

11-01-25 Message to Roeh Israel Abilene – *Lech L'cha* (go forth, yourself)
Torah Portion: Genesis 12:1 – 17:27
Haftarah: Isaiah 40:27 - 41:16
Suggested Acheron K'tuvim: Matt 18:15-20

Biblical Dispute Resolution 20 – The Decision Tree 4 – The Beit Din

**Central question: The second conversation didn't work out either,
what is the next step?**

We are this week in the third parasha of the Torah, beginning with the call of Abraham to leave Haran, and complete the journey to the Promised Land. Its name comes from the seventh and eighth word in English, and the fifth and sixth word in the original Hebrew.

Gen 12:1-3

12 Now the Lord said to Abram,

"Go forth from your country,
And from your relatives
And from your father's house,
To the land which I will show you;

2 And I will make you a great nation,
 And I will bless you,
 And make your name great;
 And so you shall be a blessing;
 3 And I will bless those who bless you,
 And the one who curses you I will curse.
 And in you all the families of the earth shall be blessed."

וּמִמִּזְדִּוֹתָיִךְ	מֵאֶרֶצְךָ	לְךָ	לֵךְ-	אַבְרָם	אֶל-	יְהוָה	וַיֹּאמֶר	12:1
and from thy kindred,	out of thy country,	thee	Get	Abram,	unto	the Lord	Now had said	
<u>4138</u>	<u>776</u>	<u>3807a</u>	<u>3212</u>	<u>87</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>3068</u>	<u>559</u>	
	אֶרְאֶכָּ:	אֲשֶׁר	הָאֶרֶץ	אֶל-	אָבִיךָ	וּמִבֵּית		
	I will shew thee:	that	a land	unto	thy father's	and from house,		
	<u>7200</u>	<u>834</u>	<u>776</u>	<u>413</u>	<u>1</u>	<u>1004</u>		
שְׁמִי	וַאֲגַדְלָהּ	וַאֲבָרְכֶךָ	גָּדוֹל	לְגוֹי	וַאֲעֲשֶׂהָ			2
thy name	and make great;	and I will bless thee,	great	a nation,	And I will make of thee			
<u>8034</u>	<u>1431</u>	<u>1288</u>	<u>1419</u>	<u>1471</u>	<u>6213</u>			
		בְּרִכָּה:	וְהָיָה					
		a blessing:	and thou shalt be					
		<u>1293</u>	<u>1961</u>					
בְּךָ	וְנִבְרַכְוּ	אָדָם	וּמִקְלָלְךָ	מִבְּרַכְיָךְ	וַאֲבָרְכָהּ			3
in thee	and shall be blessed.	curse	and him that curseth thee:	them that bless thee,	And I will bless			
<u>871a</u>	<u>1288</u>	<u>779</u>	<u>7043</u>	<u>1288</u>	<u>1288</u>			
					כָּל			
					הָאֲדָמָה:	מִשְׁפָּחוֹת		
					the earth	families of		
					<u>127</u>	<u>4940</u>	<u>3605</u>	

We are continuing in our series regarding Biblical Dispute Resolution.

Thus far, we have followed the process from the initial offense, through the second conversation (if the matter went that far). We saw that there

have been a number of opportunities for the process to be resolved in a good manner well before we reach the end of the second conversation. That is, of course, the best outcome.

But when the matter is not resolved at this informal stage, a formal proceeding is the next step. In Hebrew, it is called a Beit Din (House of justice). Let's look at the historical development of our judicial system in the body of faith.

Immediately after our people came out of Egypt, it was clear that Moses would not be able to be the sole judge for Israel. His father-in-law Yitro saw what was happening, and the day after Yitro came to faith in our G-d, he gave Moses some good advice.

Ex 18:13-23

13 And it came about the next day that Moses sat to judge the people, and the people stood about Moses from the morning until the evening. 14 Now when Moses' father-in-law saw all that he was doing for the people, he said, "What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone sit as judge and all the people stand about you from morning until evening?" 15 And Moses said to his father-in-law, "Because

the people come to me to inquire of God. 16 When they have a dispute, it comes to me, and I judge between a man and his neighbor, and make known the statutes of God and His laws." 17 And Moses' father-in-law said to him, "The thing that you are doing is not good. 18 You will surely wear out, both yourself and these people who are with you, for the task is too heavy for you; you cannot do it alone. 19 Now listen to me: I shall give you counsel, and God be with you. You be the people's representative before God, and you bring the disputes to God, 20 then teach them the statutes and the laws, and make known to them the way in which they are to walk, and the work they are to do. 21 Furthermore, you shall select out of all the people able men who fear God, men of truth, those who hate dishonest gain; and you shall place these over them, as leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 22 And let them judge the people at all times; and let it be that every major dispute they will bring to you, but every minor dispute they themselves will judge. So it will be easier for you, and they will bear the burden with you. 23 If you do this thing and God so commands you, then you will be able to endure, and all these people also will go to their place in peace."

And Moses listened to Yitro, and did what he suggested.

Ex 18:24-27

24 So Moses listened to his father-in-law, and did all that he had said. 25 And Moses chose able men out of all Israel, and made them heads over the people, leaders of thousands, of hundreds, of fifties and of tens. 26 And they judged the people at all times; the difficult dispute they would bring to Moses, but every minor dispute they themselves would judge.

This system functioned as our people's judicial system, but G-d then codified a more detailed judicial system for our people. The highest court during the Second Temple period was called the Sanhedrin [the assembly]. It was composed of 70 judges, plus the judge recognized as having the greatest knowledge, called the Nasi [ruler, or president of the court]. The Nasi was the equivalent of what we see in the US Supreme Court as the Chief Justice.

While the Temple still stood, the Nasi sat at the head of the court, and the one recognized as the second greatest judge sat at the Nasi's right hand. This judge was called the Av Beit Din – literally, “father of the court” or

also the “patron of the court.” The remaining 69 judges would be arranged below these two in descending order of age and judicial standing. Thus, the most wise and competent judges would be seated nearest to the Nasi.

Num 11:16-18

16 The Lord therefore said to Moses, "Gather for Me seventy men from the elders of Israel, whom you know to be the elders of the people and their officers and bring them to the tent of meeting, and let them take their stand there with you.

17 Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put Him upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you shall not bear it all alone.¹

This high court was known by the title of the Beit Din Hagadol [the great house of justice]. They were convened in the Land upon the Temple Mount. This court had final say in all matters of fact and law.

In the tradition of the Jewish people, all judges were required to have the following seven attributes:

¹ Note how this passage tends to refute the popular teaching in some Christian churches that the Spirit had not come before the Pentecost celebration in Acts chapter 2.

1. wisdom,
2. humility,
3. awe of heaven,
4. no love of money (even his own),
5. a love for truth,
6. beloved by the people at large, and
7. a good reputation.

Notice how these attributes are drawn from by Paul as he gives Timothy the attributes of Elders of any congregation.

1 Tim 3:1-5

3 It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. 2 An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, 3 not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, uncontentious, free from the love of money. 4 He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity.

Historically, members of the Beit Din Hagadol would go throughout the land to find people of great character, and would test them against the seven attributes of judges. If found, they would appoint those people to the office of judge and he would be given authority to rule. That conferral of authority is known as *semicha*, and then worthy of the title “Rabbi.”

When a Beit Din is convened, it is to be of a minimum of two judges, and ideally three. There can be more members of a Beit Din than three, but normally that body should have an odd number, because on occasion, the verdict is one that has been determined by a vote of the court’s members.

There is a bit of controversy in the Jewish community today regarding the authority of a modern Beit Din. This comes from the tradition that the authority of every Beit Din was established *only* by *semicha* of its members conferred by one who had previously received *semicha* within the Land of Israel and the subsequent *semicha* also occurred within the land of Israel. At the Babylonian exile, this unbroken chain was broken – as the tradition goes – and so succession from Moses was not possible to be assured. Thus, some believe that the modern Rabbis could not be directly descended from Moses, and thus the authority of the Beit Din composed of such Rabbis is severely limited.

I do not follow this line of reasoning. G-d's instructions regarding His judicial system are not dependent upon location, or specific semicha lineage. I believe that the current traditions of most in the Jewish community surrounding this topic are more consistent with human invention than with G-d's heart.

As I see it, the intention of G-d in establishing the judicial system for our people through Moses was for G-d's Word to take precedence, and judges to render proper and prompt justice, free from any form of corruption or undue influence.

I strongly believe that issues of offense between those in the community of faith should be handled by G-d's judicial system. We should not take our disputes to the civil courts of the world. Paul's letter to the congregation at Corinth made it clear.

1 Cor 6:1-7

6 Does any one of you, when he has a case against his neighbor, dare to go to law before the unrighteous, and not before the saints? 2 Or do you not know that the saints will judge the world? And if the world is judged by you, are you not competent to constitute the smallest law courts? 3 Do you

not know that we shall judge angels? How much more,
matters of this life? 4 If then you have law courts dealing
with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who
are of no account in the church? 5 I say this to your shame. Is
it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be
able to decide between his brethren, 6 but brother goes to law
with brother, and that before unbelievers? 7 Actually, then, it
is already a defeat for you, that you have lawsuits with one
another. Why not rather be wronged?

The judicial systems of the world dominated by Rome, Greece, or Egypt
were not based upon Torah, nor G-d's notions of right and wrong. The
chances of getting a proper verdict regarding G-d's law from one of
those courts diminished to zero.

Although the deep roots of the American system of civil justice are
Torah law, the upper reaches of the tree that has sprung from those roots
seems to have lost much of the original function and intention of
Scripture.

I am confident that the American system of justice – in general terms –
is more capable of rendering a just result than that of the world, I have
spent long enough in that system to understand that biblical justice is

practically impossible to attain given the law's current drift from the truths of Torah, and G-d's heart.

So, I urge people who are in the body of faith today, who must go to the next step, that of formal proceedings with a Beit Din, to seek out two or three Rabbis who are displaying the seven characteristics that our people have determined to be necessary. Then we should submit the disputes to this Beit Din, and abide by its decision.

When a proper Beit Din is convened, the judges should be G-dly enough to bathe the entire process in prayer. They should ask that G-d direct their efforts so that they can use the wisdom of Solomon in accomplishing their holy task.

Yeshua offered words of encouragement to judges. He told them that their decision on earth was so secure that it was recognized even in heaven. And He said that judges who pray for guidance, and who are assembled to carry out this holy task.

Matt 18:18-20

18 "Truly I say to you, whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven; and whatever you loose on earth shall be

loosed in heaven. 19 "Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth about anything that they may ask, it shall be done for them by My Father who is in heaven. 20 "For where two or three have gathered together in My name, there I am in their midst."

Some in the normative Church have taken these verses out of the context of judicial process, and have misapplied them. I have seen some who teach that this passage supports the sad “name it and claim it” theology, and also to community prayer. They believe that when two or three join in prayer, then Yeshua is compelled to join them and grant their prayer. These passages were not intended to provide a pathway to allow believers to manipulate G-d, nor to grant believers greater authority than we have been given. G-d is not a vending machine where a prayer goes in and we pull a Scriptural lever and get what we want. In context, and given the Hebraic understanding of the justice system as established by G-d, these passages are only relevant to judicial proceedings.

There is a passage which seems a bit odd, right between the second conversation and the statement that the verdict of the Beit Din is binding on earth and even in heaven.

Matt 18:17-18

17 "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church;
and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to
you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.

I believe that this is related to the idea of the Beit Din. I believe that Yeshua must have taught that the Beit Din was to be established by the body of faith, as was the pattern of generations before. I think this instruction was given in form of an idiom. Possibly when He said “tell it to the church” He was referring to proceedings before a properly constituted Beit Din composed of qualified believers sitting as judges.

Yeshua could not have used the word “church” at that time, regardless. This is because the first known use of the word "church" was in the Old English period dates back to before 1150, with the earliest recorded form being "cirice" or "circe," meaning a place of Christian worship or the body of believers. At the time Yeshua walked as a man among us, there was no such thing as “the Christian church.” All believers were either Jewish, or were proselytes.

The word “church” evolved from the Common Germanic word *kirika*, which was likely borrowed via Gothic from the Ancient Greek "*kyriakon doma*," meaning "the Lord's house". The Greek term "*kyriakon*" had

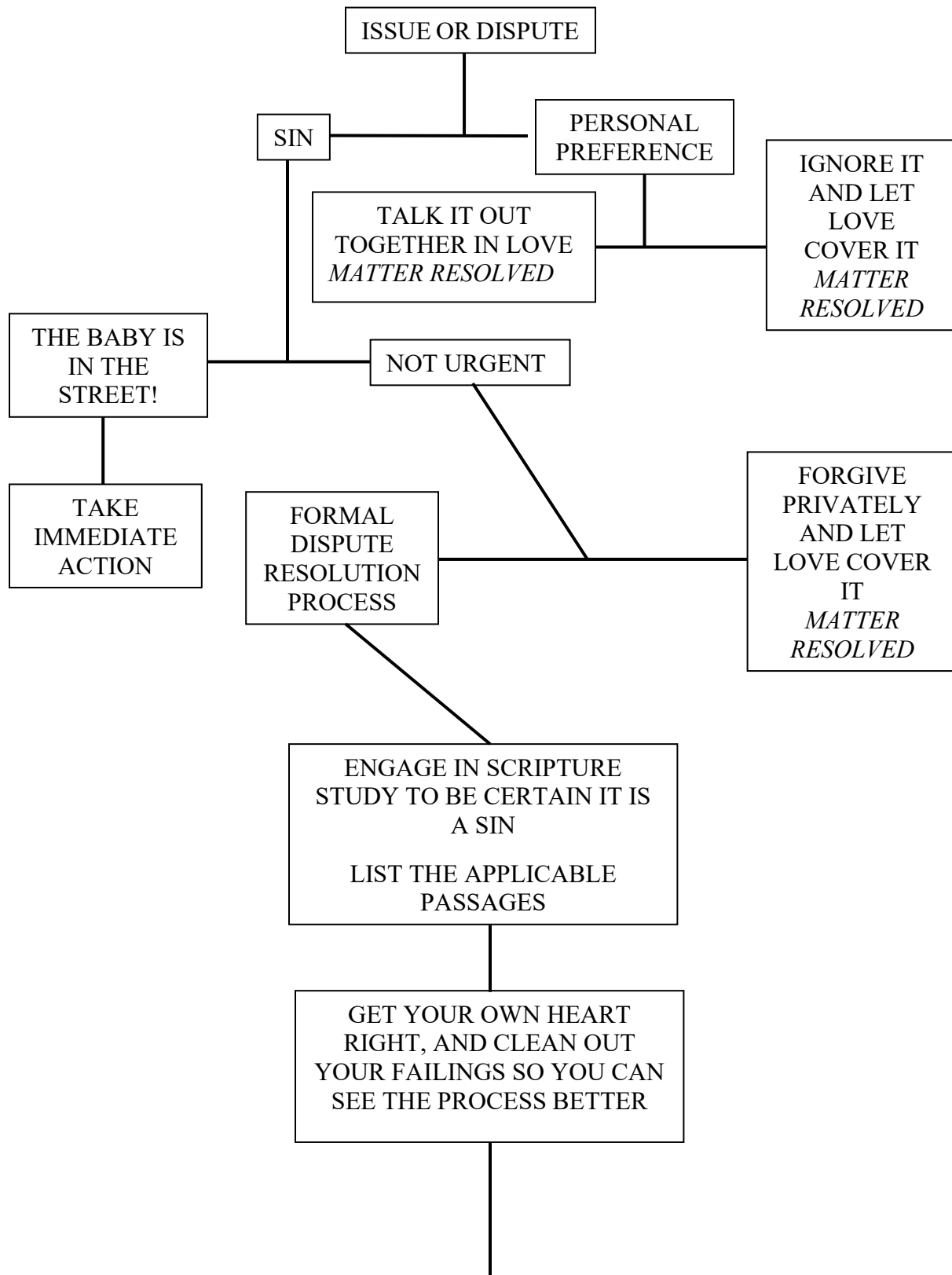
been used to refer to Christian places of worship since around 300 AD, particularly in the Eastern tradition.

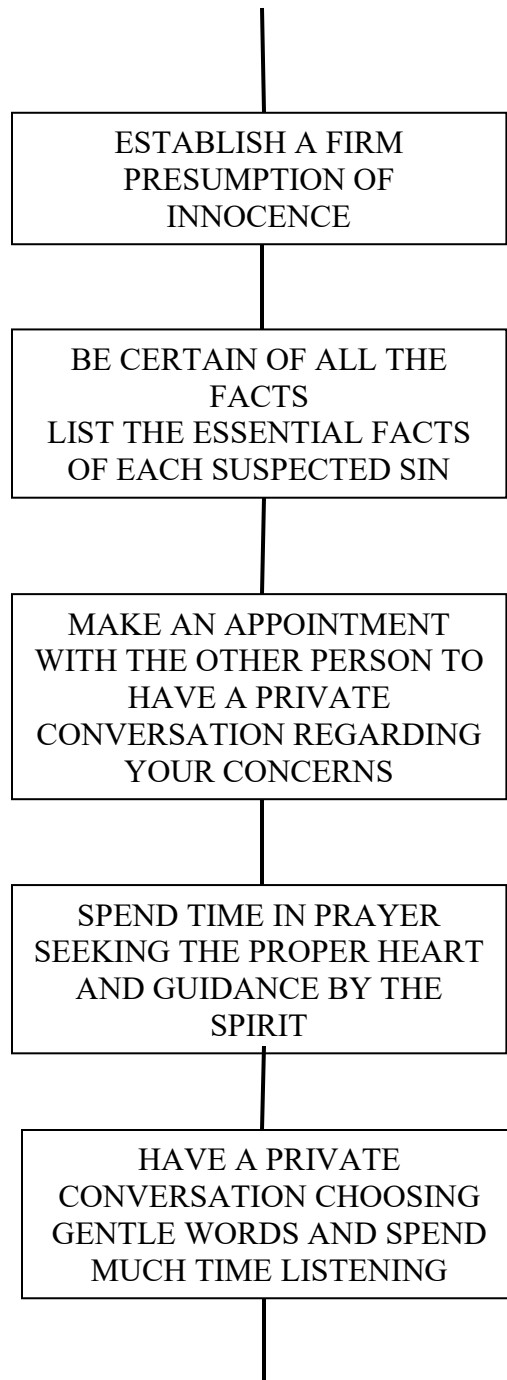
My belief regarding a Beit Din composed of qualified members of the body of faith is reinforced by Paul's clear rebuke for failing to establish a Beit Din, and resort to it in matters of disputes between believers.

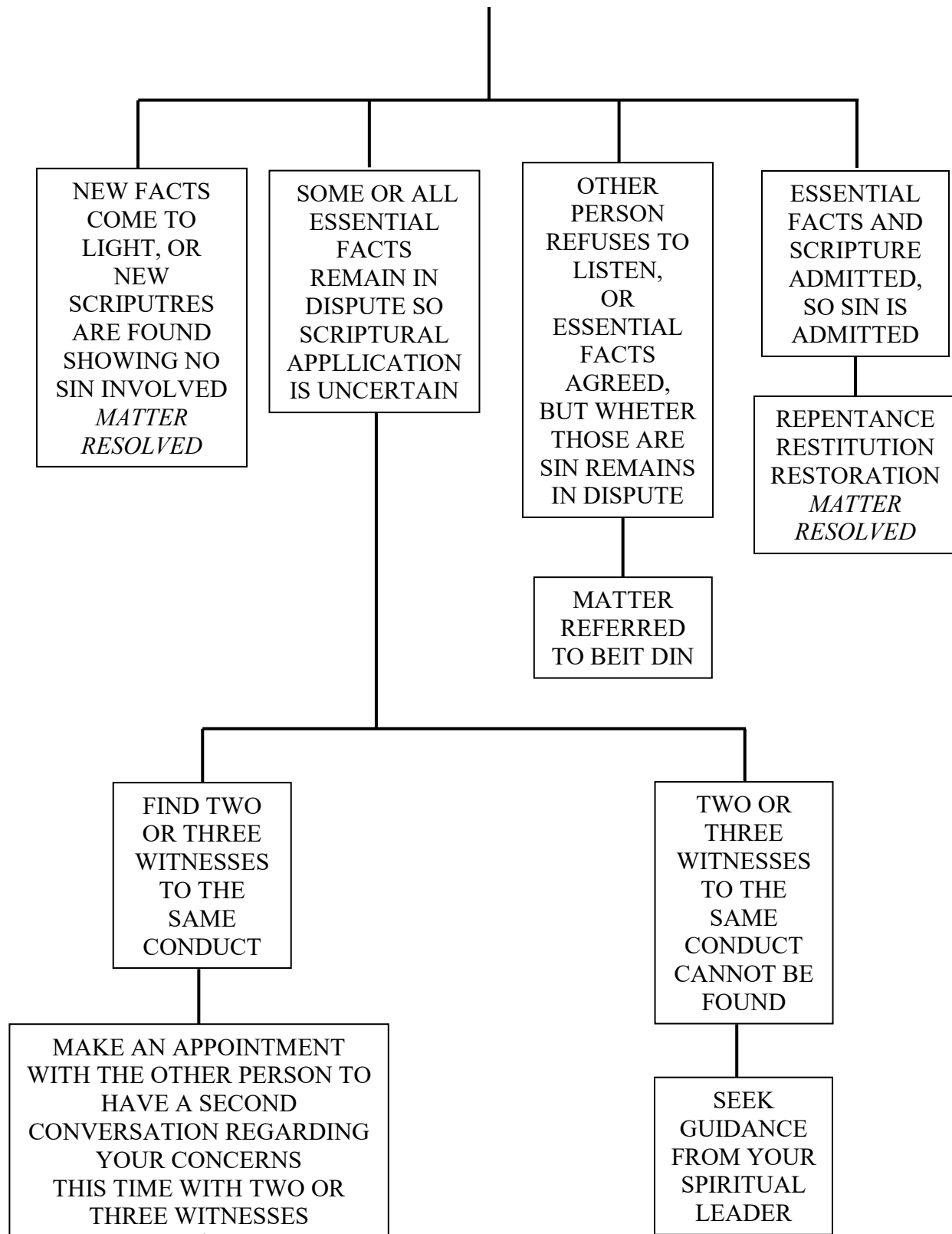
1 Corinthians 6:4-6

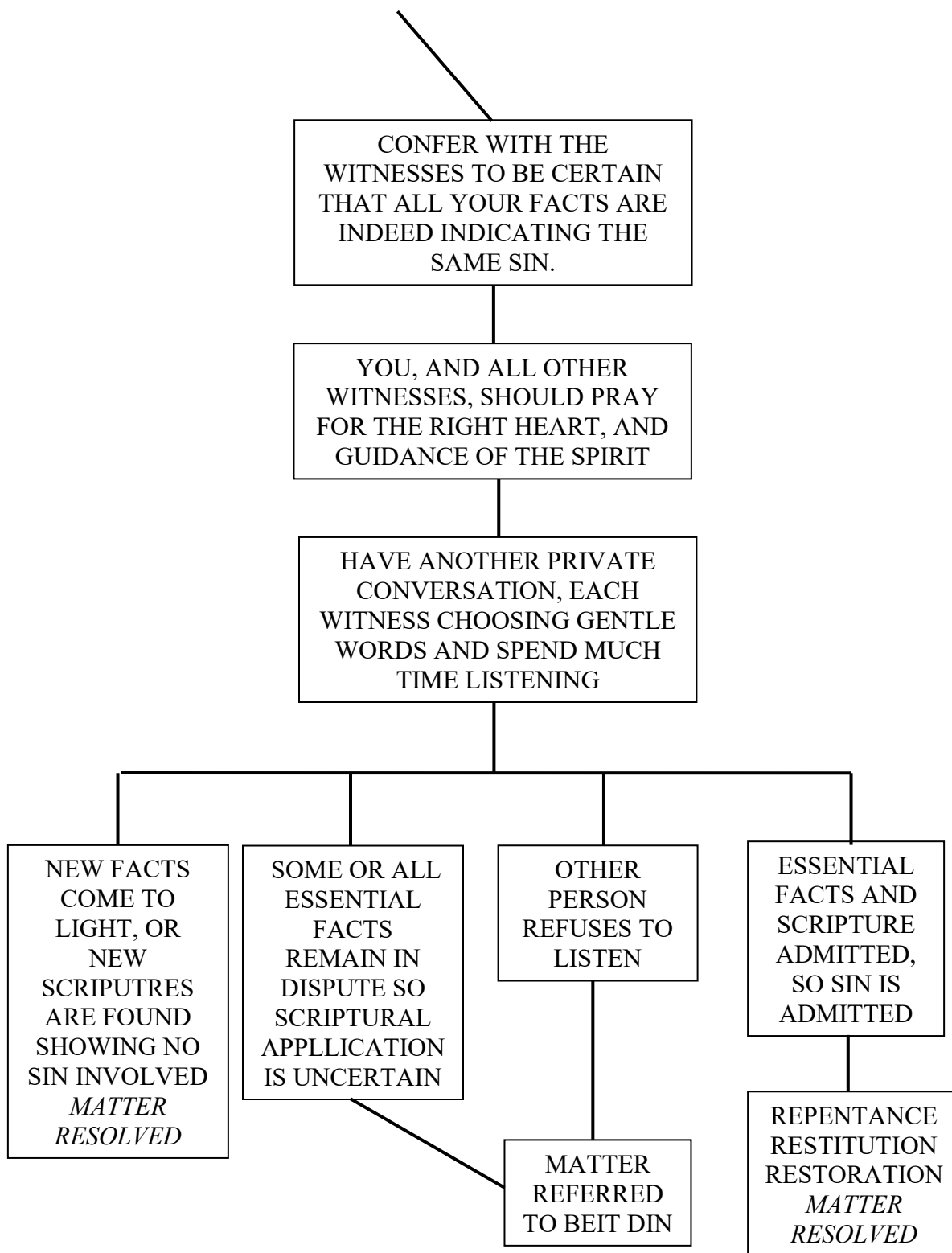
4 If then you have law courts dealing with matters of this life, do you appoint them as judges who are of no account in the church? 5 I say this to your shame. Is it so, that there is not among you one wise man who will be able to decide between his brethren, 6 but brother goes to law with brother, and that before unbelievers?

So, with all this being said, it seems clear that Yeshua was speaking of resolving this dispute by a Beit Din, and that composed of qualified judges from the body of faith.









I am not going to go into any real detail on how a Beit Din functions, for that is internal to their work, and won't involve you as a congregation member. But I will tell you what the end of the matter is.

The Beit Din will make four main determinations, based upon the accusation(s) of sin:

1. What are the operative facts?
2. What is the Law (what does Torah say about these facts?)
3. Is the accused guilty of violation of the Law?
4. If so, what are the proper consequences for that violation?

The Beit Din will then prepare a written judgment. That judgment will be a public document, and the congregation will know all that is in it.

If the judgment is that the accused is innocent, then that will be proclaimed publicly. If the accused is found guilty, that will be proclaimed as well.

If the accused doesn't abide by the decision of the Beit Din – in the case where he is found guilty, then Yeshua gave us another step to take.

Matt 18:17-18

17 "And if he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church [Beit Din]; and if he refuses to listen even to the church [Beit Din], let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax-gatherer.

This makes a bit more sense if you understand the way people viewed these two groups of people. First, the gentile is not a member of the body of faith. In that time in history, it means a “non-believer” in our G-d. Secondly, the tax gatherer is actually worse. He is one who oppresses the people for the benefit of the rulers (normally from a foreign conqueror).

As you can see, the consequences of ignoring the ruling of a Beit Din is expulsion from the congregation and from the body of faith as well.

Imagine how ordered and holy would be the walk of the members of each congregation in the body of faith, if each one of them adhered faithfully to the biblical resolution process.