Yahweh and a requirement of Yahweh. In order to claim the former, we must do the latter.

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