

Yeshua and Halakah: Which Direction?

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As the Messianic Jewish movement has matured, we've begun to ask ourselves increasingly significant questions that relate to our identity and our lifestyle. Some of these have to do with our relationship to Judaism and its traditions, to halakah (the rabbinic guidelines for how Jewish people should live in order to be consistent with God's instructions in Scripture) and its relevance. Should we be involved in our own Messianic Jewish halakah and how?

Foundational to answering these questions is an understanding of how Yeshua relates to halakah. As might be suspected, there is some difference of opinion over this as is illustrated by the following: "At times Jesus speaks of the permanent validity of the Law (Matt. 5:17f.); yet his actions and words often seem contrary to the Law (Mark 2:18-27)."[1] The question is, where did Yeshua stand in relation to the Judaism of his day? Did he place himself against the Second Temple traditions and practices, live consistently within them, or something in between? The answers to these questions, of course, have significant ramifications for Messianic theology and practice.

The Jewishness of His Life & Teaching

The New Testament accounts (e.g. Lk. 2:39-52; Jn. 8:46; Gal. 4:4 et al.) stress that Yeshua was brought up as a Jew in the traditions and faith of his ancestors. Like his childhood, his later life was also stamped by his Jewish heritage. He respected the Temple and its worship, expecting his followers to offer the usual sacrifices (Mt. 5:23, 24) and going out of his way to pay the Temple tax (Mt. 17:24-27). Like the devout Jews of his day he attended synagogue regularly on the Sabbath (Lk. 4:16 et al.), first being taught there as a child, and later doing the teaching himself. He consistently observed the Jewish festivals and holidays and used these occasions to indicate how they highlighted his mission (Jn. 2:13; 5:1; 7:2, 10, 37-39; 8:12; 10:22-23; 13:1-2).

He used and taught the traditional prayers of his time (cf. Mt. 6:9-13). "His special prayer is merely a shortened form of the third, fifth, sixth, ninth and fifteenth of the Eighteen Benedictions." [2] Undoubtedly, he used the familiar blessings over bread and wine when he said grace at meals (cf. Lk. 22:19-20).

The Gospels also indicate that he was quite Jewish in his dress. When the woman with the hemorrhaging reached for him, she grabbed the hem of his clothes (Mk. 6:56; Mat. 9:20; Lk. 8:44). The Greek term used here, kraspedon, commonly translates the Hebrew, tzitzit or fringes, [3] which God had commanded the Jewish people to wear (Num. 15:37-41).

His way of life reflected other Jewish customs as well. He followed the custom of not only preaching in the synagogue but in the open air like the rabbis who "preached everywhere, on the village square and in the countryside as well as in the synagogue." [4] The frequent use of baptism associated with his ministry was also quite common to his time, as the Talmud itself testifies (Sanhedrin 39a). As it has been pointed out,

Whether one accepts it or not, it is a fact attested to by the Gospels...that to his final hour Jesus did not stop practicing the basic rites of Judaism.[5]

Perhaps, most significant was his relationship to the Law and traditions, which some have described as "entirely orthodox".[6] He declared the permanence of the whole Torah (Mt. 5:17-19) and even accepted Pharisaic extensions (Mt. 23:2-3). Some of these include: tithing of herbs (Mt. 23:23; cf. Maaserot 4.5), grace at meals (Mk. 6:41; 8:6), blessings over wine, and the recitation of the Hallel Psalms at the Passover seder (Mk. 14:22-23, 26).

This relationship to the traditions and practices of his day prompted David Flusser to write in the Encyclopedia Judaica: [7]

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The fact that Yeshua preached regularly in the synagogues, which would not have been possible if his lifestyle or teachings had been recognizably different from the current teaching or accepted halakah, substantiates these observations. The incident in Matthew 9:18f. provides further corroboration. The "ruler" -- in Lk. 8:41 and Mk. 5:22, the "head of the synagogue" (rosh kneset?) -- comes to Yeshua. Both his request and his posture (kneeling) indicate this religious leader's ready acceptance of and profound respect for Yeshua as an observant Jew and important religious leader.

Another author further noted:

Jesus...represents a point of contact between the Bible and linked to it through an interpretive Bible and linked to it through an interpretive Bible. The great literary creation of the Rabbis, the Oral Tradition, put it: "The attitude of Jesus to the Law among the masters of halakah and haggadah who followed in the Tradition." [8]

In fact, even the Sermon on the Mount, often viewed as the essence and epitome of Yeshua's teaching, reflects concepts familiar to the Jews of his day and consistent with rabbinic teaching. To begin with, it is quite similar in style. Much of the Sermon consists of illustrations of the proper understanding of the Law, or Torah, spelling out its wider implications and describing its broader principles. Many of the illustrations he used were common to the "Rabbis" of his day, and the whole is carried out in the style of a midrash--an interpretive supplementing of Scripture--much as is exemplified in the Oral Torah which later became the Talmud. [9] Much like Yeshua these teachers felt that the morally sensitive must go beyond mere conformity to the Torah (cf. Baba Mezia 88a; Mekilta on Ex. 18:20).

As each expounded the Torah, the things they taught paralleled each other. One example of this parallel teaching comes from the Talmud: "He who has mercy on his fellow creatures obtains mercy from heaven" (Shabbat 151b; cf. Mt. 5:7). Other similarities to the Beatitudes could be cited as well. [10]

Scholars frequently cite the famous "turn the other cheek" passage (Mt. 5:38-48) as an example of the radical newness of Yeshua's teachings. But even here

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same spirit which inspired the best teaching of the Rabbis...[11]

The point Yeshua emphasized here is the proper response to insult, "the slap in the face." A person is not to seek redress or retaliation but should endure the insult humbly. With this the Rabbis agreed, and counseled that a person struck on the cheek should forgive the offending party even if he does not ask forgiveness (Tosefta Baba Kamma 9:29f). The Talmud commends the person who accepts offense without retaliation and submits to suffering and insult cheerfully (Yoma 23a). In fact, one can find parallels in the rabbinic material to almost all of Yeshua's statements in this paragraph (5:38-42).[12]

The next paragraph (vv. 43-47) builds on "loving your enemy". Here, too, statements expressing similar ideas can be found in the writings of the Rabbis. For example, "if anyone seeks to do evil unto you, do you in well-doing pray for him" (Testament of Joseph XVIII.2; cf. Mt. 5:44). While it is true that the Rabbis did not always agree over how to treat an enemy, there are indications that many of them taught perspectives similar to Yeshua.[13]

The following assessment of the parallels between the teachings of Yeshua and those of the Pharisees acknowledges this commonness but also recognizes the independence:

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legitimate lines for the exposition of Judaism.[14]

The Conflict Defined

As the previous quote illustrates, while Yeshua was very much in tune with his times and his people, there were points of conflict between him and some of the religious leaders. Just what was the nature of this conflict?

Yeshua taught in a period of flux and transition, of various developing and occasionally conflicting interpretations of the Torah. In taking advantage of this liberty in interpretation, he nevertheless remained thoroughly Jewish and mainstream at that. For example, he accepted the laws concerning the Sabbath but differed in the interpretation of some of those laws concerning certain conditions which justify its suspension.[15] "In minor points ... he showed a freedom from traditional custom which implied a break with the stricter rule of the more rigorous adherents of the Law at that time." [16] However, "some of this, of course, may be allowable violation of traditions which, far from having a binding force, were subject to free and continuing intramural debate." [17]

It must be remembered then that he did not violate generally accepted customs and practice; he simply disagreed with certain specific pronouncements put forward by some teachers. The Sabbath question illustrates this.

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tendency to put the letter before the Spirit.[18]

One other consideration deserves mention. A number of Yeshua's comments indicate that he interacted with the discussion between the schools of Hillel and Shammai, and therefore would be in conflict with one or the other.[19] For example, the statement about tithing mint and dill (Mt. 23:23f.) reflects one of the things included for tithing by Shammai but not by Hillel (Maaserot 1.1 cf. 4.6; Eduyyot 5.3; Demai 1.3). This shows the extent of Shammai's zeal and commitment to the law of tithing (Dt. 14:22-23). The reference to enlarging the tzitzit alludes to another discussion between the schools. In response to the command to make tzitzit (Dt. 22:12), Shammai wanted to make broader tzitzit than Hillel (Menahot 41b).

What then was the major focus of the conflict between Yeshua and some of the religious leaders of his day? Was it simply differing interpretations or applications of the Torah? Or, was it something deeper, as has been suggested?

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deputed power from on high.[20]

The key to the conflict, then, revolves around Yeshua's uniqueness and authority as Messiah, and as the Second Moses. In his ministry "I say" replaced "thus says the Lord." As the Messiah and initiator of the "Age to Come", he brought in a new order of things.[21] Yeshua's Messiahship implied something new had come for Judaism. This formed a basis for his authority and for whatever appropriate adaptations or interpretations he might have made, or for the challenges he leveled against certain interpretations which obscured the intended meaning of the Torah. As Messiah and Second Moses he was the authoritative interpreter of the Law. In fact, the Talmud indicates that Messiah's authority is so great that: "Even if he tells you to transgress any of the commandments of the Torah, obey him in every respect" (Yebamot 90b).

Yeshua's Basic Premise

Yeshua, according to the rabbinic understanding of the Messiah as Second Moses, as previously noted, had the authority as Messiah to adapt the Torah and the traditions.

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according to some, the inclusion of the Gentiles under the yoke of the Torah.[22]

Before dealing with the question as to how he DID deal with the Torah, it is important to discern Yeshua's basic perspective with respect to the Torah. In short, he did not abrogate the provisions of the Torah but did elaborate on the implications of its guidelines and principles, making sure "its obscurities would be plain."

Yeshua said quite directly: "Observe the commandments of God" (Mk. 10:17-19; Mt. 19:16-19; Luke 18:18-20). He also indicated that the Torah would not pass away with his coming (Mt. 5:18). Often his statements beginning with "but I say" are put forward as evidence for his setting aside the Torah. But, these statements - as will shortly be seen - appear to function more as an unfolding of the deeper, fuller meaning of the Torah, rather than as a sweeping away.[23] In fact, when compared with the traditions which serve as the foundations of the Oral Torah in classical Judaism,

The interpretations [Jesus gives]...are not incompatible with the Oral Torah and with the method by which its provisions were written text. [24]

However, Matthew 5:17-20 remains the crucial passage in understanding Yeshua's perspective of his relationship to the Torah. It is here that he described his purpose or intent ("I have come/not come") with respect to the Torah. He stated that his purpose was NOT to abolish the Torah. The term abolish (kataluo) carries the idea of: do away with, annul, make invalid, repeal, terminate.[25] Yeshua came to do none of the above. In fact, he mentioned "not abolish" twice so as to emphasize his intent. The strength of his statement is further reinforced by the phrase, "Don't think that", which has the thrust of "Never think that".[26] He wanted people to clearly understand that he would not annul, repeal or terminate the Torah!

Next, he set up a stark contrast with this statement. In using the particular construction for "but" (ouk ... alla), Yeshua was presenting "fulfill" as a direct opposite of, or strong contrast to, his previous statement. In effect, everything "abolish" is, "fulfill" is not, and the reverse; any explanation of fulfill that even resembles the thrust of abolish is therefore out of the question. Now, in the passive, "fulfill" (pleroo) is used in the sense of things -- particularly Scripture -- being fulfilled. However, in the active, as it is here, the sense is different. Here it carries the idea of: cram full, make complete, confirm, show forth the true meaning, bring to full expression; in other words "to fill full." [27] The image seems to be that of a treasure chest, packed full of valuables (cf. Mt. 13:52.).

The probable linguistic backgrounds of the Greek in the text here help fill out the implications of fulfill, particularly in light of the context of this passage. In the Septuagint, the term translates mala, taman, and sava with the sense of "make completely full, fill up the measure." [28] (In the Targums, male and kum are used interchangeably.) [29] The probable Hebrew term behind the Greek is kiyyem, which means "uphold, sustain, preserve." [30] The term implies that the teaching given agrees with the text of the Scripture in question. This fits admirably with the discussion of verses 21-48. The likely Aramaic equivalent, la'asuphe, means "to add"; and it connotes the idea of preserving the intended meaning of a statement by including all the actions or prohibitions implied in it. [31] Yeshua's discussion in verses 21-48 pointedly illustrates this

emphasis. Thus, both the Aramaic and Hebrew backgrounds reinforce the idea of fulness as filling full or filling out.

As it turns out, "abolish" and "fulfill" are actually terms used at that time as part of scholarly debate and rabbinic discussion.[32] A sage was accused of abolishing or cancelling the Torah if he misinterpreted a passage, nullifying its intent. If he fulfilled it, he had properly interpreted Scripture so as to preserve and correctly explain its meaning.

The remainder of this paragraph (vv. 18-20) further reinforces this understanding of fulfill. When Yeshua talked of not even the "smallest letter" or "least stroke of a pen" passing away, he spoke in terms similar to the sages:

If the whole world were gathered together to destroy the yod which letter in the Torah, they would not succeed (Rabbah 19). Not a letter shall be abolished (Rabbah 6.1).

And, he added that no one can break or set aside even the least of the commandments, without jeopardizing his future status (v.19). As if this were not enough, he concluded this section (v.20) by emphasizing that his followers needed to be even more observant and devout than the Pharisees, going beyond even their practice of the traditions!

Therefore, it appears that Yeshua said:

..... not only do I not overthrow the Law ... or empty it of its content... not only do I not overthrow the Law, but I increase that content, so as to fill the Law full to the brim.[33]

So, Yeshua came to bring the correct interpretation and understanding of the Law, i.e. to indicate the full implications and complete meaning of the commandments. Therefore, a person who obeyed his teachings obeyed even the least of the commandments (v. 19) because he was teaching their intended import (cf. Rom. 8:4). The context following (v. 21 f.) expands on this foundational principle (vv. 17-20) in typical rabbinic fashion, i.e., a listing of cases demonstrating or illustrating the principle. [34] Basically, in this section, Yeshua was saying:

I say to you: do not stop halfway in obedience to the commandments; go beyond, always beyond the letter of the commandments; go beyond the letter to the spirit that gives it life, from the literal to the inner spirit (Mt. 23:23); and my Father is perfect (Mt. 5:47); and my Father is perfect in its fulness.[35]

In effect, Yeshua built a "fence around the Law" - as indicated by the Aramaic and Hebrew underlying "fulfill" - much as the earlier sages cited by the Talmud did (Pirke Avot 1.2). And his fence is remarkably similar to that of the sages.[36]

Problem Passages

Much of the discussion about Yeshua's relationship to the halakah revolves around apparent or alleged violations of the Torah and/or traditions. Several passages raise the question of possible violation. How are they to be viewed?

Matthew 5:21-48

Frequently, the formulation "You have heard it said,...but I say to you...", found in the Sermon on the Mount, is presented as evidence of his opposition to the traditions. Actually, this statement reflects a rabbinic formula used to indicate that a particular interpretation of the Bible may not be valid in the fullest sense. In other words, it implies: "One might hear so and so ... but there is a teaching to say that the words should rather be taken in this sense." In fact, this is a phrase that Rabbi Ishmael -- a contemporary of Yeshua and one of the foremost scholars cited in the Talmud -- used frequently (cf. Mekilta 3a, 6a, et al.).[37] The point being made by the formula is that to some people Scripture appears to have a certain meaning, but that apparent meaning is an incomplete, or inaccurate understanding. So then the first part of the formulation implies a specific interpretation of Scripture held by some, and is not intended as a quotation of Scripture. As such, this is a rabbinic way of refuting an inaccurate or incomplete understanding.[38]

Usually what followed was a logical deduction introduced by a form of the verb "to say": "you must say," or "there is a teaching to say." However, Yeshua used no logical argument or development to validate his interpretation; he simply said: "I say." He went beyond the usual emphasis, and instead of a rabbinic exposition of the Torah, he presented the more complete sense in an authoritative proclamation that implied he was the supreme or final authority. (Yet, even in this, the specific formulation was quite rabbinic and paralleled that found in Abot DeRabbi Nathan (XIII, p. 16a -- aval ani omer leka.) Significantly, in the rabbinic literature God is the one who occasionally undertakes these "corrections" (Midrash Tanhuma, Jer. 4:2 on goodness)! [39]

The previous discussion implies that Yeshua did not oppose the old Law with a new one, but contrasted two interpretations, his -- based on his personal authority -- and some commonly accepted one. His was fuller -- explaining the intent and ideal underlying the Scripture and using the very teachings and traditions common to his contemporaries -- not setting aside the other, but including and expanding it. [40] In effect, as the Sermon on the Mount aptly illustrates, he intensified the Torah with his declarations.

..... we ca... we cannot speak of the Law being annulled in the antithesis, but only ... we cannot speak of the Law being intensified in its demand, or reinterpreted in a higher key. [41]

However, Yeshua's statements in Matthew 9:16-17 seem to contradict this perspective. Normally this passage is cited to oppose the use of traditional or rabbinic practices. However, a reconsideration of this passage indicates that Yeshua -- consistent with his lifestyle, and with his statements in Matthew 5:17-20 -- did not oppose the observance of the traditions. [42] Upon closer examination, Yeshua is not saying the same thing -- namely, setting aside the "old" -- in two different ways; he is speaking of two different, but related, issues focused on combining faith in Yeshua with Judaism.

Verse 16 pictures Judaism as an old coat, and unadapted Messianic faith as an unshrunk patch. "Shrinking" in this context does not imply "diminishing" but "adapting" to the framework of Judaism. If unadapted Messianic faith is combined with traditional Judaism, disaster results; the patch tears away from the coat! It leaves a worse hole; and both patch and coat are now rendered near useless. In other words, faith in Yeshua, wrenched from its Jewish context, can be

quite harmful. Yeshua implies that it is essential to shrink the new patch – adapt Messianic faith to Judaism -- because there is nothing wrong with mending an old coat. At this time and in this culture, old clothes were not thrown away as soon as possible, as modern society tends to do. They were valued, restored, and worn. The early Messianic Jews adapted their faith to the framework of Judaism. Unfortunately, the later "church" did not; they "tore away" from the "coat," leaving both worse off. In fact, some forms of Christianity became paganized precisely because they devalued the Torah or ignored their Jewish roots.

While verse 16 teaches that Messianic faith needs to be adapted to Judaism, verse 17 indicates that Judaism needs to be adjusted to faith in Yeshua. Yeshua compares new wine to Messianic faith and the old wineskins to traditional Judaism. If new wine is put into old wineskins, the wine is lost and the skins are ruined! But if the wineskins of traditional Judaism are renewed, or reconditioned -- as wineskins were in those days -- to accommodate trust in Yeshua, both the Messianic faith and renewed Judaism "are preserved."

Levi's (Matthew's) careful choice of words here reinforces this understanding. He speaks of new (Greek: neos) wine and fresh (kainos) skins. The former indicates new with respect to quantity, i.e. time; the latter, new with respect to quality. Neos implies immaturity or lack of development; kainos indicates "new" or "renewed," contrasting "old" or "not renewed." [43] Old wineskins lose their strength and elasticity, so cannot withstand the pressure of new wine fermenting. However, an old skin can be "renewed" and thus restored to service. In ancient, conservation-conscious societies, restoring old items -- such as wineskins -- was highly desirable; therefore, it was important that this be done.

Yeshua's statement implies that the new Messianic faith cannot be poured into old religious concepts if they remain rigid. But, if the old religious ideas become fresh and flexible, they can accommodate Yeshua. In this context (i.e. vv. 1-15), the necessary accommodation involves refining the understanding of Messiah to fully incorporate the concepts of the Supernatural Son and the Suffering Servant. Too frequently, the inference is drawn that Judaism cannot possibly be an appropriate context for trusting Yeshua -- only the new wineskins of Christianity will work. However, here Yeshua makes the point that the container which can best hold the new wine of Messianic faith is a Jewish one, a properly renewed, refreshed and reconditioned Judaism flexible enough to acknowledge him.

Taken together, these verses suggest that both Messianic faith and Judaism need to adjust to each other. In verse 16, the "old" has its life and usefulness extended by the proper adjustment and application of the "new." In verse 17, the "old" is revitalized and renewed for further service and becomes an effective vehicle for conveying the "new." In both cases, the "old" is not set aside but has a continuing and continual use. The point is that without the "old," the "new" would be lost as well as the "old"; now, "both are preserved."

The larger context of this passage points to the nature of the newness and refining Yeshua has in mind. Verses 14-15 indicate that the concept of Messiah must have a significant place for the Suffering Servant found in Isaiah, akin to the Mashiach ben Yosef of the Rabbis. Verses 1-8 emphasize that a complete understanding of the Messiah must also account for the supernatural Son of Man pictured in Daniel and in the Second Temple literature (and perhaps somewhat along the line of the Melchizedek of the Dead Sea Scrolls).[44]

Both the subsequent paragraph (vv. 18-19) and the earlier context (8:18-22) reinforce the perspective presented here. In the one case, a synagogue "ruler" - a traditional, observant Jewish religious official - shows Yeshua profound respect. In the other case, "Torah teachers" are among his disciples! Both cases demonstrate Yeshua's association with, and acceptance by, the traditional elements of Second Temple Judaism.

In retrospect then, the assessment of Jewish scholar and rabbi Pinhas Lapide is both accurate and appropriate:

According to the three gospels, Matthew, Mark, and Luke, Jesus never and no where broke the law of Moses, the any way provoke its infringement--it is a borderline case; the Johannine Jesus there is only a single passage, and that is a borderline case; the healing on the Sabbath, where he says to the man who has been healing on the Sabbath, where he "bed and walk." Here there might be some discussion as to whether the law was really broken...In this respect you must believe more or less...This Jesus was as faithful to the law as I am--and I am an Orthodox Jew.[45]

The Sabbath Controversy

The gospels record a number of discussions and differences between Yeshua and some of the religious leaders regarding activities appropriate to the Sabbath. Some people have seen in these accounts teachings of Yeshua that appear to violate or set aside certain laws concerning the Sabbath. In analyzing these passages, it is important to remember that certain 'violations' of the Sabbath were allowed. The prevailing view went like this: "It is right to violate one Sabbath in order that many may be observed; the laws were given that men should live by them, not that men should die by them." [46] Considerable concessions were made, although there was much debate as to the limits of such concessions. The fact that saving life, alleviating acute pain, curing snake bites and cooking for the sick were all allowed on the Sabbath (Shabbat 18.3; Tosefta Shabbat 15.14; Yoma 84b; Tosefta Yoma 84.15) shows leniency, not absolute rigidity. Quoting Isaiah 58:13, the Rabbis also allowed acts of service to others -- for example, meetings for the purpose of deciding on grants to charity and making arrangements for engagement or for a child's education. They viewed these acts of service as God's business, not their own. Since good deeds were God's business, they were allowed (Shabbat 150a). However, these relaxations were not extended indiscriminately for fear of destroying the rest for which the day was set aside by God. [47] Nevertheless, the basic principle remained: "The Sabbath was made for you; you were not made for the Sabbath" (Mekilta on Ex. 31:14, 104a).

Others question the propriety, rabbinically, of Yeshua healing on the Sabbath. The most clear example would be in John 5:8, where he commands the man to work on Sabbath by saying: "Pick up your bed and walk." However, upon examining early Jewish sources, we find that what constitutes work was yet to be fully defined. So for example, carrying things within a walled city (Jerusalem), was not always considered work. What we learn then from John 5:8 is that Yeshua was portrayed as the one who has the correct understanding of how to keep the commandment: "You shall not do any work on the Sabbath day". A paralytic man who carries his bed on the Sabbath was nothing but a testimony to the mighty acts of God. In other words, rabbinic rulings of his day WOULD allow his Sabbath healings. As Safrai concludes: "Jesus' Sabbath healings which angered the head of the synagogue were permitted by tannaitic law." [48]

Several other considerations are worth mentioning. Josephus' writings imply that many of the Sabbath -- and other -- regulations were not in force in Yeshua's time.[49] They were still under discussion. Yeshua, therefore, in his interaction on the Sabbath question, did not deny the validity of the Torah or halakah but merely countered these extreme interpretations propounded by some. In this he usually opposed the views of Shammai in favor of those of Hillel (cf. the discussion by Lee).[50]

As it turns out, even the content of his replies were not as revolutionary as first imagined but were "in harmony with the views of the modern scribes." [51] And he made these replies in typical rabbinic fashion and form as well, frequently using a specific kind of homily called yelammedenu. This involves a question addressed to the teacher, followed by his answer based on a midrash (interpretation) or halakah (authorized opinion). The Sabbath passages (Mt. 12:1-8; 12:9-13; Mk. 2:23-28; 3:1-6; Lk. 13:10-17; 14:1-6; Jn. 5:1-16; 7:22-23) record Yeshua's response in this form, in which he cited an interpretation of Scripture or an accepted rabbinic opinion, e.g. "Is it lawful to save life or let it die on the Sabbath?" (Yoma 35b). In fact, his argument closely paralleled that of the somewhat later Rabbi Ishmael (Yoma 85a), particularly in Mark 3.[52] In typical rabbinic fashion he also frequently cited both the principle and an example which helped clarify it. In making his case in situations such as this, he used a variety of familiar concepts, halakic conclusions and rabbinic methods.

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Therefore, both the form of his replies and the content he communicated in these situations struck familiar chords in the hearers - consistent with teaching they had received - which, because of their cogency, left them without a comeback.

Several implications arise from the previous discussions. First, there was disagreement and discussion in Yeshua's time over what was and was not lawful; it was not a settled matter. He entered this discussion and proclaimed his teachings. In them he acknowledged the prohibitions against working on the Sabbath and explained their applications and qualifications. But then, this is exactly how the Sabbath regulations were handled by the religious leaders. [54]

Second, the fact that he took the trouble to argue and to declare certain things lawful, and did not just say the Sabbath and its traditions were suspended, is significant. It means he acknowledged that certain actions were unlawful on the Sabbath and, therefore, did not set aside the Sabbath commandments and practices. (Compare with Matthew 24:20, where he assumed the continuance of the Sabbath laws when he said: "Pray that your flight is not in winter or on Sabbath.") If he had broken the Sabbath and its traditions, as previously noted, evidence of this would have been used against him at his trial before the Sanhedrin. This kind of evidence would have been presented if there had been the slightest foundation for the accusation; yet there is no trace of it (Mk. 14:55-64). Third, in the cases of controversy Yeshua took a clear-cut stand, not against the Torah or the customs, or even against Pharisaism and the traditions, but against certain tendencies or interpretations among some of the Pharisees, frequently siding with one school of the Pharisees against the other.[55] Finally, when Yeshua entered the debate and presented his case, he did so in the typical rabbinic fashion, using halakic arguments and

examples familiar to his hearers, and coming to conclusions they found both consistent with what they had been taught and quite compelling. So the following assessment is quite appropriate.

What is puzzling to Jewish students is that what is reflected in rabbinic Judaism is near to that ascribed to Jesus ascribed to his opponents. [56]

Mark 2:23-28; Matthew 12:1-5

The argument Yeshua presented here was familiar to his "opponents" for several reasons. The key phrase, "Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath," as has already been pointed out, appears in the rabbinic material (Mekilta 103b, Yoma 85b). Also, the Rabbis frequently used the quotation from Hosea 6:6 to argue that helping people was of greater importance than observing the rituals and customs (e.g. Sukkah 49b, Deuteronomy Rabba on 16:18, etc.) as Yeshua did here. In fact, they used the same examples Yeshua presented -- David's eating the Tabernacle bread and the Temple offerings made on the Sabbath -- to demonstrate the same general principle, that the needs of life override the Sabbath restrictions (Y'loimm'denu, Yalkut II, par. 130, Tosefta Shabbat 15b.).[57]

In the first century, it was also apparently the general opinion, at least in Galilee, that it was acceptable not only to pick up fallen ears of grain but also to rub them in one's hand to get to the grain. Some Pharisees objected to this practice, but according to others it was perfectly permissible. [58] The Talmud itself says: "Bundles which can be taken up with one hand may be handled on the Sabbath ... and he may break it with his hand and eat thereof" (Shabbat 128a). This certainly allows for what the disciples did; their actions fall well within the bounds of acceptable practice.

Matthew 15:1-18; Mark 7:1-19

In pre-Pharisaic times the washing of hands was necessary for handling holy objects (Shabbat 14b). This was later extended to handling food. But once again there was a debate between Shammai and Hillel. Shammai insisted on washing the hands before filling the cup.[59] Yeshua referred to this when he said: "They clean (declare pure) the outside of the cup." Actually, the precept about handwashing states: "Washing hands before a meal is a matter of choice, ablution after a meal is obligatory" (Tosefta Berakhot 5.13). And, even this may not have been binding on all, but only on those who accepted it voluntarily.[60] Handwashing was not, then, a universal command although some chose to live under such restrictions. Apparently, at this time "the majority of purity laws applied only to priests, or to laymen who had occasion to enter the Temple." [61] As the previous citation indicates, although handwashing was important in some circles, its exact extent was a matter of dispute at this time, and continued to be until the compiling of the Talmud. And, even then, it was not determined how much of handwashing was compulsory and how much meritorious.[62]

Yeshua's response to this situation compared favorably with others of his time.

...their...their hands and hearts are all corrupt, and their mouths a...their hands and hearts are all corrupt and yet they complain: Do not touch me lest you of Moses 7.9-10)

The famous first century rabbi, Yohanan ben Zakkai, stated: "In life it is not the dead who make you unclean; nor is it the water, but the ordinances of the king of kings that purifies." [63] Much later, Maimonides made the same comment:

For to confine oneself to cleaning the outward appearance of the garment, while having at the same time an unbridled license...merits the utmost blame. [64]

So, Yeshua's analysis and criticism were quite thoroughly Jewish and most appropriate.

Many have interpreted the next section, Mark 7:17-19, to mean that Yeshua set aside the food laws. But by doing so he would have contradicted himself. His detractors had just accused him of not observing their traditions, and he had responded that they did far worse; they did not observe the commandments of the Torah (vv. 9-13). To choose this time to set aside other commandments of the Torah would have undercut his whole response. It would have left him open to the charge they made, and which he implicitly denied. It would also have shown him to be inconsistent. [65]

But then, what did he mean here? As Flusser aptly notes:

The passage about the washing of hands does not justify the assumption that Jesus opposed the Jewish legal practice of this time; but by the third century, Origen understood it as signifying the rejection of Jewish dietary laws by the overwhelming majority of modern translators thoughtlessly accept Origen's interpretation when they take Mark 7:19b to mean "Thus he declared all foods clean," although the Greek original can hardly be read in this sense. [66]

As Flusser pointed out, "the Greek original can hardly be read in this sense." The nominative participle (katharizon) modifies "drain" or "latrine" (accusative). This is just one example of a construction "in which the grammatical object of the sentence is regarded as the logical subject." [67] What Yeshua stated, then, is what is physically true: the latrine removes that part of the food which cannot be used for nourishment and in this way "purges" the food. As Alford goes on to note:

The aphedron (latrine, drain) is that which, by the removal of the part carried off, purifies the meat; the portion which is converted into chyle, and the remainder being cast out. [68]

The passage should then read: "Do you not understand that whatever enters a man from without cannot defile him because it does not enter his heart but his stomach, and then passes out of it, thus purging the food." [69]

Further, if the disciples had understood Yeshua to mean he had set aside the dietary laws, why did Peter -- who put the question to Yeshua and received the answer (Mt. 15:15f.) -- react so strongly against the possibility of eating non-kosher food when he saw the vision (Acts 10)? He expressed great indignation and shock. And why did he not later say, especially when explaining these events (Acts 11), "Now, I remember the words of the Lord, making all foods

clean"?[70] He said nothing of the sort, because Yeshua had not in fact set aside the dietary laws.

Yeshua and the Traditions

The second part of this paper seeks to examine Yeshua's (and the apostles') relationship to the Jewish traditions, and thereby to point toward a model for our own day.

Several examples from Yeshua's life help illustrate his approach to the traditions. A significant passage is Luke 4:15f. Here Yeshua attended a synagogue, participated in its service, and read the Haftorah portion (the Scripture reading from the prophets) of the day.

Much of the traditional synagogue service was intact during Yeshua's time, as the Dead Sea Scrolls confirm. Fragments of scrolls of both daily and festival prayers dating to the Hasmonean period (second to first century B.C.E.) from the fourth cave at Qumran show striking parallels with the traditional prayers in content, structure and texts. Since the prayers in these scrolls exhibit nothing sectarian -- unlike the other documents which contain specific Qumran terminology and ideas -- these prayers were apparently part of the traditions of the broader Jewish community.[71] That means:

Research of recent decades has established the AR tradition. Many elements of the Siddur go back to the Second Temple period, and thus to the days of Jesus.... The Q... the research of early Jewish prayer. For example, recent the research of early Jewish demonstrates that...the Jewish New Year liturgy has roots in demonstrates that...the community as far back as c.200 BC.[72]

These findings lend support to the tradition that the men of the Great Assembly, reaching back approximately to Ezra's time, established the basic structure of the synagogue service followed to this day. [73] In fact, as Albright and Mann point out,

The data contained in our rabbinic sources of the second century A.D. The data contained in our are proving are proving reliable for earlier times than generally believed. The sayings of the leading Jewish teachers of the intertestamental and NT per with remarkable tenacity for centuries after their original date.[74]

The synagogue, its service, and the cycle of readings are all "traditional" institutions, in which Yeshua approvingly participated. And, his followers shared the same attachment to these traditional institutions (e.g. Acts 13:14-15; 14:17). Further, for example, there is evidence to suggest that the gospels are structured as commentaries on the cycle of Jewish lexical and holiday readings, another traditional practice.[75]

Concerning Yeshua's life as a whole, two passages are most characteristic and instructive. In the first situation, Yeshua challenged the crowds, which INCLUDED the religious leaders, "Who among you can accuse me of any wrong?" (John 8:46) No one came forward to claim he had violated any of the biblical laws OR any of the Jewish traditions. Not one religious leader was able to point to a flaw in his behavior or conduct, even with respect to the traditions! The same holds true in the second situation. Yeshua stood before the Sanhedrin (Mark 14:55-56). Some of the religious leaders tried to find something of which to accuse him. Nevertheless, they were

After reviewing Yeshua's relationship to the Judaism of his day [79], it would not be inappropriate to describe Yeshua as a Pharisee in good standing.[80] So appropriately, Orthodox scholar and rabbi, Pinchas Lapide, described Yeshua as a traditional, observant Jew, as cited earlier:

Jesus never and no where broke the law of Moses, nor did he in any way provoke its infringement--it is entirely false to say that he did...In this respects infringement--it is entirely believe me, for I know my Talmud more or less...This Jesus was as faithful to law as I would hope to be. But I suspect that Jesus was more law than I am--and I am an Orthodox Jew.[81]

To this may be appended the evaluation of Klausner: "Despite all the Christian antagonism to the Pharisees, the teaching of the Pharisees remained the basis of Christian teaching." [82] Quite clearly, Yeshua remained an observant, traditional Jew, halakic both in his life and in his teaching.

That his followers understood Yeshua is clearly seen in subsequent apostolic history. So, insightfully, Irenaeus, a prominent second century leader, whose teacher was taught by the apostles -- and who therefore had accurate knowledge of their lives -- wrote concerning the apostles' practice (AGAINST HERESIES 3.23.15): "But they themselves ... continued in the ancient observances Thus did the apostles ... scrupulously act according to the dispensation of the Mosaic law." In other words, the apostles carefully followed Yeshua's instructions to observe the traditions (Mt. 23:2-3).

As a result, they remained fully involved in the Jewish community. They continued to worship in the Temple (Acts 2:46; 3:1). They continued to worship in the synagogue and to pray the liturgy (Acts 2:42; where "to prayer" literally reads "to the prayers"). "The prayers" describes the set prayers of the synagogue liturgy. In fact, there is some evidence that Peter actually wrote a bit of the synagogue liturgy, specifically, one of the Shabbat prayers, and a poetic section of the Yom Kippur liturgy, plus more.[83]

Often, however, the "addition" of the twelfth benediction (against the "minim") to the Amidah is presented as evidence that the early Messianic Jews no longer remained a part of the Jewish community and therefore severed themselves from the traditions. This position argues that "the Rabbis" added the twelfth benediction to the existing eighteen of the Amidah, giving the Amidah its now traditional form of nineteen benedictions. The twelfth, the argument continues, with its condemnation of the "minim" (heretics) was aimed at ostracizing and isolating the early Messianic Jews.

Three major historical roadblocks stand as obstacles to this position. The first is the evidence of Shimon's contributions to the liturgy. The second is the description of the Nazarenes by Epiphanius as "approved of by the Jews." (See below.) Neither of these fits the "minim" scenario. Then thirdly, there is the history of the Amidah itself. The fifteenth benediction ("make flourish the offspring of David ... make flourish the horn of salvation") was not recited in Israel as late as the seventh century. IT is therefore, a later addition, not the twelfth. This is corroborated by the traditional siddur. There are Purim additions in the form of poems (*piyyutim*) for everyone of the benedictions EXCEPT the fifteenth. These poetic additions were composed by Eleazar HaKallir (c. 700 CE). Evidently HaKallir did not have the fifteenth benediction in front of him when he wrote his poems. The benediction that was added to the

eighteen was therefore the fifteenth, not the twelfth ("the minim").[84] In addition, later some synagogues ADD to their curse against the "minim" the term "notzrim" (Nazarenes), further indicating that "against the minim" was neither added nor had the Messianic Jews in mind.[85] The Oxford Jewish scholar Geza Vermes points out:

In fact, in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, many regarded "Minim" as the rabbinic name for that [Messianic] sect. This title scarcely fits the Judeo-Christians of the apostolic and sub-apostolic age.[86]

After extensively addressing the issue, Hebrew University Professor David Flusser concludes:

Birkath ha-Minim is thus older than Christianity -- including those who delivered Jews to the Gentile government -- and similar wicked men who have separated themselves from the Jewish collectivity...[87]

To this can be added the assessment of Anthony Saldarini, a professor of New Testament and Judaism at Boston College:

...the *Birkat Ha-Minim* cannot be reliably dated to the late first or second centuries, nor shown to have been generally used in Jewish communities. It appears to have been aimed at Christians.[88]

Considering this, it is no wonder that several centuries later, Jewish believers were still following the apostolic practice of observing the traditions, as Epiphanius noted (c. 375-400 CE) about the Nazarenes [PANARION xxx,18; xxxix,7]:

They are mainly Jews and nothing is changed in their way of life, but they also use in a way that does not forbid the books of the Law, the Prophets, and the writings of the ancients approved of by the Jews, from whom the Nazarenes do not differ in anything; and they profess all the dogmas pertaining to the prescriptions of the Law and the customs of the Jews, except they believe in Christ. ... They teach that there is but one God, and his son Jesus. ... They, like the Jews, read the Law and the Prophets [i.e., they use the cycle of synagogue Scripture readings] They differ from the Jews because they believe in Christ, and from the Samaritans because they are to this day bound to the Jewish rites, such as the Sabbath and other ceremonies.

Further, Jerome indicates that the Nazarenes are to be found "in all the synagogues of the East among the Jews." [89] Reflecting on the first century, Isidore Epstein accurately described the apostolic and early Messianic Jewish practice:

The earliest adherents ... regarded Jesus as the Messiah. They continued to go to the Temple, and presumably to the Temple services. They continued to observe the Sabbath and the festivals as they had been accustomed to do ... they conformed in all things to the usual Jewish observances.[90] [Emphasis mine]

Quite clearly the apostles and their followers remained a part of the "traditional" Jewish community, as Yeshua had instructed them.

This biblical pattern emerges: Yeshua, Paul, the apostles, and the early Messianic Jews all deeply respected the traditions and devoutly observed them, and in so doing, set a useful pattern for us to follow. However, several underlying assumptions or operational principles need to be clarified. Above all, the traditions are NOT authoritative for Messianic Jews; ONLY the Bible has that role. Anything that contradicts Scripture does not belong in Messianic Judaism. However, the traditions, as annunciated by halakah, are usually beneficial and elevating; Messianic Jews can learn and appreciate much through them. Not that the traditions have no shortcomings, but they possess a great deal of richness, beauty and depth.

The Beauty of the Traditions

The Holidays

If we did not have the traditions to fill out the details of the biblical holiday instructions, our observance would lose significant dimension and depth, and our celebration would be correspondingly diminished.

The traditions expressed by halakah have provided us with the Pesach haggadah (the guide to the ceremony of the Passover), setting forth the order and elements of the seder (the Passover meal). The stirring images and striking pictures which richly reflect Yeshua would be lost to us apart from the "traditional" seder. The traditions give us the aphikomen (the broken matzah used for dessert) and the three pieces of matzah, the cup of redemption, Elijah's cup, and more.

Without the traditions, we would not know that Shavuot (Pentecost) is more than a harvest festival, that it celebrates the giving of the Torah and the formalizing of God's covenant with us. We would then miss the impact of the work of the Spirit of God at the Shavuot of Acts 2, where he writes the Torah on our hearts, and God renews his covenant with his people (Jer. 31:31f). The traditions also speak of the Moroccan Jewish custom of pouring large containers of water over the Shavuot celebrants to picture the prophecy of Ezekiel concerning the coming of the Spirit (36:25-27).

The traditions remind us that Rosh Hashanah is more than just the Festival of Trumpets. It celebrates the creation of the world. And, the Rabbis remind us that the sounding of the shofar will announce the Messiah's coming and will usher in the Messianic Age, the time of the world's re-creation. The traditions give us the ceremony of tashlich with its reminder that Micah 7:18-20 is the basis for participating in the Messianic Age and the new creation.[91] The Rabbis wrote the striking prayer at the blowing of the shofar which mentions "Yeshua, the Prince of God's Presence." [92]

The Yom Kippur liturgy provides us with "Oz M'lifnai Bereshit," the startling musaf prayer which describes the Messiah in terms from Isaiah 53 and requests his return to his people. The liturgy also paints the pictures of Messiah's death and resurrection by means of its stress on the "sacrifice" of Isaac and the reading of the book of Jonah. And, the traditions keep alive the basic message of atonement by sacrifice through the custom of kapporet.[93]

The historical customs surrounding Sukkot (Tabernacles) gave Yeshua the perfect opportunity to present himself as the source of living water (John 7) and as the light of the world (John 8) against the stirring backdrop of the Temple water drawing ceremony and the lighting of the Temple courtyard menorahs.[94] The existing traditions of the waving of the lulav remind us of Yeshua's last entry into Jerusalem (Mt. 21:1-9) and anticipate his return through the Golden Gate. Finally, the accompanying Hoshanot prayers and the traditionally prescribed reading from Zechariah 14 both beautifully picture the time of his return to reign over Israel.

The ancient traditions add so much to our celebration and enjoyment of the holidays! We would lose much by way of insights and joy had they not filled out the details of the biblical instructions.

The Liturgy

The traditional liturgy - besides that which relates to the holidays - provides us with awesome and inspiring reflections of God as well as breathtaking opportunities and vehicles to worship him.

The words of the special kaddish chanted as part of the burial service ring out with stirring hope:

May his great name be magnified and sanctified in the world that he will raise the dead, and give them eternal life; wof Jerusalem, and establish his temple in the midst of Jerusalem, and restore the worship of the Holy One, blessed be he, reign in his sovereignty and majesty during your lifetime, and during the lifetime of all the houses of Israel. Amen.

Let his great name be blessed forever and for all eternity.

Blessed, praised and glorified, exalted, praised and glorified, lauded be the name of the Holy One, blessed be the name of the Holy One, blessings and hymns, praises and songs, which are uttered in all the world. Amen.

May there be great peace from heaven, and life from heaven, and life from heaven, and life from heaven. Amen.

He who makes peace in his heavenly realms, may he make peace for us and for all Israel; and say, Amen. [95]

Then there is the rich beauty of the words beginning "Nishmat kol chai...", which elevate participants to the heights of worship:

Every living thing shall bless your name, O Lord our God, and all the earth shall acclaim and exalt your fame, O our King. From everlasting to everlasting you are God; and beside you we have no God; and beside you we have no deliverer, who supports and comforts in all times, have no King but you.

You are the God of the first and of the last ages, God of all crYou are the God of the first and of generations, adored in countless praises, guiding your world with faithful and your creatures with tender mercies ..and your creatures with tender mercies he makand yo the prisoners, supports the falling, and raises up those who are bowed down.

To you alone we give thanks. Were our mouths full of songs as the sea, and To you alone we give tongues full of praise as it tongues full of praise as its many waves of the skies; were our eyes shining with light like the sun and the moon, and our hands were spread forth like the wings of eagles, and and our hands were spread forth like as the wild deer, we would still be unable to thank you and praise yo as the wild deer, we would st Lo Lor Lord our God and God of our fathers, for one thousandth or one ten thousandth part of the bounties which you have bestowed part of the bounties which you have bestowed on o your name be exalted, our King, forever and throughout all generations.[96]

The liturgy also invites us to come before God in repentance, expecting him to respond to us because of his grace. So the sixth benediction of the daily Amidah expects us to pray: "Forgive us our Father for we have sinned; pardon us our King for we have transgressed, for you pardon and forgive. Blessed are you, O Lord, GRACIOUS and ever ready to forgive."

In fact, a major portion of the liturgy teaches or describes God's grace. During Shacharit (the daily morning prayers) we pray: "Sovereign of all worlds! Not because of our righteous acts do we lay our supplications before you, but because of your abundant mercies." During Minhah (the daily afternoon service) we add: "Our Father, our King, be gracious to us and answer us, for we have no good works of our own; deal with us in graciousness and lovingkindness, and save us." Finally, during Ma'ariv (the evening service) we include Psalm 51, which so clearly expresses our need to rely on God, not ourselves, because we are sinners.

Therefore, doing good deeds to obtain a reward was opposed by the Rabbis, not just by Yeshua. The Midrash expounds it this way:

David said, "Some trust in their fair aDavid said, "Some trust in their fathers, but I trust in you. Although I have no good works, yet because I their father upon you, you answer me.[97]

Likewise, the Pharisees criticized those among them who continually asked, "What good deed may I do?" They caricatured themselves by speaking of seven types of Pharisees. The fifth type, one of those severely critiqued, was the "Calculating Pharisee" who was always saying, "Tell me what good deed I can do to offset the bad deed.[98]

In their discussions and commentaries, the Rabbis repeatedly refer to God's graciousness. For example, in the Midrashim they reflect:

"Deal with your servant according to your"Deal with your servant according to your merit and good worktake pleasure in our good works? Merit and good worktake pleasure in our good works? Merit and us in grace.(Tehillim Rabbah, on 119:123)

Statements such as this prompted C. G. Montefiore to comment about the Rabbis' perspective:

One might almost say that man was created in order to display His forgiveness, His lovingkindness, His mercy, His grace.[99]

His remarks form part of a very extensive selection of passages on God's grace drawn from the rabbinic sources.

Montefiore accurately assessed the importance of God's graciousness in the rabbinic materials; it is a significant and representative aspect of the Rabbis' thinking, not an isolated stream. Lapid makes this quite clear: "It is evident to all Masters of the Talmud that salvation, or participation in the coming world, as it is called in Hebrew, can be attained only through God's gracious love (grace)."[100] The evangelical scholar, William Sanford LaSor, also attests to this.

Salvation is always and everywhere in Scripture bSalvation is always and everywhere in Scripture other way of salvation in either the Old Testament or the New. A study of the Jewish Prayer Book will show that this is also the faith of the Jews.[101]

However, much misinformation persists to the effect that Judaism is a religion of law, in contrast to Christianity as a religion of grace. To help set the record straight, Dr. James Sanders, President of the Ancient Biblical Manuscript Center in Claremont, California, addressed these remarks to the 1988 graduating class of Hebrew Union College:

To say that grace supercedes law is totally to misunderstand Torah. To say that grace is a gift of God's grace (e.g., Deuteronomy 10:12) and leave us on our own. God does not want us to be righteous the plummet. God gave our ancestors not only the Torah but also his own *spirit* (e.g., Numbers 11:29). The go (e.g., Numbers 11:29). was for observant Jews in his day more was for observant Jews in his day more interpreting Torah and the laws related to it than either of the Pharisaic interpreting Torah and even more perhaps than the authors of the Dead Sea Scrolls, as Yigal Yadin used to say. I do not think that Paul was What he asked quite clearly was in *whose* works should we have faith, God's works should we have faith in human works and not in God's works.[102]

In addition, the Rabbis even had a concept of vicarious atonement, one person dying in the place of another to secure his atonement.[103] And, of course the Talmud reminds us: "Does not atonement come through the blood, as it is said: 'For it is the blood that makes an atonement by reason of the life?'" (Yoma 5a)

The ancient, traditional Jewish penitential prayer, the Prayer of Manasseh, beautifully presents the issues involved in having a relationship with God.

(11) And now behold I am bending the knees beseeching your kindness. (12) I beseech your kindness. certainly know my sins. (13) I beseech you; forgive me, O Lord, forgive me, do not destroy me with my transgressions; do not be angry against me forever; do not remember my evils; and do not condemn me and banish me to the depths of the earth! For you are the God of those who repent. (14) In me you will manifest your grace; and although I am not worthy, you will save me according to your

manifold manifold manifold mercies manifold mercies. (15) Because of this (salvation) I shall praise you all the days of my life; because all the host of heaven shall praise you all the days of my life; because all the host of heaven shall praise you forever and ever.[104]

To this, only one more thing needs to be added, the statement of the Talmud: "...then came the prophet Habakkuk and reduced all the commands to one, as it is written: 'the just shall live by his faith'." (Makkot 23-24)

But there is still other misinformation that needs correcting. Some people think that "the Rabbis" revere the Oral Law more than they respect the Scriptures. However, no rabbi should imply that the Oral Law is equal to or on a par with the biblical text. As a prominent modern rabbi pointed out:

After the weekly reading of the prophetic portion in the synagogue, the reader concludes with a blessing that praises God "all of whose words are true and just" and "who is faithful to all of his words." In so doing, the reader expresses a conviction that the text he has just read is the Word of God, not a rabbinic text.

The biblical text is unique as the Word of God. The oral law elaborates and interprets the scriptural text in such a way that Judaism attaches to the oral law, it does not eclipse the primacy of the Bible as the Word of God.[105]

Does utilizing the traditions violate the biblical command "to go outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13), as some have charged? If this passage is interpreted correctly by keeping it in its context, absolutely not! The phrase "outside the camp" comes from Exodus 33:7 and Numbers 19:9. The "Tent of Meeting" originally stood "outside the camp." Here God met with Moses (Ex. 33:8-11). And, here, God originally met with his people to give them the Torah (Ex. 19:17)! People came here to be cleansed by the ashes of the red heifer (Num. 19:9). The bodies of the animals used in the Yom Kippur sacrifices were burned here, and the scapegoat was released here (Lev. 16:20-27). This place "outside the camp" stood not as something distinct from Judaism, but served as the CENTER and focus of early Jewish faith and as the place of communicating with God! So very appropriately, Yeshua died here, as Hebrews describes it, in fulfillment of the images and lessons of the sacrifice system and consistent with, not in contrast to, Jewish religion. The readers of Hebrews understood the command to "go outside the camp" as a challenge to return to God and identify with Judaism as properly centered, centered in Yeshua who makes all the traditions come alive. This was NOT a command to withdraw from the traditions and practices, but a challenge to return and observe them properly, in light of Yeshua the true--not the new--center of Judaism. God wanted them to return to the true center and practice of their faith -- in the spirit of Isaiah 2:2-3 -- not to withdraw from the traditions.[106]

Further, others claim that "Rabbinic" Judaism is a Babylonian religion that is ungodly and man-made. This view is based on the notion that since the Talmud originated in Babylon, it absorbed into itself an alien religion. There are a number of major flaws in this line of reasoning because it ignores (or is unaware of) history. Judah Ha-Nasi compiled the Mishna, the central core of the Talmud. The Bet Din he presided over was located at Tiberias and then Sepphoris, NOT in Babylon. Judah's work was based on that of the Rabbis Akiva and Meir, both of Israel, which in turn was based on the halakhah of earlier Israeli sages, parts of which can even be traced to the

time of Ezra and Nehemiah.[107] The Gemara, the commentary on the Mishna, forms the second part of the Talmud. It is this that distinguishes the Babylonian Talmud from its lesser-known companion, the Jerusalem Talmud; the version of the Gemara in one differs from that in the other. However, the two versions are VERY similar. The title, the Babylonian Talmud, undoubtedly gave rise to the misinformed assumption that "Rabbinic" Judaism is a Babylonian religion. Further, as the history of the Talmud indicates, much of the material in the Talmud goes back to, or reflects, the very earliest stages of Second Temple Judaism in Israel, as noted before.

This means that much of it predates Yeshua, parallels his teachings, and was respected by Yeshua (Mt. 23:2-3), as demonstrated previously. Therefore, most of the Talmud cannot be an attack on Yeshua and Messianic Judaism; it's too early. And, the bulk of the later material is not an attack either. A two-fold motivation drives it. The first motivation seeks to understand, interpret and apply Scripture written 500-1500 years prior to the then "modern" situation, as Pirke Avot (the section of the Talmud entitled, "The Sayings of the Fathers") clearly indicates. The second seeks to respond to the destruction of the Temple and preserve Judaism despite this great loss, as reflected in the work of the center at Yavneh. Messianic Jews inflate their own importance when they claim that the Talmud and early "Rabbinic" Judaism concerned itself primarily with attacking Messianic Judaism.

Some critics fault "the Rabbis" for Greek, not Babylonian influence. They charge "the Rabbis" with a Greek philosophical speculation and sophistry that pervert and distort G-d's revelation. However, they misinterpret "the Rabbis," who merely use all possible resources to understand and explain the Scriptures which are so important to them.[108] And so, teachers such as Hillel and Ishmael developed guidelines for properly interpreting Scripture, some of which may "appear" Hellenistic but are not. As it has been pointed out: "... (there) are marked differences... between Hellenistic and rabbinic intellectual styles." [109] Others have noted that there isn't a single "philosophical" term throughout the vast realm of rabbinic materials; such isn't present in Greek form nor in an Aramaic or Hebrew translation of Greek philosophical terms.[110] As many have demonstrated, "Rabbinic" Judaism stands opposed to the Hellenistic philosophical approach.[111] This should surprise no one. The Pharisees, the "ancestors" of "the Rabbis," were at the forefront of the opposition to the Hellenizing of Israel during the Maccabean revolt and thereafter. And, they continued to vigorously oppose the Sadducees, who were Hellenistically-inclined, throughout the Second Temple period.

Principles

Just as in interpreting Scripture, so in understanding the traditions and reading "the Rabbis," there are essential principles to follow. It is not just content but also context, specifically including culture, which determines what is said and written. It is not just the language of the works which must be analyzed, but also the OUTLOOK of the authors which must be taken into account. This involves a basic understanding of the differences between Semitic and Hellenistic worldviews and thought patterns, and an appreciation for how the rabbinic mind functions within the Semitic mindset. It is totally inadequate and highly inaccurate to interpret "the Rabbis" through the "eyes" of the twentieth century or the "glasses" of the Western world and the lenses of modern philosophy and philology.

In dealing with the traditions, and in incorporating them, certain principles must be remembered. The focus of Messianic Judaism MUST remain squarely on Yeshua, but this does not mean

setting aside the traditions. Further, the traditions are NOT authoritative, ONLY the Bible is. NOR are we under "the authority"[112] of the Rabbis; we are under Yeshua's authority! However, the prayers and teachings of the Rabbis are valid and helpful as they reflect and do not contradict Scripture. In fact, rather than obstacles, the halakic traditions serve as rich and meaningful pointers to, and reinforcers of, Yeshua! [113] And, God used these very traditions to preserve our people through the centuries. The Rabbis and the traditions are not without their flaws and shortcomings, but they possess a depth, beauty and richness that are too often ignored. And, as classical Judaism has done, we, too, need to build on them. As we build on and supplement them from a Messianic perspective, we will begin to develop a sound, biblical halakah after the pattern of Yeshua and his followers.

NOTES

1. Donald Hagner, "Jesus and the Law: the Modern Jewish Perspective," paper presented to the Evangelical Theological Society.
2. Joseph Jacobs, "Jesus of Nazareth in History," JEWISH ENCYCLOPEDIA, vol. VII, Funk and Wagnalls, New York, 1916, p. 102.
3. Walter Bauer, A GREEK-ENGLISH LEXICON OF THE NEW TESTAMENT AND OTHER EARLY CHRISTIAN LITERATURE, translated & adapted by William F. Arndt & F. Wilbur Gingrich, further revised & augmented by F. Wilbur Gingrich & Frederick W. Danker, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1979.
4. Jules Isaac, JESUS AND ISRAEL, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1971, p. 46.
5. Isaac, p. 55-56.
6. George Foot Moore, JUDAISM IN THE FIRST CENTURIES OF THE CHRISTIAN ERA, vol. II, Schocken Books, New York, 1971, p. 9.
7. Vol. 10, p. 14.
8. B.Z. Bokser, JUDAISM AND THE CHRISTIAN PREDICAMENT, Alfred Knopf, New York, 1967, pp. 208-209.
9. Bokser, p. 194
10. See, e.g. Isaac, pp. 78-79; Johannes Lehmann, RABBI J, Stein & Day, New York, 1971, p. 91.
11. C.G. Montefiore, RABBINIC LITERATURE & GOSPEL TEACHINGS, KTAV, New York, 1970, p. 52.
12. E.g., v. 39 cf. Baba Kamma 8.6; v. 40 cf. Pirke Avot 5.13, Mekilta on 22:25, 102b; v. 41 cf. Baba Mezia 7.1; v. 42 cf. Sifra Kedoshim on 19:18, 89a. See also Bokser, p. 192; Asher Finkel, THE PHARISEES & THE TEACHER OF NAZARETH, E. J. Brill, Leiden, 1964, p. 165.

13. E.g. v. 43 cf Sifra on Lev. 19:18, 89b; v. 45 cf. Mekilta on 18:12, 67a; v. 48 cf. Sifre Deut. on 11:22, 85a; see also Montefiore, pp. 68, 73-74; Jacobs, p. 166; as well as Samuel T. Lachs, A RABBINIC COMMENTARY ON THE NEW TESTAMENT, KTAV, Hoboken, NJ, 1987.
14. Bokser, p. 206.
15. Israel Abrahams, STUDIES IN PHARISAISM AND THE GOSPELS, KTAV, New York, 1967, vol. I, pp. 134, 131.
16. Jacobs, p. 162.
17. Hagner, p. 22.
18. Isaac, p. 60.
19. Finkel, pp.139-142.
20. Jacobs, p. 163.
21. Cf. Moore, vol 1, pp. 270-271.
22. W.D. Davies, TORAH IN THE MESSIANIC AGE AND/OR AGE TO COME, Society of Biblical Research, Philadelphia, 1957, p. 84.
23. David Daube, THE NEW TESTAMENT AND RABBINIC JUDAISM, University of London Press, London, 1956, p. 60.
24. Bokser, p. 194.
25. Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, "kataluo."
26. Nigel Turner, A GRAMMAR OF NEW TESTAMENT GREEK, Vol. III, "Syntax," T. & T. Clark, Edinburgh, 1963, p. 77.
27. Bauer, Arndt & Gingrich, "pleroo."
28. Gerhard Delling, "pleroo," in Gerhard Kittel & Gerhard Friedrich, eds., THE THEOLOGICAL DICTIONARY OF THE NEW TESTAMENT, vol. VI, Eerdmans, Grand Rapids, 1968, pp. 287-288.
29. D. A. Carson, "Matthew," THE EXPOSITOR'S BIBLE COMMENTARY, vol. 8, Frank Gaebelin, ed., Zondervan, Grand Rapids, 1984, p. 143.
30. Daube, p. 80; David Bivin, "Preview: The Jerusalem Commentary," THE JERUSALEM PERSPECTIVE, March 1988, p. 4.
31. Finkel, p. 163.

32. Bivin, p. 4.
33. Isaac, p. 66.
34. Daube, p. 61.
35. Isaac, p. 66.
36. See Lachs; Montefiore; Finkel; G. Friedlander, *THE JEWISH SOURCES OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT*, KTAV, New York, 1991; Pinhas Lapide, *THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT*, Orbis Books, Maryknoll, NY, 1986; Gregory Hagg, "The Interrelationship Between the New Testament & Tannaitic Judaism," doctoral dissertation, New York University, 1988; and Strack-Billerbeck's German commentary on the gospels.
37. Solomon Schechter in Abrahams, vol. I, p. 16; Solomon Schechter, "Rabbinic Parallels to the New Testament," reprinted in *JUDAISM AND CHRISTIANITY*, Jacob Agus, ed., Arno Press, New York, 1973, pp. 427-428.
38. Daube, pp. 55-62; Schechter, "Parallels," pp. 427-428; Finkel, p. 166, note 3.
39. Daube, pp. 55-62.
40. Ibid., p. 60.
41. W.D. Davies, *SETTING OF THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT*, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1966, p. 194.
42. See David Stern's excellent treatment of this passage -- which forms the basis of this discussion -- in his *JEWISH NEW TESTAMENT COMMENTARY*, Jewish New Testament Publications, Clarksville, MD, 1992.
43. See R.C. Trench, *SYNONYMS OF THE NEW TESTAMENT*, Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids, 1956; & W. Kaiser, "The Old Promise & the New Covenant," *JOURNAL OF THE EVANGELICAL THEOLOGICAL SOCIETY*, XV (1972), pp. 11-23.
44. See I Enoch & IQMel.
45. Pinhas Lapide, in Hans Kung, "Jesus in Conflict," a dialogue between Pinhas Lapide & Hans Kung, in *SIGNPOSTS FOR THE FUTURE*, Doubleday, New York, 1978, pp. 74-75.
46. Montefiore, p. 243.
47. Abrahams, vol. I, pp. 134-135; Bokser, p. 196.
48. Shmuel Safrai, "Religion in Everyday Life," in S. Safrai & M. Stern, eds., *THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE FIRST CENTURY*, vol. II, Fortress Press, Philadelphia, 1976, p. 805.
49. Klausner, p. 134.

50. Bernard Lee, THE GALILEAN JEWISHNESS OF JESUS, Paulist Press, New York, 1988.
51. David Flusser, JESUS, Herder & Herder, New York, 1969, p.48.
52. Finkel, pp. 163-172; Samuel Cohon, "The Place of Jesus in the Religious Life of His Day," JOURNAL OF BIBLICAL LITERATURE, XLVIII, 1929, p. 98.
53. Daube, p 174.
54. Bokser, p. 196.
55. Isaac, pp. 59-60; Cohon, p. 97; or Lee.
56. Cohon, p. 97.
57. Klausner, pp. 122, 278.
58. Flusser, JESUS, p. 46; S. Pines, "The Jewish Christians of the Early Centuries of Christianity According to a New Source," THE ISRAELI ACADEMY OF SCIENCES AND HUMANITIES PROCEEDINGS, II, Jerusalem, 1966, p. 66.
59. Finkel, pp. 140-141, 52-56.
60. Flusser, JESUS, pp. 46-48.
61. Abrahams, p. 200.
62. John Bowker, JESUS AND THE PHARISEES, Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1973, pp. 39, 70.
63. Flusser, JESUS, p. 48.
64. THE GUIDE OF THE PERPLEXED, vol 2, book III, trans. Shlomo Pines, University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1974, p. 533.
65. Isaac, pp. 62-63.
66. David Flusser, "Son of Man," in THE CRUCIBLE OF CHRISTIANITY, ed. Arnold Toynbee, Thames and Hudson, London, 1969, p. 225.
67. Henry Alford, THE GREEK TESTAMENT, vol. I, Moody Press, Chicago, 1968, pp. 359-360. Alford cites several other examples as well.
68. Ibid.
69. Vincent Taylor, THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO ST. MARK, Macmillan, London, 1969, makes note of this sense; Matthew Black, AN ARAMAIC APPROACH TO THE GOSPELS AND ACTS, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1967, pp. 217-218, argues on behalf of it.

The King James Version translators correctly follow it, as does George Lamsa, *THE HOLY BIBLE FROM ANCIENT EASTERN MANUSCRIPTS*, Holman, New York, 1961.

70. Geza Vermes, *JESUS THE JEW*, Collins, London, 1973, pp. 28-29.

71. S. Ackerman, "Rabbinic Lore Vindicated by Prayers from the Past," *JERUSALEM POST*, October 27, 1990; Lawrence Schiffman, "The Dead Sea Scrolls and the Early History of Jewish Liturgy," in L. Levine, *THE SYNAGOGUE IN LATE ANTIQUITY*, Jewish Theological Seminary, New York, 1987. Also see, e.g., A.Z. Idelsohn, *JEWISH LITURGY*, New York, Schocken Books, 1975; J. H. Hertz, *THE AUTHORIZED DAILY PRAYER BOOK*, Bloch Publishing Co., New York, 1985.

72. Torleif Elgvin, "Messianic Jews and the Liturgies of Judaism," *MISHKAN*, #2, 1996, p.2.

73. Ackerman; Levine.

74. W.F. Albright and C.S. Mann, *MATTHEW*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 26, Doubleday, New York, 1987, p. clxvi. Cf. B. Gerhardsson, *MEMORY AND MANUSCRIPT* (Gleerup: Lund, 1961), who delineates the role of oral traditions in accurately transmitting the gospel material until its writing. Also cf. W. Ong, *ORALITY AND LITERACY*, Routledge, London, 1988, who demonstrates--from the fields of anthropology and linguistics--how orally-oriented societies preserve and maintain their history and tradition ACCURATELY from generation to generation.

75. See P. Carrington, *THE PRIMITIVE CHRISTIAN CALENDAR: A STUDY IN THE MAKING OF THE MARCAN GOSPEL*, University Press, Cambridge, 1952; M. Goulder, *MIDRASH AND LECTION IN MATTHEW*, SPCK, London, 1974; M. Goulder, *THE EVANGELISTS' CALENDAR: A LECTIONARY EXPLANATION OF THE DEVELOPMENT OF SCRIPTURE*, SPCK, London, 1978; and A. Guilding, *THE FOURTH GOSPEL AND JEWISH WORSHIP*, Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1960.

76. Lawrence Schiffman, "The Significance of the Dead Sea Scrolls," *BIBLE REVIEW*, October 1990, p. 25. By way of note, the same can be said for the "halakah" of the Essenes & Sadducees. This was a time of tremendous vitality and variety in Judaism as numerous groups interacted and developed their ideology.

77. "Book Review: Qumran Cave 4-V: *Miqsat Ma'ase Ha-Torah*. Discoveries in the Judean Desert X, Elisha Qimron and John Strugnell (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994)," *BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGICAL REVIEW*, November-December 1995, pp. 49-51, 80-81.

78. See note 36.

79. For a more complete discussion of Jesus' relationship to the Judaism of his day, see J. Fischer, "Jesus and Early Judaism," in the forthcoming *THE ENDURING PARADOX: JUDAISM AND BELIEF IN JESUS*, eds., J. Fischer and D. Juster.

80. Cf., e.g., A. Finkel; W. Phipps, "Jesus the Prophetic Pharisee," *JOURNAL OF ECUMENICAL STUDIES*, 1977; and H. Falk, *JESUS THE PHARISEE*, Paulist Press, New York, 1985.

81. Kung, pp. 74-75.
82. p. 216.
83. Jacob Jocz, *THE JEWISH PEOPLE AND JESUS CHRIST*, SPCK, London, 1962, pp. 201, 383 note 1: cf. J.H. Hertz, *THE AUTHORIZED DAILY PRAYER BOOK*, pp. 416-417.
84. Cf. the discussion in A. Z. Idelsohn, *JEWISH LITURGY*, New York, Schocken Books, 1975, pp. 104-105; my argument is based on a presentation by Rabbi M. Gruber in the course "Liturgy of the Jewish People," Spertus College of Judaica, Fall 1976, in which Gruber also pointed out that the evidence for a late, rather than early, date for the fifteenth benediction is now considered very strong. M. Wilson, *OUR FATHER ABRAHAM*, Grand Rapids, Eerdmans, 1991, pp. 65-69, also concludes that the "minim" blessing was not composed or directed against the early Messianic Jews. A further note should be added here as to the biblical orthodoxy of the post-first century Messianic movement. Although some parts of the movement, specifically the Ebionites, strayed from biblical positions, other parts, such as the Nazarenes, did not. See, e.g., F. Bagatti, *THE CHURCH FROM THE CIRCUMCISION*, Jerusalem, Franciscan Press, 1971; R. Pritz, *NAZARENE JEWISH CHRISTIANITY*, Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1988; J. Danielou, *THE THEOLOGY OF JEWISH CHRISTIANITY*, Chicago, Regnery, 1964.
85. *BIBLICAL ARCHAEOLOGIST*, June 1988. p. 70.
86. G. Vermes, *POST-BIBLICAL JEWISH STUDIES*, Leiden, E.J. Brill, 1975, p. 175. I. Abrahams, "By the (Expressed) Name," in G. Alon, *JEWES, JUDAISM AND THE CLASSICAL WORLD*, Jerusalem, Magnes Press, 1977, pp.235-251, suggests that the minim were the Sadducees. Vermes (pp. 169-177) concludes that the minim came from within Hellenistic Judaism, perhaps having gnostic leanings.
87. *JUDAISM AND THE ORIGINS OF CHRISTIANITY*, Magnes Press, Jerusalem, 1988, p. 639.
88. "Bible Books," *BIBLE REVIEW*, April 1996, p. 40. Also see Reuven Kimelman, "*Birkat Ha-Minim* and the Lack of Evidence for an Anti-Christian Jewish Prayer in Late Antiquity," *JEWISH AND CHRISTIAN SELF DEFINITION*, Philadelphia, Fortress, 1981,, Volume 2, edited by E.P. Sanders, pages 226-44 and 391-403.
89. Cited in Pritz, *NAZARENE JEWISH CHRISTIANITY*, p. 55.
90. *JUDAISM*, Penguin Books, Baltimore, 1975, p. 107
91. During the tashlich ceremony the family gathers by a body of water and throws either bread or stones into the water. As the objects sink out of sight, the family recites Micah 7:18-20.
92. See the Rosh Hashanah service in John Fischer, ed., *MESSIANIC SERVICES FOR FESTIVALS AND HOLY DAYS*, Menorah Ministries, Palm Harbor, FL, 1992.
93. The swinging of the chicken over the heads of the participants with the accompanying request that the chicken's death serve as a basis for "entering into a long and happy life."

94. For more on these traditions, and on the significance of the holidays, see John Fischer, *THE MEANING AND IMPORTANCE OF THE JEWISH HOLIDAYS*, Menorah Ministries, Palm Harbor, FL, 1979.
95. John Fischer and David Bronstein, eds., *SIDDUR FOR MESSIANIC JEWS*, Menorah Ministries, Palm Harbor, FL, 1988, p. 119.
96. Fischer and Bronstein, *SIDDUR*, p. 155.
97. Midrash Psalms 141, ed. Buber, pp. 530-531.
98. Jerusalem Talmud, Berachot IX, 14^b; Babylonian Talmud, Sotah 22^b; Avot de-Rabbi Natan, Version A, Chap. 37 ed. Schechter, p. 109; Version B, Chap. 45, p.124.
99. C. G. Montefiore and H. Loewe, *RABBINIC ANTHOLOGY*, Schocken Books, New York, 1974, p. 88.
100. *PAUL: RABBI AND APOSTLE*, Augsburg, Minneapolis, 1984, p. 39.
101. "Law, Grace, Faith, and Works," in *YAVO DIGEST*, vol. 2, no. 3, 1988, p. 4.
102. Found in *EXPLORATIONS*, vol. 3, no. 1, 1989, p. 1. For further development of this, see Roger Brooks, *THE SPIRIT OF THE TEN COMMANDMENTS: SHATTERING THE MYTH OF RABBINIC LEGALISM*, Harper and Row, San Francisco, 1990; Shlomo Riskin, "The Spirit of the Law is As Important As the Letter," *JERUSALEM POST*, Aug. 18, 1990; Solomon Schechter, *ASPECTS OF RABBINIC THEOLOGY*, Schocken, New York, 1972.
103. Max Kadushin, *THE RABBINIC MIND*, Bloch Publishing Co., New York, 1972, p. 318. It should further be noted that in no way did the Rabbis seek to exclude the concept of sacrifice from Judaism. The hope for the restoration of the sacrifice system was expressed continually in the daily (seventeenth benediction), Sabbath, and festival amidahs (fifth benediction). In fact, the biblical passages prescribing the specific holiday sacrifices are recited as part of each festival musaf service.
104. James Charlesworth, ed. , *THE OLD TESTAMENT PSEUDEPIGRAPHA*, Doubleday and Co., Garden City, NY, 1985, vol. 2, pp. 634-635.
105. Michael Wyschogrod, in M. Tannenbaum, M. Wilson, J. Rudin, eds., *EVANGELICALS AND JEWS IN CONVERSATION*, Grand Rapids, Baker Book House, 1979, p. 39.
106. See John Fischer, "Covenant, Fulfillment and Judaism in Hebrews," in *THE ENDURING PARADOX*.
107. Cf., e.g., among others, Adin Steinsaltz, *THE ESSENTIAL TALMUD*, New York, Bantam Books, 1977, pp. 3-39.
108. Cf. Shaye Cohen, *FROM THE MACCABEES TO THE MISHNAH*, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1987, pp. 216ff.

109. Robert Alter, quoted in J. Faur, "Reading Jewish Texts with Greek Eyes," SH'MA, November 27, 1987, 1987, p. 12.
110. Harry Wolfson, PHILO, vol. 1, p. 92.
111. These include, among others: T. Boman, HEBREW THOUGHT VERSUS GREEK, New York, W. W. Norton, 1960.
- E.J. Bickerman, THE JEWS IN THE GREEK AGE, Cambridge, MA, Harvard Univ. Press, 1988.
- S. Cohen, FROM THE MACCABEES TO THE MISHNAH, Philadelphia, Westminster Press, 1987.
- S. Safrai and M. Stern, eds., THE JEWISH PEOPLE IN THE FIRST CENTURY, 2 vols., Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1974.
- E.P. Sanders, PAUL AND PALESTINIAN JUDAISM, Philadelphia, Fortress Press, 1977.
- M. Kadushin, ORGANIC THINKING: A STUDY IN RABBINIC THOUGHT, New York, Bloch Publishing Co., 1938.
- M. Kadushin, THE RABBINIC MIND, New York, Bloch Publishing Co., 1972.
- I. Epstein, JUDAISM, Baltimore, Penguin Books, 1975.
- J.J. Collins, BETWEEN ATHENS AND JERUSALEM, New York, Crossroad, 1986.
112. This concept of "the authority of the Rabbis" is frequently a badly distorted perspective and a poorly understood concept some believers share, often due to the influence of the Western World Protestant and Catholic views of authority.
113. See, e.g., Fischer and Bronstein, SIDDIR, pp. 180ff.