

# Dead Faith versus Living Belief

By Rabbi Edward Levi Nydle-Revised 6-30-03

**“In the same way, Belief (faith), if it does not have works, is DEAD being alone.” Ya’akov (James) 2:17**

**“But are you willing to know, O vain man, that belief (faith) without works is DEAD?” Ya’akov 2:20**

**“For just as the body without the spirit is dead, so belief (faith) without works is DEAD also.” Ya’akov 2:26**

One of the largest obstacles we encounter when we attempt to share Torah with an “Xtian” is the doctrine of salvation by faith alone without works in the context of the word “faith” or better rendered BELIEF. They seem to fail to understand the Scriptural truth that Scriptural belief requires good works to be operative or a saving “faith”. Belief does require one to DO SOMETHING to PROVE in the world of action to prove or perfect their faith in YHWH and His Word.

- Faith or belief according to *Vines* means “trust, conviction based upon hearing, FAITHFULNESS, fidelity, assurance, a personal surrender to Him, a CONDUCT inspired by such surrender.” Does this sound like the “just believe” doctrine found in most kirches? Even *Vines* says that true belief will involve CONDUCT, and FAITHFULNESS based upon a total surrender to Yahweh from the heart. This Yahshua asked of His talmidim. We are to take up our personal torture stake and FOLLOW HIM and not look back or remove our hand from the plow. We must be WILLING to give all for Him to be worthy to inherit the Kingdom He offers. Yes, we will fall short and sin, but it is the heart fully surrendered that will turn (to do *teshuvah*-repentance) and ask Him to cleanse us and help us back on the narrow path.
- The word dead in *Vines* means inactive or barren, sin, the works of the law or legalism. Dead faith is a belief that does not bear fruit, does not produce good works or an action based upon the conviction believed in through hearing, or works BY THEMSELVES TO OBTAIN FAVOR without coming from a heart surrendered to Yahweh (the Pharisees are a good example of this) or to be seen by men.

I have seen both of these extremes in the Messianic faith. We have the “grace” people who are *antinomies* (no law) and believe anything goes, and the other extreme of radical legalism or self-righteousness based on one's good works of keeping Torah. Both are deadly poison and cannot save! B'nai Avraham is trying to set *Halakah* to reflect the balance spoken here by Ya’akov. A belief in Yahshua that will bear the good fruit of Torah obedience from a heart totally surrendered to Yahweh and empowered by the *Ruach*.

Let us go back to Ya’akov chapter 2 and see what he is saying. The first part of the chapter deals with our conduct based on Torah which he calls the “perfect Torah of liberty”. He also calls love the Royal Torah or law. In the second half of the chapter he expounds on the relationship between faith and Torah observance. They are so interrelated that they cannot be separated from each other. He says that faith is only to believe in Yahweh and even to say the *Shema* is a demonic type of faith and cannot save you. Then in verse 22 he says that our father Avraham's faith worked TOGETHER with his act of offering up Yitzchak to make his belief perfect or complete. Does this contradict Romans chapter 4-absolutely NOT! By combining the two chapters together we get a BALANCED doctrine of both faith and works as taught by Moshe and Yahshua! In verse 23 he claims that Avraham's belief combined with the ACT of BELIEF was accounted unto him for righteousness before Yahweh. Righteousness means to be innocent or holy before Yahweh. The faith that Avraham held told him what to do-it was up to him to perform it. Then in verse 24 he declares by the *Ruach Hakodesh* “You **see then that a man is also justified by works, and not by faith alone.**” Verse 26 compares the dead faith with a dead body-unable to do anything, unclean, rigid, stiff, no life, no breath (*Ruach*), unmovable, and also very smelly!

To confirm this by a second witness, as Torah commands, you need to read Hebrews (*Ivrim*) chapter 11, called the faith chapter by most people. Hebrews eleven is called the Hall of Faith. Great men of Yahweh who lived what they believed. EVERY ONE OF THEM had a faith or belief that was followed by good works of obedience to the Word of Yahweh.

The verses always start with “By belief Moshe DID SOMETHING! By belief Avraham DID SOMETHING!”

Faith is always action oriented .It demonstrates something that brings righteousness. It is not as the Western Gentile kirche has taught-some mystical, abstract, theoretical mental assent to Truth. No, true Scriptural saving faith will be result in right behavior.

Salvation has NEVER been through works. The *TaNak* (OT) teaches in **Habakkuk 2:4** “The just shall live by belief-faithfulness”. David knew that Yahweh could only forgive his sin through His grace and mercy (**Tehillim 32** and **51**). We as Messianic Yisrael know that Yahweh uses our faith to save us. The way of salvation is the same for all in the past and the present-by grace through BELIEF (or a conviction that leads to right living) or faithfulness to Yahweh.

Any teaching that some intellectual assent to a truth would “save” anyone would be totally foreign to Yahshua and His *talmidim*. In Hebraic thought, faith and works go hand in hand –they are inseparable not opposed! They knew a heart transformed by the *Ruach* would do good works out of a love for Yahweh and a sense of gratitude for His provision for our salvation in the blood of His Son, Yahshua.

True faith is recognition of whom Yahweh is and what He has done for us.the result of that belief is obedience to His word as given in the Torah given by Moshe and brought to its fullness of expression in Yahshua. True faith abandons the worldly ways and teachings of men to embrace with the heart the teachings of Yahweh, and endeavors to live them out. It is running forward and never looking back to Egypt (Yahshua said to remember Lot’s wife).

Ya’akov teaches us that pure religion is to minister to the widows and orphans and keep ourselves unspotted by the world (**Ya’akov 1:27**). Yahshua said that our fruits would declare who we are (note: barren faith does not produce any fruit) in **Mtt.7: 20**. If one does NOT have good fruit in their lives then according to Yahshua we should question whether they have had a true salvation experience with Yahweh.

Salvation is not an instantaneous, irrevocable event in ones life. It is a life-long process that requires a deep commitment to Yahweh. A “gospel” that does teach repentance, belief, and sacrifice or obedience is not a true “gospel” nor does it produce fruitbearing believers. It is a DEAD FAITH and cannot save. This was the message Yahshua taught. Rav Shaul taught the same message. He said in **Romans 3:31**-“**Are we then doing away with the Torah through faith? By NO MEANS! Rather we establish (put it on a firmer foundation) the Torah!**”

Let us as Ephraim and Yehudah as one proclaim the same message taught by Ya’akov the *tzaddik* (the righteous), “**...show me your faith without works, and I will show you my faith by my works.**” **Ya’akov 2:18b**