

## **The Values of the Followers of the Way**

Based on Jewish interpretations of the teachings of the Prophet Yeshua`, and Ya`aqov ha-Tzaddiq (Jacob the Pious):

The most profound emphasis of the Way is the immediate and joyful presence of YHWH; that our Heavenly Father is always with us, and not just far away in a distant heaven; that God cares for each and everyone of us, regardless of who we are, or what we have done, or how far we have come in our spiritual journey. YHWH loves us, and is concerned about each and every one of us.

The second most important thing is the Kingdom of God. We should exercise kindness and compassion in our daily practice of religion. Without care, consideration and concern for others, anything else we might do is pointless. The Way emphasizes that all deserve to be included in the kingdom of God - the poor, the outcast and the rejected, and not just those whom religious teachers have judged to be righteous. We are all imperfect, and no one should be made to feel that they have failed even before they have started.

The Way points out that if we simply follow mitzvot (commandments) without any concern for the heart of God's teaching, then we are following mechanically, and our observance is worthless. YHWH's Torah is meant to turn us into a holy people - that is, a people whose behavior is different and distinctive from that of others; "If you love only those who love you, what credit is that to you? Because even tax collectors do the same!"

When you do good, and follow the precepts of YHWH, then expect no reward from other human beings; you will only be doing these things expecting praise, and not for the sake of our God, or for the welfare of God's children or creation.

We should ever be mindful of religious hypocrisy—this was a big part of the teaching of the Way. We cannot tell others not to do something, and then go and do that very same thing ourselves!

It is important to practice religious and spiritual humility. One who practices spiritual humility exudes warmth, and even people who are outside of our religion, even non-believers, throw down their defenses, and their hearts and minds open up to us. But the one who shows religious arrogance, that person is closed to all, their heart is cold, and appears as nought but dark and frowning towards others.

In addition, emphasis should not be placed on an apocalyptic "salvation-event" to happen in the future, because our saving God is already here. God is working and active now—YHWH's power is the same now as it always was and always will be. And we humans—all of us—are the agents who work for YHWH to bring about the fulfillment of God's kingdom. If we wait for an event in the future, we are failing in our duty by sitting back and doing nothing, expecting someone else to do things for us.

We should help each other and support each other so that we do not worry about things, because the greatest enemy when we are in dire straits is despair. We should work towards giving hope to those who have none. "Who of you by worrying can add a single cubit to the length of their days?"

Wealth in itself is not sinful. If it is used for good, then it is good. If it is used for greed, and a goal only for itself, then it is worthless. "You cannot serve both God and wealth." It is the *love* of money, which is evil, not money itself.

We should not give up on people, or abandon them. Each living soul is dear to God, and of great value. "You are worth more than many sparrows!"

Don't give up in prayer - God hears every prayer, whoever we are; "If you who are imperfect, know how to give good things to your children, how much more will our Father in heaven give us when his children ask him!"

We should not hide our light under a bushel. We should not hide our values, our identity or our heritage. In ancient times, Gentiles were attracted to Jewish culture because they could see it and found it attractive. When explaining your faith to those who are genuinely interested, do not be defensive, but in your own words show that your faith brings you joy, and meaning and excitement. Don't make our identity to scowl at others, rather, when someone thinks of us, they should think of a people with a kind, warm and loving spirituality.

Even though we differ in our interpretations, we are stronger when we are united - remember Yeshua`'s teaching, "Every kingdom divided against itself will be laid waste, and every house divided falls."