

Mennonite Brethren: From What Did We Stray?

It has been on my heart to ask you certain questions about how you perceive what Yeshua Messiah has done for you. The questions arise from a Scripture passage with which you are entirely familiar, namely Yeshayahu (Isaiah) chapter fifty three. I ask for your patient and prayerful thoughtfulness.

When we read, "[He was pierced for our transgressions](#)," the question immediately comes to mind, "How and what have we transgressed?" Most of us have been willing to confess that we are indeed sinners and have believed that Yeshua's sacrifice was the only possible remedy. But the question remains, "What are transgressions?. The simple dictionary answer is that "transgress" means to break or violate a law or rule. This is also the Scriptural definition, "[Everyone doing sin also does lawlessness, and sin is lawlessness](#)," (1 Yohannan 3:4). It is astonishing how few people are willing to acknowledge the simple truth that to sin is to break a law. After all did not Shaul the apostle write in Romans 7:8, "[For apart from Torah sin is dead](#)"? The clear meaning is that if there were no laws, then neither would there be sin (see vs 9). Again, most of us have acknowledged the we have done "wrong things" in our lives, but only a very few are willing to admit that we have broken YHWH's commandments. For most of us the concept of sin is autonomous from law, and often just a matter of conscience.

Similarly, Yeshayahu wrote, "[We all, like sheep, went astray, each one of us has turned his own way](#)." The obvious question is, "From what did we stray?" After all, if we went astray, we must have been on a correct course at some time. Wolves and wild beasts do not go astray. But sheep do because they have a shepherd. Who then was our shepherd in times past? And from what did we turn aside and go our own way? Answering these questions correctly will tell us something about our past, establish our true identity, and give us a proper sense of direction.

The overwhelming truth is that we are the children of Abraham! We are the Israelite people, and from the ten tribes that YHWH scattered among the nations. We are the descendants of those whom YHWH took out of Egypt, the very ancestors of those who received the Torah or the law of Moshe. The Elohim of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob is also our Elohim. The reason that we are now scattered among the nations and so utterly unaware of our own identity is that we broke our covenant relationship with YHWH by breaking His Torah. We transgressed His commandments and went our own way by worshiping the gods of the nations around us. Individually we have sinned and continue to sin in the same way. To this day we are a lawless people with idolatrous forms of worship who fail to see ourselves in the Scriptures or acknowledge that they were written about us. Brethren we are Israelites, and if not by nature then grafted in. But the inescapable reality is that we must return to the Torah and to YHWH the Shepard of Israel.

Beloved, even now our Shepherd is asking the question in our hearts for us, "Your words have been harsh against Me, says YHWH. Yet you say, 'What have we spoken against You?' You have said, 'It is worthless to serve Elohim: and what profit is it that we have kept His Torah?'" (Malachi 3:13-14). We have all the pat answers to YHWH. We say that the Law is not for us, or that it is burdensome, or that there is no reward in obedience. Our ancestors said it and we continue in the same way; and even as we say that we are sinners, we go on sinning. The truth is that we do not believe in YHWH's definition of sin, nor do we believe that the Torah was given to us for all our generations, or believe as Shual said, "the Torah is truly set-apart, and the commandment set-apart, and righteous, and good." (Romans 7:8). Hence we can't possibly understand what it means to "transgress" or to "turn our own way."

Beloved, the following is for you:

"Do not let this Book of the Torah depart from your mouth, but you shall meditate on it day and night, so that you guard to do according to all that is written in it. For then you shall make your way prosperous, and act wisely." (Yesoshua 1:8).

Shalom