

TWO DOCTRINAL DITCHES

As we read the gospel accounts of Yeshua feeding and healing the multitudes, we tend to forget that Yeshua founded his ministry upon humble men. Yeshua's strategy for building the "kingdom of God" began with the creation of a team of apostles who could face death without fear and stand against the wiles of the devil. Throughout the course of his ministry, Yeshua was training his apostles to avoid two doctrinal ditches – lawlessness and Phariseeism. His verbal attacks on the Pharisees were not only to defend his ministry and mission, but to re-program his disciples, who feared the religious leadership of the day. After one confrontation with the Pharisees, the disciples came to the Messiah and said,

Do you know that the Pharisees were offended when they heard this saying? But He answered and said, "Every plant which my heavenly father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, they will both fall into the ditch. Matthew 15: 12-14 NKJV

On the opposite side of the path of truth from the Pharisaic ditch lies the doctrinal error of antinomianism (lawlessness). Yeshua's warnings against lawlessness were to fortify his disciples against Greek and pagan influences that would undermine Yahweh's righteous standards through-out man's age. The Savior warned about this extreme in Matthew 7:19-23:

Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. Therefore by their fruits you will know them. Not everyone who says to Me 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of my Father in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in your name, and done many wonders in Your name? And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you, depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness (NKJV)

There is no space here to explore the Apostle Paul's missionary and philosophical war (waged very successfully, we must add) against pagan torah/lawlessness throughout his epistles. Suffice it to say he used the same Greek word *ἀνομος*, (literally 'without law'), and had the same attitude as Yeshua toward it.

We will now examine in greater depth Yeshua's motives and methods for exposing two doctrinal extremes - antinomianism and Phariseeism. We will make application of the Messiah's teachings to the modern day Messianic movement, and examine some of the writings of popular Messianic teachers.

DITCH #1—ANTINOMIANISM

It is commonly acknowledged that Yeshua of Nazareth taught against lawlessness. In Matthew 5:17-19 he said heaven and earth would pass away, but not one jot or tittle would pass from the Law of Moses until all was fulfilled. Despite the fact that Yeshua emphasized that we were not to think that he came to do away with the Law, the official theology of all the mainline Christian denominations is that Christ came to do just that. Does the fact that Yeshua fulfilled various types and shadows in the Law, and scores of prophecies, change our obligation with respect to the Law? Let the Holy Spirit answer through the pen of the Apostle Paul in Romans 8:3-4,

Inasmuch as the law was impotent, because of the weakness of our flesh, Elohim sent His Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and condemned sin in the flesh; *so that the*

righteousness of the Law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but in the Spirit.

The Mixing of the Law of Moses with Pagan Practices

In John chapter 4, Yeshua met a woman at Jacob's well in Samaria. Samaritans practiced the ultimate mixture religion. Archaeology has unearthed a number of Samaritan synagogues with bas relief and icons of pagan gods inside and on the walls. Yet they believed in keeping the Mosaic holy days and Sabbaths.^[1] Yeshua told the woman "You [Samaritans] do not know what you worship; we [Jews] know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews." (John 8:22) The Old Testament decries this mixing of pagan and Yahwistic practices. Yet Christianity, due to its Catholic origins in the fourth century, has certainly followed in the footsteps of the Samaritans^[2]. Catholics make prolific use of statues, pray to intermediaries other than Yeshua, and worship Mary as the 'mother of God'. Most mainline Protestant denominations also follow syncretistic practices like worshipping a trinity patterned after the various pagan trinities, adopting the pagan holidays of the Gentile nations, and changing of Yahweh's Sabbath to Sunday.

Thankfully, there are now hundreds of thousands of Christian believers in America who now have had decades of experience keeping Yahweh's health laws, dietary restrictions, and his holy Days and Sabbaths. They have studied various parts of his Law and realize that the Law is not such a bad thing, as many have been led to believe. But for those who have been led to come out of antinomianism by means of a movement called Messianic Judaism, beware! There is a ditch on the other side of the road that is very pro-law, pro-Sabbath and holy day, pro-unclean meat laws, etc. but whose precepts are, nevertheless, at odds with the New Testament and Torah.

DITCH #2—MODERN PHARISEEISM: THE COMBINING OF RABBINIC JUDAISM WITH THE NEW TESTAMENT SCRIPTURES

Modern Orthodox Judaism is the same religion as first century Pharisaic Judaism combined with rabbinic interpretations of the Law made during the Middle Ages. It was the Rabbinite of Baghdad's two academies that gained hegemony over doctrine and practice throughout world Jewry during the early Middle Ages (400-1100 AD). Modern Messianic Judaism, together with the Church of God sabbatarian movement, has fostered a rather odd respect for various ancient rabbinic teachings, especially the patently unbiblical Jewish calendar. These groups are forging a strange amalgamation of the New Testament with Phariseeism. This is being done in the name of love for the Torah, the religion of Moses. But as many people have pointed out, Orthodox Judaism is not the religion of Moses.^[3]

Since we now accept the authority of the Torah, who has the authority to interpret the Law for the Believer? Ultimately it is only those whose opinion agrees with Yahweh and Moses. But the authority of the Talmud does not rest on rightness, but strictly on majority opinion. Nehemia Gordon^[4] and Avi Ben Mordecai^[5] have made abundantly clear from their experience in orthodox Judaism that the Jews have used their interpretation of Deuteronomy 17 (the decisions of the elders) to bully people into thinking that whatever the rabbis decide is authoritative. If 1000 prophets of Yahweh disagree with 1001 rabbis, you are obliged to obey the opinion of the rabbis. Exodus 22 says "do not follow a multitude (a majority) to do evil." The rabbis twist that scripture completely around to mean that you are supposed to follow the majority.

The head of every man is the Messiah (I Corinthians 11:3); therefore, what a person believes and practices is a matter of conscience, not a matter of hierarchy. I Corinthians 11:19 shows that differences and factions were tolerated among the brethren in order that those of sterling faith might be made manifest (Barclay's NT). The issue of Jewish authority or headship to determine the calendar and to interpret Torah and dictate practices in the New Covenant assembly must be

addressed in the light of the New Testament and the Messiah's teaching. Some, like the Church of God Sabbatarian organizations (too numerous to mention), as well as the conservative Orthodox-leaning Messianic organizations (such as First Fruits of Zion) are misusing Matthew 23:3, Romans 3:1, and Paul's self-identification as a Pharisee, to say that we are under the human authority of the rabbis, although the Church of God leadership would not put it so plainly. They are basically agreeing with the rabbis in saying that the scriptures cannot be understood without an Oral Law to interpret them for us.

There is indeed a Melchizedek priesthood functioning and restoring all things in these last days before Messiah's return. Whether you will have grace, favor and the spiritual knowledge and discernment to receive their teaching depends on whether you are personally doing the will of Yahweh in your day-to-day life. As Yeshua said,

If any man does His will, he shall know of the doctrine, whether it be of God, or whether I speak of Myself. (John 7:17)

This principle is the reason why non-theologians and lay people alike have a sixth sense, call it spiritual intuition, that tells them that the mainstream theologians of Christendom are wrong about the Torah and Laws of God. Humble believers know the Laws that govern the universe and atoms, biological reactions and functions, etc. are as fine-tuned as any man-made watch. That being the case, why would Yahweh's revelation of social Law intended to optimize human government and individual health—laws regulating diet, agriculture, marriage, sexual boundaries, cleanness and uncleanness, quarantine laws and disease, etc.—why would these laws be any less perfect than the physical laws that have been discovered by science? Responsible people who are working no ill to their neighbors and who love Yahweh God are always open to the sensibility of his laws rightly applied.

But leave it to false shepherds, pastors, teachers, theologians, rabbis, who are a dime a dozen, to pervert knowledge. "They which lead thee cause thee to go astray." And who supports their folly and orthodox heresy? Why, those with the most wealth and the greatest incomes in the Church and synagogues. Which is to say those oftentimes in the most compromised and/or oppressive professions—doctors, lawyers, accountants, landlords, pharmaceutical industry and sales, politicians, insurance brokers, etc. How can the truth flourish when you have that much money supporting the erroneous status quo?

The same is true today with those Yahweh continues to send to bring doctrine, prophecies, and knowledge. Division in the body is not caused by the Melchizedek priesthood and their teaching, so much as by sin and lack of humility and meekness in the body of Christ, and shepherds trying to protect their flock and their paycheck. And even if Truth divides us, we must deal with what Yeshua said on this matter in Luke 12:51,

Suppose you that I am come to give peace on earth? I tell you, NO; but rather division.

Woe to those who cause divisions contrary to the doctrine of Christ (Romans 16:17, Proverbs 6). And that is why this paper had to be written, to expose the doctrines of certain sectors of Messianic Judaism that are highly questionable, and bound to cause unnecessary division within the Body. I understand they are trying, in some cases, to build a bridge between themselves and rabbinic Judaism. But I will not stand idly by while the New Testament historical record is subjected to a revisionist agenda.

To establish how incredibly real the dangers are on the right side of the road (Phariseeism), I would like to shed some light on the works of authors and speakers in the modern Messianic and Sabbatarian movement having enormous influence over Yeshua's people.

Did Yeshua Teach His Disciples to Follow the Oral Law?

Many Messianic leaders take the approach that Yeshua taught his followers to adhere to the Oral Law and Rabbinic Judaism, with all its fences around the Law of Yahweh. For support of this they turn to a translation from the Greek for Matthew 23:3:

The scribes and the Pharisees sat down^[6] in Moses seat: All therefore whatsoever they bid you observe, observe and do; but do not ye after their works: for they say and do not. For they bind heavy burdens and grievous to be borne, and lay them on men's shoulders...

Obviously, if one believes in the validity of the Talmud, this rendering of Matthew 23:3 is most helpful. However, it is no longer a foregone conclusion that the Greek texts have the correct pronoun "they" in the above verse. First of all, let us agree that if the Greek texts are correct, then this saying of Yeshua contradicts everything else He had to say about the leaven of the Pharisees. This we can and will make abundantly clear in this paper, if we do nothing else. But do we have another textual witness on the matter? Yes we do. And that witness is in Hebrew, the language that numerous Church fathers^[7] said Matthew wrote his Gospel in! This source is called *Shem Tov*. Let me give the background of this alternative to the Greek text of Matthew. It dates to the time of the inquisitions in Catholic Spain^[8], during the time of public debates held for the purpose of forcing Jews to convert to Catholicism. A Spanish Jew named Shem-Tov made copies of Matthew in Hebrew for the purpose of enabling Jews to defend the keeping of Jewish customs in these public debates. A number of Jews won their debates, and were not forced to convert.

In addition to George Howard's groundbreaking work (see footnotes at the bottom of page), Nehemia Gordon has made a very strong case for the validity of readings in the earliest copies of Shem Tov in his book *The Hebrew Yeshua. vs Greek Jesus*. Shem Tov's Matthew (which is dated 1380 A.D.) resolves the most critical, long-standing problem in the history of New Testament scholarship. More dissertations have been written trying to reconcile the word "they" of Matthew 23:3 with the balance of Yeshua's teaching in Matthew 23, Matthew 15, Mark 7, Galatians, and Acts 15, etc. than any other single verse in the entire New Testament. How does one explain Yeshua's telling his disciples to do whatsoever the scribes and Pharisees bid them to do when every other section of the Gospels and Acts 15 plainly contradict this?

The solution lies in the Hebrew text found in Shem Tov's Matthew 23:3. Translated it reads:

Upon the seat of Moses the Pharisees and the sages sit. All which *he* (Moses) says to you keep and do; but (according to) their *takanoteem* and *ma'aseem*, do not do because they say and do not.

Whatever is read from the Torah of Moses by the hassan, who was often a scribe or Pharisee, DO THAT. Note the Shem Tov pronoun is singular, not plural. Yeshua is not telling his disciples to do whatever *they* the Pharisees say. The plural pronoun *they* in the Greek texts is simply wrong. Pappias said around 90 A.D., everyone translated Matthew's Hebrew Gospel "as best he could," which is as if to say they did not know how to translate out of the Hebrew into Greek very

accurately. The student of Hebrew will note other instances in Shem Tov where the Hebrew pronoun is “he” where the Greek text has “they.”

Now let’s consider if the Shem Tov case were wrong. Then you would have an immediate internal contradiction in the text. Because Yeshua goes on to tell His disciples NOT TO DO according to the Pharisee’s *takanotiyim* and *ma’asiym*. These were the two most important categories of Oral Law, and in the first century had not yet been written down. But they were considered as binding on the religious adherents of Judaism living in the first century as any command in the Law. Hence, it is absolutely absurd to suggest that Yeshua is telling his disciples to do whatever they bid Jews to do, but in the next breath telling them not to do according to the *takanotiyim* and *ma’asiym*. For a fuller explanation of how important these two were to the Oral Law of the rabbis and what they comprised, you will have to read Gordon’s book^[9] or Avi ben Mordecai’s *Galatians*. Suffice it to say, that since the early translators into Greek of Matthew’s Gospel did not understand what these terms meant, it looks like they simply conflated the two into one Greek word *εργον*, (works), has a similar meaning to *ma’asim* (deeds, actions). These laws were based on deeds or customs that became precedents over time. For instance, when, during the Middle Ages, the majority of Jewish men began to wear head coverings^[10], this became a precedent which the rabbis made a ruling on (*ma’asim*), declaring it to be binding law or *halakhah* (הלכה).

What is the upshot of all of this? Is it not apparent that somebody very familiar with Jewish Oral Law had to have authored the Shem Tov? Matthew, the accountant and tax-collector, noted exactly those areas of Oral Law that Yeshua spelled out as having gone beyond and added to the Law of Moses. Therefore, Shem Tov cannot be attributed to pro-rabbinic sources, as credulous messianic teachers would like to do. The details about *takanot* and *ma’asim* sharpen rather than blunt the attack on rabbinic authority. These details are absent from the Greek texts.

Finally, the Shem Tov Hebrew in Matthew 27 makes much clearer than the Greek text the absolute culpability of the high priests, the elders, and the Jewish mobs in the trial of Yeshua. It shows Pilate washing his hands before the mob and telling them “I am innocent (of the blood), Be careful what you do.” (Matthew 27:24) Two verses later it says Pilate “released Barabbas (to them, i.e. the Jews), and delivered to them Jesus for beating and affliction that they might hang him.” Shem Tov indicates that Pilate turned Yeshua over to the Jews for hanging on the tree. As George Howard notes,

‘Hanging’ in reference to Jesus also appears in the Talmud perhaps because it, like the Hebrew Matthew, ascribes his execution solely to the Jews. ^[11]

Again, this is hardly the polemical work of Jews of the Middle Ages bent on exonerating their forefathers from guilt in the crucifixion. Yet it is totally consistent with a Matthew who takes pains to highlight the antagonism of the Pharisees against Yeshua (Matthew 12:14—“Then the Pharisees took counsel and plotted to put Him to death.”).

In short, a reading of Howard’s translation of Shem Tov presents a very believable resemblance to the canonical Gospel of Matthew with which we have become familiar except that where the Greek is garbled and leads to unclear English translations, the Shem Tov often comes to the rescue. For those who seek to truly know Matthew’s original intent, Shem Tov is an invaluable source of fresh insight.

At almost every turn in the four Gospels we find confrontation between the Pharisees-scribes and Yeshua over the Oral Law. Many passages cited below clearly show that Yeshua lambasted the

teaching of the rabbis. Actually, I consider it an embarrassment that I should have to even make these points, as they are obvious to everybody else except certain Messianics and Church of God Sabbatarians who use the rabbinic calendar.

Prominent Messianic authors, following the erroneous views of skeptical scholars of the early twentieth century, have attempted to align Yeshua with the rabbinic schools of Hillel or Shammai. But the New Testament record does not agree with this. Would the Jews in John 7:14-15 have asked the following question if Yeshua had been to a rabbinic academy?

“Now about the midst of the Feast Yeshua went up into the Temple, and taught. And the Jews marveled, saying, “How knows this man letters, having never learned?”

In the book, *The Jews in the Time of Jesus*, the author Steven Wylen, an orthodox Jew, shows the absurdity that Yeshua was anything akin to a rabbi:^[12]

Rabbis demonstrated their authority by quoting the law in the name of the teacher from whom they heard it...a rabbi's exegetical ingenuity was limited by tradition. He could not validate just any ruling with a proof text from scripture. Rabbinic ruling had to be in line with current practice and the opinions of the sages in general...Jesus is never [presented] as a preserver and teacher of ancient traditions. (p. 163)...

Scholars of today, no matter how friendly to Judaism, would not agree with former scholars that Jesus was a disciple of Hillel.” (p. 160)

Yeshua, unlike any rabbi^[13] before or since, amazed the crowds with the freshness and originality of his interpretations of Torah, and by speaking “with authority, not as their teachers of the law.” (Matthew 7:29) Wylen says, “Jesus spoke with authority. That is, he did not quote sources nor interpret scripture...Jesus own words have the authority of God.”^[14] Yeshua used unprecedented phrases to introduce His teaching—such as “but I say to you”—to indicate that He was Yahweh in the flesh come to earth. Even the greatest prophet Moses said “and YHWH spoke unto me” to introduce instruction. “Jesus' own words have the authority of God.”^[15]

Yeshua had the best teacher ever: “My doctrine is not Mine, but His That sent Me.” He was taught by the Heavenly Father. Believe it or not, this flies in the face of the long-standing rabbinic teaching that even Heaven itself has no right to interpret the Torah, only the rabbis do. In the Talmud there is a story that relates this principle in which God says, “The rabbis have defeated Me.” In fact the only thing they accomplished was to incur Yahweh's anger and totally take Deuteronomy 30:12 out of context.^[16]

Comparison of Yeshua's Parables With Rabbinic Parable

Notice what contemporary scholar/rabbi Stephen M. Wylen, a “devoted Jew”, says about this:

Some have said that Jesus spoke rabbinically in his use of parable. The rabbis did teach in parables, but our records on rabbinic parable show them to be a different type than Jesus'. Rabbinic parable was nearly always a parable of a king, with the acts of God compared with those of human rulers. Jesus has some parables of this type, but most of his parables are earthy, drawn from everyday examples of immediacy to his listeners...Jesus' parables have **a power and freshness** which, in this devoted Jew's opinion, **formalized rabbinic parable cannot match**...How ironic that in an age when so many are seeking to identify the new and original aspects of Jesus' teachings, many Christian scholars have classified one of the most creative and original aspects of Jesus' teaching as “typically rabbinic!”^[17]

“The view that parables were a common method of instruction among the Jews does not seem to be well-founded...to Christ’s hearers they were a novelty,” according to Alfred Plummer.^[18]

Another stark contrast between Yeshua and the rabbis of his time is that “I am among you as he that serves” (Luke 22:27); whereas a candidate for rabbinic ordination in Yeshua’s time “waited hand and foot on his master (thus the title ‘rabbi,’ ‘my master,’ which is the address of the disciple to his teacher.”^[19] Yeshua was the first to teach that greatness comes from serving.

In conclusion, the suggestion that Yeshua wasted His precious youth sitting at the feet of another man, becoming the slavish follower of some great one,^[20] is to turn the truth upside down. The head of every man is Messiah (I Corinthians 11:3),^[21] whose Bread was straight from the Father. He had the unction of the Holy One, having no need that men teach Him. (I John 2:20)

The Leaven of Divorce Under the Pharisees

Both Mark 10 and Matthew 19 show the Pharisees coming to Yeshua to tempt him on the matter of divorce. But first let us give a little historical background on the social situation of that generation as given by the main Jewish historian of the first century—Josephus. Josephus was a divorced Pharisee who said that Jewish men were allowed to put away their wives for any reason in his day (cf. Matthew 19:3). He tells us that divorce was commonplace and scandalized Jewish culture in the eyes of outsiders. It is evident from Matthew and Mark’s accounts that the Pharisees had largely contributed to this sordid state of affairs. When we realize that Hillel and his disciple Gamaliel taught a multitude of petty reasons for which a man might divorce his wife, it is not hard to see why Yeshua sought to distance Himself from their socially destructive teachings. His attitude was the same as the prophet Malachi’s, that Yahweh hates putting away (Mal. 2:16). However, Yeshua upheld the law in Deuteronomy 24:1-4 which protected the woman from being put out of her home without the bill of divorce being accorded her. It did two things: 1) gave indication she had done nothing worthy of death, and 2) freed her to remarry.

As I indicate in my paper *The Law of the Husband*,^[22] the Pharisees of that day were putting away their women without first obeying the Deuteronomic requirement that they render a bill of divorce. The Pharisees were also violating the principle of Exodus 21:10-11 against connubial fraud where the Law allowed the woman to go free from the “marriage.” The highly partial interpretations of the Pharisees never allowed a woman to initiate divorce proceedings. But Torah legislation *did*, in fact, and is widely viewed by scholars as the most progressive in human history up to that time. It protected the interests of women, but the Pharisaic/rabbinic tradition did virtually nothing legally to recognize that fact.

D. THOMAS LANCASTER’S KING OF THE JEWS

Some Messianic authors have implied that Yeshua, His disciples, and the Apostle Paul were not much different doctrinally than the Pharisees. One of the more popular writers in Messianic Judaism is D. Thomas Lancaster.^[23] His book, *King of the Jews*, contains many insidious lies. It also contains many wonderful insights on the Judaism of that day. We should not be surprised to discover this mixture of truth with error. Thus it always has been: error and lies are a parasite on the tree of truth. In chapter 5, in the short space of two paragraphs, he takes the reader from the seven woes Yeshua pronounces upon the Pharisees in Matthew 23 to asking the preposterous question, “What would you think if you were told Yeshua and the apostles were essentially Pharisees?” In between, we are told that vilifying the rabbis and their teaching is nothing more

than “slightly reworked old anti-semit[ism].” This polemical boomerang has the effect of casting Christ’s indictment into nothing more than first century anti-Semitism.^[24] Here is that quote:

Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like whitewashed tombs, which on the outside appear beautiful, but inside are full of dead men’s bones and all uncleanness. Matthew 23:27

One thing is certain--it is not a stretch to say that the Messiah did indeed vilify the sect of the scribes, Pharisees and their lawyers^[25] in Matthew 23, and it would be hard for any modern person to be more incisive in picking them apart “at the bones” than Yeshua. Some commentators have said that Yeshua’s diatribes against the Pharisees in the four Gospels are the strongest denunciations of any group found anywhere in scripture.

But we must view His denunciations in the context of the gamut of Pharisaic history from the time of John Hyrcanus (when the Pharisees were punished for making additions to the law of Moses) down to Sa’adia Gaon in the tenth century. The evidence from Jewish history is that virtually every generation has taken issue with the rabbis with what they saw as additions to the law of Moses. These additions are the subject of explicit attack in Matthew 15:1-20 and Mark 7.

It was Yeshua’s and Paul’s attitude that a little leaven leavens the whole lump. Hence, He told His disciples to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:6, 11) and the Sadducees. Since that leaven was very clearly their doctrine (Matthew 16:12), then the First Fruits of Zion’s understanding that Matthew 23:3 upholds the oral law of the rabbis cannot be correct.^[26] It is disingenuous for Lancaster to state that “Yeshua was, for all practical purposes, a Pharisee,”^[27] and yet totally ignore this passage in Matthew 16, and a host of others which fly in the face of his revisionism. Lancaster ignores the blunt, easy to understand passages showing that Yeshua rejected the Pharisaic movement. An entire sermon recorded in Matthew 23 is devoted to condemning their deeds and doctrine. This author needs to read again Matt. 16:12, “Then they understood that he did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.” In Matthew 15:12, Christ quotes Isaiah 29:13:

This people draws nigh to Me with the mouth, and honors Me with their lips; but have removed their heart far from Me. Their fear toward Me is taught by the precept of men.

He applied it to the Pharisees, making it plain that YHWH rejected their teachings and worship. The Karaites of the Middle Ages, quite independent of Yeshua’s writings, understood Isaiah 29:13 in the same way as later Christian scholars and Yeshua Himself—“commandments of men in which they have been schooled: i.e. taught by rote.”^[28] The Karaites and Yeshua were both well aware of the chief indictment of the Jews and Judah in Amos 2:4:

They have despised the law of Yahweh, and have not kept His commandment [but rather the commandments of men], and their lies caused them to err, *after which their fathers have walked.*

Lancaster engages in some very non-Hebraic logic that Brad Scott^[29] calls ‘truth by default’—“since I’ve destroyed your argument, therefore I must be right.” Lancaster sets up the Sadducees--a group with whom Yeshua definitely had doctrinal differences (not to mention their covetous practices at the Temple outer Court.^[30])—as his straw man in order to highlight a few doctrinal areas that Yeshua had in common with the Pharisees. But this no more makes the Messiah a Pharisee than my believing the dead sleep in their graves until the resurrection makes me a Jehovah’s Witness. “In Judah Elohim is known” (Psalm 76:1), because to them were given the oracles of Yahweh (Romans 3:1); so, yes, we should expect Yeshua to share the knowledge

of God that comes from the written Torah with many of his fellow Jews. However, according to Alfred Edersheim, the born-again scholarly English Jew of the late 1800's and author of *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Yeshua's teaching transcended rabbinic Pharisaic thought in every way. He pointed out the need to transform the inner man, in order to affect what proceeds out of man:

Rabbinism started with demand of outward obedience and righteousness and pointed to sonship as its goal; the Gospel started with the free gift of forgiveness through faith and of sonship, and pointed to obedience and righteousness as its goal.^[31]

The Pharisees were only interested in affecting the outward conduct in order to sanctify the man. That is the fundamental difference. One was the administration of life, the other the administration of frustration and death.

Can We Let the Pharisees Off the Hook in the Trial and Death of Yeshua?

What possible agenda could prompt Lancaster to make the radical, off-the-wall suggestion that the Pharisees were in no way responsible for the death of Yeshua the Messiah?^[32] That question must be posed when we see the evidence contradicting Lancaster's hypothesis. One does not like to question motives, but at the very least, he is ignoring the scriptures bearing on this subject. But it is more than that. The subtle inference in *King of the Jews* is that John the Apostle is some kind of turn-coat sectarian who betrayed Judaism and black-balled the Pharisees. On the other hand, if Lancaster's purpose is 1) to build bridges of credibility between Messianic Judaism and Orthodox Judaism, or 2) to minimize anti-semitic prejudice, or 3) to promote ecumenical harmony and understanding for modern-day Pharisaic Judaism, then Lancaster must disregard major passages in the Gospel accounts of the Savior's death. As Stephen Wylen, a devout Jewish rabbi cited earlier, puts it so well: "[Christian scholars] have made themselves credulous^[33] [gullible] in their eagerness to defend the Jews from anti-Semitism."^[34]

The issues raised in this section are of great concern to those who wish to avoid the pitfalls of errant Messianism. Our desire is a zeal for the Torah and commandment-keeping, but the Devil is willing to give us a form of godliness and righteousness in the Law at the expense of New Testament truth. In our pursuit of identity with Judaism, few are aware of the very real danger of offending Yahweh and His Son. Yeshua suffered the most torturous, excruciating trial and crucifixion ever, and his visage was marred more than any man, according to Isaiah 52:14.^[35] Therefore, if we deceitfully deny the historical accounts that squarely place the blame for His crucifixion at the feet of both the chief priests and the Pharisees, and then attempt to justify and build that system of religion that brought about this heinous act, we are in grave danger of incurring the wrath of Almighty Yahweh. Nor should we expect right interpretations of prophecy, the Holy Days, Sacred Name, etc. to reside with those who maintain such a position.

This new-fangled theory can easily be refuted by studying the four Gospels. Even the Talmud (*Tol'doth Yeshu*, a rabbinic parody on the Gospels) and the Shem Tov both indicate that Pontius Pilate handed both Barabbas and Yeshua over to the Jewish authorities, the one for freedom, the other for death. So even the Jews own Talmud does not absolve them in the execution of the Savior!

Pharisaic Cohort Implicated in the Arrest of Yeshua at Garden of Gethsemane

Next we turn to John 18 for the setting of Yeshua's arrest in the garden of Gethsemane on Passover night. Some very popular radio preachers try to say that Judas Iscariot brought a band of Roman soldiers to arrest Yeshua^[36], but that is not what John 18:3 says:

Judas, therefore, having taken the band and officers out of the chief priests and Pharisees, doth come thither with torches and lamps, and weapons. (Young's Literal Translation)

It is rather illogical to assume that Judas or the chief priests would have risked involving the Romans at this point. Lancaster obviously has no fear. He has taken the same position as secular scholars on this subject, and assumes the right to edit what you and I should and should not accept as historical in this eyewitness account. John was from a priestly family. He was so well-known by the servants in Caiaphas court, that he was able to get Peter inside the outer court of Caiaphas palace where Yeshua had been led for His initial arraignment before the Sanhedrin (see John 18:15-16). Lancaster comes close to turning the "apostle of love" into a biased Jew-hater who selectively tried to make the Jews and Pharisees look bad.

It is clear from John 1:19, 24; John 7:13 and 9:22 that the term "Jews" is used by John as a metonym for the Jewish leadership, particularly the Pharisees (John 1:19, 24). In John 7:13 many Jewish people at Succot were discussing their opinions, good and bad, toward Yeshua, but not openly, "for fear of the Jews." Likewise, in John 9:22 says the healed blind man's parents were guarded in their response to interrogation by the "Jews", because "the Jews" had already agreed that if any one should confess him to be Christ, he was to be put out of the synagogue. Therefore, when it says in John 5:18 and 7:1 that "the Jews sought to kill Him" it is talking about the Jewish religious and political establishment.^[37] "All the land of Judea" [except the scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 21:25-26)] went over to Jordan to hear, repent, and be baptized by John the Baptist (Mark 1:5). The Jewish elders and scribes refused to answer Yeshua when He asked them whether John's ministry was "from heaven, or of men." They said "All the people will stone us" if we say it was of men (Luke 20:5-6). We conclude then that John and the other Gospel writers draw a dichotomy between the Jewish people and their leaders.

John 4:1 is most informative about the Pharisees' involvement in the death-plans for Yeshua:

When therefore the Lord knew how the Pharisees had heard that Yeshua made and baptized more disciples than John, He left Judaea, and departed again into Galilee.

This verse tells us that Yeshua made and baptized more disciples than John, who had a veritable groundswell of support from the common people. Yeshua's popularity was even greater, becoming so great that people tried to take him by force and make Him king (John 6:15). When Yeshua knew how the Pharisees had heard of the above realities, He left Judea and departed again into Galilee. Why? Because He knew it was not His time to die yet, and that the spirit of Cain that He had roused—the spirit of jealousy and envy which even Pontius Pilate could discern (Matthew 27:18 and Mark 15:10)—would lead to His early apprehension and death prior to the time appointed by the Heavenly Father. The first murder (Cain vs. Abel) was over the issue of worship and resulting spiritual envy. The last martyrdoms in the Bible in the book of Revelation are over the issue of worship. The murder of Yeshua was due to what the Jews perceived as blasphemy (John 10:33), which also involves the issue of worship. Spiritual envy and the fact that the Messiah's teachings and actions at the Temple^[38] undermined the authority of the religious establishment—these are the things that got Yeshua killed. Yeshua was quite aware of

this principle, and the saying of Solomon, the wisest man who ever lived, “Wrath is cruel, and anger is outrageous; but who is able to stand before envy?” ^[39] Yeshua was no fool. He knew that even he would not withstand the plans of Cain’s spiritual heirs who were plotting His death. In the end, no man took His life. He laid it down by himself (John 10:18). He chose not to call down legions of angels to defend His personal safety (Matt. 26:53). “I have authority (permission from the Father) to lay it down, and I have authority to take it again.” But there are other scriptures that First Fruits of Zion and Lancaster would have us ignore in the matter of Pharisaic complicity in the death of Yeshua of Nazareth.

But some of them went their ways to the Pharisees, and told them what things Yeshua had done (the raising of Lazarus from the dead). Then gathered the chief priests and the Pharisees a council, and said. (vs. 48) If we let Him alone, all men will believe on Him: and the Romans shall come and take away both our place and nation.^[40] (vs. 53) Then from that day forth they took counsel together for to put Him to death. (John 11:46)

John 11: 57 says, “The Pharisees had issued instructions that, if anyone knew where Jesus was, he should give information which might lead to his arrest.” (Wm Barclay Trans.)

The council convened in John 11:47 was hardly the first council held by the Pharisees for the purpose of destroying Yeshua. Much earlier in His ministry, after He had healed a man with a withered hand on the Sabbath at a synagogue in Galilee, the Pharisees went out of the synagogue and held a meeting against Him (Matthew 12:14). Both Mark and Matthew agree that the purpose of this meeting was to discuss how they might destroy Yeshua (Mark 3:6). Luke implies this intent, saying they were “filled with burning anger and madness.”

The elders^[41] of the people were not all of one sect or another. Since the Pharisees were the sect with the greatest popular support among the people, and were selected partly by popular support of the people^[42], it is probable the Pharisees were involved in the group convened to arrange the arrest of Yeshua, as the following reference shows:

...behold, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs came (to the Garden of Gethsemane) from the chief priests and elders of the people. (Matthew 26:47)

YESHUA and THE SACRED NAME

In *King of the Jews*, Lancaster claims that Yeshua, like the Pharisees, honored the man-made tradition of not pronouncing the name, and we should do likewise. Lancaster states the following on page 74 (*ibid.*):

“Perhaps the best example of the Master’s conformance to Jewish tradition is in the matter of the pronouncing of God’s name...The tradition of sanctifying the name by leaving it unpronounced is still honored in Judaism and much of the believing Torah movement today.”

He then gives the Lord’s Prayer as an example of Yeshua setting aside the Father’s Name. “Our Father, hallowed [sanctified, set apart] be your name.” But obliterating the name of God from hearers does not hallow that name. As we are going to see, Yeshua honored the Father by speaking and doing everything He did in the Name of His Father, and did so quite literally by mentioning His Name.

While the Torah did forbid the mention (זָכַר, SH #2142.=*zahchar*) of pagan gods' names in a law found in Exod. 23:13, earlier in Exodus Yahweh told Moses that Yahweh was His memorial name, זָכַר(*zehcher*), to all generations:

“And Elohim said unto Moses, I AM that I AM; Thus shall you say unto the children of Israel, I AM has sent me unto you...this is my name forever, and this is my memorial [SH #2143 זָכַר = *zehcher*] unto all generations.” (Exodus 3:14)

Zehcher is simply the noun form of *zahchar*, to mention, make known. Therefore, it becomes impossible to memorialize Yahweh's name by not mentioning it. The following examples of usage will confirm this. Many, many more scriptures could be cited.

“Write this for a memorial [#2146=*zikkarohn*] in a book, and rehearse [7760] it in the ears of Joshua; for I will utterly put out the remembrance [#2143=*zehcher*] of Amalek from under heaven. Moses built an altar, and called the name of it YHWH-Nissi. For he said, “Because Yahweh has sworn: Yahweh will have war with Amalek from generation to generation.” (Exodus 17:14)

This verse proves that memorials are to be rehearsed in the ears of the people.

“I will remember (*zahchar*=mention, #2142) my covenant.” Genesis 9:15

“Think on me (#2142=remember) when it shall be well with you again (JPS), and do me the kindness of making mention (#2142) of me to Pharaoh.” Genesis 40:14

Orthodox Jews are kidding themselves if they think they are honoring the Father by substituting surrogate names and titles. But then why would we expect the people who have rejected the Son to honor the Father, when Yeshua said “He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father who sent him.” (John 5:23)? II John 9 says:

Whoever transgresses and does not abide in the doctrine of Christ, does not have God [The Father]; he who abides in the doctrine of Christ has both the Father and the Son.

Yahweh inspired his name to be written down 6957 times in the Old Testament alone. Yahweh remembers (#2142=*zahchar*/mentions) his covenant with his people Israel when He hears their groaning in the land of Egypt (Exod. 2:24).

“Remember (#2142) the Sabbath day to keep it holy.” Exodus 20:8

Do the Jewish faithful honor the Sabbath day by not mentioning it? No. Then how is it honor to NOT mention the God of Israel's Name? Messianics bent on imitating the Orthodox Jews have fallen into the trap of honoring men instead of Yahweh, and in so doing they are violating the third commandment, etc. Our goal should be to provoke them to jealousy, to want to emulate the true believer, via works of power and the demonstration of the fruits of the Holy Spirit. Mere imitation will not accomplish this.

Psalm 83:4 is a very popular scripture for lovers of the state of Israel,

“Lo thine enemies make a tumult; and they that hate thee have lifted up the head. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people, and consulted against thy hidden ones, They have said, come, and let us cut them off from being a nation, that the name of ‘Israel’ may be no more in remembrance (2142).”

The modern ayatollahs and political leaders of Iran have indicated their great desire to fulfill this very scripture. They would like to wipe out both the existence and the name of Israel. Judaism's sages have been in this matter blind and inconsistent. They don't want their enemies to blot out

the remembrance of their name, but they, in turn, have done their utmost to blot out the remembrance of Yahweh's name, the very God who formed them. It remains to be seen whether the worship of Yeshua will spare Messianics the judgment that accrues from blindly following orthodox Judaism in this matter.

Four places in the Talmud (in the *Tol'doth Yeshu*, to be specific) the rabbis accuse Yeshua of doing his healings and His many miracles in 'HaShem's' Name! *Tol'doth Yeshu* is a parody of the four Gospels. It does not deny that Yeshua accomplished many healings, signs and wonders. However, it invalidates them strictly on the basis that the Savior used the name of Yahweh to perform the miracles. The fact that Messianics such as FFOZ are ignoring the *Tol'doth Yeshu*, claiming he did not use God's Name, is remarkable. The Gospel of John, however, agrees with the Talmud on this point! Yeshua four times in his intimate prayer to the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane said very significant things about His Father's name (John 17:6):

I manifested (εφανερωσα, 'to make known something previously hidden'^[43]) Thy Name unto the men whom Thou gavest me from the world.... Holy Father, keep through Thy own Name which Thou hast given Me,^[44] in order that they may be one as we are one.... while I have been with them in the world, I have kept them in Thy name.

I have made known (Gr. = εγνωρισα, to impart knowledge)^[45] Thy name to them, and will declare it: so that the love You have loved me with may be in them, and I in them. (John 17:26)

When Yeshua declared "there is nothing hidden, which may not be *brought to light*" (Gr. φανερωω, the same Greek word used in 17:6), there is no question that he had in mind the holy name of his Father, in Whose name he performed all his mighty deeds. At the end of the prayer (17:26), the Greek verb εγνωρισα (*egnōrisa*) is used, meaning Yeshua had imparted objective knowledge to his disciples. Yeshua links the revelation of the Name with the impartation of the Father's love, as well as being a means by which the body of believers achieve unity (v. 12, point #2). I believe this declaration of Yahweh's Name by Yeshua to His disciples involves revelation of his character, grace and judgment, as well as unveiling the pronunciation of the Father's actual name. That pronunciation had been lost during the inter-testamental period (ca. 490 BC to 27 AD), when no prophet of Yahweh was present to speak in his Name. In this spiritual vacuum, interlopers such as the Pharisees invented rabbinic taboos and prohibitions which built a fence around profaning the Sacred Name.

FFOZ and other sacred-name-shunning Messianic and Church of God Sabbatarian organizations say they believe in observing the Torah literally; but not when it comes to this one precept. The Third Commandment literally says "You shall not take in vain [or 'bring to nothing'] the Name of Yahweh." The "take in vain" part of this commandment is the Hebrew word *shav*, which is translated "desolation" and "destruction" many other places in scripture. Hence, any custom or work of translation that substitutes another term for Yahweh's name is doing that very thing. Strong's also defines *shav* as "uselessness". Hence, not using the Name as the Bible does is rendering it useless.

The rabbis and Lancaster admit that Abraham, Isaac, David and Daniel (there are many others) actually uttered and used the name of Yahweh. These great men of God praised not just Yahweh but the Name of Yahweh,^[46] and that the Massorettes deliberately tried to cover up this fact with their 134 emendations.^[47]

Finally, the Hebrew Gospel of Matthew,^[48] called *Shem Tov*, has finally been published, translated, and thoroughly analyzed for the first time by Professor George Howard.^[49] “The Divine Name occurs 19 times in the text.” Howard argues successfully that this is proof it existed in the original Matthew,

“The conclusion seems inescapable that Shem-Tov found the Divine Name already in his gospel text, having received it from an earlier generation of Jewish tridents. He permitted the Divine Name to remain in the text perhaps because he was unsure himself about what to do with it.”^[50]

It is inconceivable how Shem Tov or any Jewish scribe would have inserted the Divine Name into his text of Matthew. As Howard aptly states, “No Jewish polemist would have done that. It must have included the Divine Name from its inception.”

For additional evidence that the Tetragrammaton was used in the Greek New Testament, see “The Tetragram and the New Testament,” *Journal of Biblical Literature*, Vol. 96 [1977], pp. 63-83, and “The Name of God in the New Testament,” *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Mar. 1978, 12-14.

There is some evidence to suggest concerted efforts were made during the fourth century to destroy Hebrew manuscripts of the NT and ones of the Septuagint containing the Tetragrammaton. This happened in conjunction with Constantine’s well-known effort to purge Christianity of Jewish customs such as Sabbath-keeping and Passover observance. The fact that only non-Hebrew MSS and versions have come down to us should not deter us from examining the evidence that New Testament writers would have necessarily been meticulous in quoting Old Testament passages that contained the Divine Name. Such a practice was necessary to avoid confusion between the Father and the Son, as well as to avoid violating the Third Commandment. I have presented some of that evidence in this brief reference to George Howard’s work. For those who have the time and the passionate pursuit, the literature is out there for your perusal.

WERE THE PHARISEES ON THE PATH OF TORAH?

In Luke 5:31-32, Yeshua says:

It is not those who are well who need a physician, but those who are sick. I have not come to call the righteous but sinners to repentance.

On page 77 of *King of the Jews*, we get Lancaster and First Fruits of Zion’s explanation of this verse. Yeshua “was less interested in the religious and righteous of Israel because *they were already on the path of Torah*. He was concerned with the irreligious.” Frankly, I know of no better way of putting the Torah in a bad light than teaching that the Pharisees were on the path of Torah. It blatantly contradicts Yeshua (John 7:19): “Did not Moses give you the Torah, yet **none of you** keeps the Torah.” There are quotes from Matt. 15, 23, Mark 7, John 9 and throughout the Gospels that show that the Jews were circumventing the Law, were full of covetousness and envy, threatening excommunication, and oppressing people right and left. The ministry of the priesthood was so corrupt that John the Baptist forsook the Temple (where his father Zechariah had served) for a ministry in the desert and a Spartan diet of locusts and honey. Lancaster says Yeshua “regarded them [the Pharisees] as healthy and the righteous of the Israel.” (*ibid.*) Nothing could be further from the truth. Yeshua’s point is that you are not going to seek the Great

Physician unless you see yourself as sick and spiritually blind. I interpret Luke 5:31-32 by comparing it with the last verse of John 9:

Yeshua said to them, "If you were blind, you should have no sin: but now you say, 'We see;' therefore your sin remains."

But in a vain attempt to bolster his point, Lancaster digs himself even deeper, citing Luke 15:4-6:

Suppose one of you has a hundred sheep and loses one of them. Does he not leave the ninety nine and go after the lost sheep until he finds it? ...I tell you there is more rejoicing in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine righteous persons who do not need to repent.

Lancaster interprets this verse, "The ninety-nine remaining sheep are the righteous of Israel who don't need to repent, present company of Pharisees and teachers of the Torah included." It almost too much to fathom how a person and ministry so highly respected throughout the Messianic movement could make these kinds of statements.

DIGGING THE DITCH DEEPER WITH MONTE JUDAH

Just when you think things could not get any worse out there on the frontiers of Messianic Judaism, Monte Judah in his flagship magazine *Yavoh* (November 2005), casts doubt on the canonicity of the book of Hebrews. At the end of the article statements were made about the end-time Temple and altar in Jerusalem that everyone in Messianic Judaism needs to be aware of. The article makes a rather weak case that Paul's book of Hebrews contains mistakes concerning the Law and the tabernacle. What we wish to highlight, however, is the rather strong case that can be made against Monte Judah's views on the altar. This error is perhaps one of the most radically wrong theological ideas I have encountered in the last 40 years.

Monte Judah states that the altar sanctified the blood of Yeshua. I quote from internet page 20 of the November 2005 issue of *Yavoh* magazine,

The altar in the temple in Jerusalem sanctified the blood of the New Covenant in accordance with the Law of Moses.

There can be no doubt that Monte Judah is referring to the actual blood of Yeshua the Messiah here. The answer to his bold assertion may be found in Matthew 23:16-21, where Yeshua gives us the principle that the greater thing blesses that which is connected to it. If anything, Yeshua's presence would have sanctified the Temple building and the altar¹⁵¹, not the other way around. In Matthew 12:6 Yeshua said this of Himself: "But I say to you, that in this place is One greater than the temple." Since scripture says that the greater blesses the inferior (Hebrews 7:7), then how can it be said that the man-made altar blessed or sanctified the sacrifice of Yeshua on the Mount of Olives?

Powerful Recurring Signs from Heaven from 31-70 A.D. (Talmud-Documented) Demonstrated Yahweh's Rejection of the Temple and the Levitical Priesthood

Let us reason some more on this. Monte Judah goes on to say that "[the book of Hebrews] is the basis for the rejection of the entire temple/altar service in Jerusalem." But for someone as versed in the Jewish rabbinic writings as he is, he should be ashamed of himself for making such a statement. The Talmud and Josephus document four major signs that began to occur and repeat themselves at the Temple 40 years before its destruction in 70 AD. In other words, these signs

began occurring the very year Yeshua was crucified. They are attested by a respected figure in Judaism of that time, Rabbi Yohanan Ben Zakkai^[52], who lived on past the temple's destruction in Yavneh. I quote the following from *Talmudic Evidence That Narrows the Year of the Crucifixion*^[53] containing chronological evidence narrowing the year of the crucifixion to 31 AD:

Josephus and Jewish rabbinic writings in the Centuries after the fall of the Temple record phenomena at the Temple that began some forty years prior to the fall of the Temple. Since the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD, these accounts are telling us that some very strange things began to happen there either in 30 or 31 AD. Forty years before the fall of the temple (70 AD), the Sanhedrin no longer met in the Chamber of Hewn Stones adjoining the Southeast corner of the Temple. Though the Talmud does not specify why, we know from Matthew 28:2 and Matthew 27:51-54 that there were separate earthquakes after the resurrection, as well as at his mid-afternoon death on Passover day. The rending of the veil is associated with the initial earthquake in Matt 27:51. It is certainly probable that these earthquakes caused significant damage to the Chamber of Hewn Stones.

Forty years before the Temple was destroyed, the doors of the Holy Place mysteriously opened by themselves during the night, even though they were locked each evening. This was considered a bad omen by many. R. Yohan Ben Zakkai rebuked the gates: "Hekel, hekel [The Hebrew word for temple], why alarm thou us? We know you are destined to be destroyed. For of you has prophesied Zechariah Ben Iddo (Zech. 11:1): 'Open your doors, O Lebanon [The Temple], and fire shall eat your cedars.'" (See Yoma 39b)

Alfred Edersheim believed that the miraculous opening of these doors was linked to the tearing of the curtain, since the doors were positioned directly behind the curtain itself,

We can scarcely doubt, that some historical fact must underlie so peculiar and widespread a tradition, and we cannot help feeling that it may be a distorted version of the occurrence of the rending of the Temple-Veil at the Crucifixion of Christ. But even if the rending of the Veil had commenced with the earthquake, and, according to the Gospel to the Hebrews, with the breaking of the great lintel over the entrance, it could not be wholly accounted for in this manner...the rent of the Temple-Veil was... really made by the Hand of God.^[54]

However, historian Ernest L. Martin^[55] gives credence to an early second century account in "The Gospel of the Nazarenes":

...the large stone lintel which supported the curtain (which no doubt had the inner doors attached to it for stability) split in two when the curtain was severed...there is no reason to deny the possibility that the collapse of the overhead lintel was the 'natural cause' of the curtain tearing in two^[56]... and the means by which the inner doors next to the curtain were forced open.

The impression made on Temple personnel by these events helps explain why, just months later, "a great company of priests were obedient to the [new] faith" and "the number of disciples multiplied in Jerusalem greatly." (Acts 6:7) It was time to become Melchizedek priests.

The cumulative effect of recurring portents over several decades would have lent themselves to the idea that the Levitical system was "becoming obsolete and growing old, ready to vanish away." (Hebrews 8:13). If the head of the Sanhedrin knew the Temple was doomed, then Monte Judah is way out of line for blaming the book of Hebrews.

Ominous Signs on the Day of Atonement

In Leviticus 16:8, instructions are given to Aaron the high priest to cast lots upon the two selected goats—one lot was for Yahweh, the other lot was for the scapegoat. In Yoma 39b we read that during the 40 years leading up to the Roman destruction of the Temple, the scarlet thread from the Azazel goat did not turn white [signifying forgiveness of Israel's sins] as it had in previous years. Furthermore, the lot for Yahweh continued to fall into the *left* hand every single year (from the Crucifixion year all the way down to the Day of Atonement 69 AD.)^[57] Since the lot falling into the *right* hand was considered a sign of Yahweh's favor, this was considered a very bad omen by leaders and people alike. According to tradition, this meant that for the forty years between Yeshua's crucifixion and the destruction of the Temple, Yahweh had rejected Israel's sacrifices and their sins were not being forgiven. They failed to comprehend after Yeshua's death and resurrection that Yahweh no longer accepted the blood of bulls and goats for Israel's sins.

Josephus speaks of the mysterious extinction of the chief lamp of the menorah (used to rekindle the menorah each evening), forty years before the destruction of the Temple. It would not stay lit. He also refers to the supernatural opening of the great Temple gates, which were kept locked.

The odds against all these phenomena happening by chance have been calculated at many quadrillions to one. The truth, as Martin and others have concluded, is that these signs indicated Yahweh's rejection of the Temple and the Levitical system. Why, then would Yahweh be so keen on re-establishing something He destroyed in the first century? Only one reason makes any sense, only so prophesy can be fulfilled. The implication that somehow spiritual benefit accrues to the end-time Believer due to his respect for the Jewish Temple and resumption of animal sacrifices is a gross misreading of scripture, and a disparagement of the benefits of Yeshua's sacrifice. Does Monte Judah believe that the blood of bulls and goats takes away sin? If not, then how can he construe the Temple and its altar as sanctifying the blood of a New Covenant whose priests are not even Levitical, and whose temple is Yeshua and His body of Believers, the Church. Monte Judah, one of the greatest discerners and elucidators of shadows and types of the Messiah in the Torah, needs to contemplate his Savior's statement:

Destroy this Temple, and in three days I will raise it up. John 2:19

Yeshua's primary intention was to foretell his resurrection after three days of death, to give the Jews the sign they asked for (John 2:18) that He was Messiah. Most of the Jews thought He was speaking of the actual Temple, whose destruction was indeed a judgment from YHWH, and a clear indication that a new priesthood was in order. Even the dominant sect after 70 AD, the Pharisees, ***had no interest*** in restoring a functional Levitical/Aaronic class of teachers.^[58] A non-hereditary Melchizedek priesthood was needed to teach Christ's body how to worship in Spirit and Truth wherever they might be on the earth. Therefore, there is double meaning in what Yeshua said in John 2:19. His body of Messianic believers was to provide the dwelling place for God and His Holy Spirit from now on. Hence, the glory departed from the Second Temple, and will NOT be in the end-time Tribulation Temple. The Second Temple was destroyed, thus fulfilling Yeshua's detailed prophecies to the 'T',^[59] but what remained was the body of Jewish and Gentile Messianic believers who the Apostle Paul called "the Temple of God." Many of them were living in Gentile lands, but they were Yahweh's Temple because of Yeshua and the sending of the Holy Spirit. This identification was made by Paul in I Corinthians

3 at least a decade prior to the fall of the Second Temple. Hence, the fall of the Temple provided no motive for the new identification.

Never have the descendents of Judah tried to live in the Holy Land under such precarious conditions as today. The state of Israel permits almost every form of sexual immorality and wickedness. The iniquity in Tel Aviv is palpable to all Christians who go there. Homosexuality is rampant. The youth hostels there have wall murals that depict some of the most sordid demonic activity and lewdness as to shock the sensibilities of all but the most callous and seasoned sinner. Building a Temple for Adonai under these conditions will be a novel experiment whose outcome is not difficult to predict. As the angel went on to say in Revelation 11:2:

But the court which is outside the Temple cast out and measure it not; for it is given unto the Gentiles: and the holy city shall they tread under foot 42 months.

Furthermore, in John 4 Yeshua himself makes it clear that the Father was looking for a people to worship Him in spirit and truth, and that *neither Mt. Gerazim or Jerusalem would provide the focal point for worship in the near future*, a future prophesied by Yeshua in Luke 21:6, Matt. 24:2, et. al. These prophecies came to pass in 70 AD.

Finally, Monte Judah impugns the book of Hebrews with this assertion:

Soon another altar will be erected on the temple mount in Jerusalem. It is prophesied to be. God will measure us with that altar (Revelation 11:1).

However, Revelation 11:1 does not say Yahweh will measure believers by that altar, but will measure those worshipping therein at that time. To quote:

There was given me a reed like unto a scepter: and the angel stood, saying, Rise, and measure the Temple (Gr. ναός, the sanctuary itself, not the adjoining courts or buildings) of God, and the altar, as well as *those that worship therein*.

The Holy Spirit thus indicating that there is deficiency in this future Tribulation period Temple. Daniel 8:12 is a prophecy about, not just Antiochus Epiphanes, but also the end-time anti-Christ or “man of sin, son of destruction” who will sit in this Tribulation Temple.^[60] Daniel 8:9-12 gives some indication as to what this deficiency is:

[The little horn] waxed exceeding great...even to the host of heaven; and it cast down some of the host and of the stars to the ground...by him the daily sacrifice was taken away, and the place of His sanctuary was cast down. And an host was given him against the daily sacrifice by reason of transgression, and it cast down the truth to the ground, practiced and prospered.”

Though it is evident that the Jews will have their Temple, what is not so sure is whether it will meet the rigorous specifications of a Holy God as to location^[61] and measurements. Hence, Revelation 11:1, as E.W. Bullinger points out, is telling us that,

...this measuring reed is like a scepter, and **measures for destruction**, not for building.
See Lamentations 2:8: “Yahweh has purposed to swallow up the wall of the daughter of Zion: stretched out a line, He has not withdrawn His hand from destroying.”

So when we allow Lamentations 2 to interpret Revelation 11:1, we see that Monte Judah has totally missed the point about Rev. 11, the context of which is the 1260 day ministry of the Two

Witnesses. These have authority to bring about the destruction of the great city (v. 8) where our Lord was crucified (as well as other Israelite lands). The fact that John, projected forward in time by the Spirit into the yet future Day of the Lord (Revelation 1:10), calls Jerusalem “Sodom and Egypt”, certainly marks it for destruction. This, together with the parable of the fig tree (Lk. 13) and Yeshua’s cursing of the fig tree (Matt. 21:29, Mk. 11:14), when rightly understood, is a plain indictment of anyone attempting to establish Jerusalem as the focal point of worship or a rallying point for the end-time believer. What Yahweh hath dispersed let him gather in his time.

Parable of the Fig Tree Linked to the Rejection of Judah/Judaism

In Luke 13, Yeshua speaks about judgment. Many Galileans went up to Jerusalem to sacrifice unto the Lord some time after the middle Passover of Christ’s ministry, but somehow managed to have their blood mingled with their sacrifices they brought to the Temple. I have no historical clue as to the situation that caused Pontius Pilate to do this. Report of this was brought to Yeshua. He replied by saying “Unless you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” Then he mentioned how 18 people perished when the tower of Siloam fell on them. Yeshua asked, “Do you think they were sinners above all men that dwelt in Jerusalem? Nay, but except you repent, you shall all likewise perish.” (Lk. 13:4-5) In connection with this, and to enforce these words of warning^[62], Yeshua gives the parable of the fig tree. Yahweh God is pictured as having planted a fig tree in the midst of His vineyard. Three years He came and sought fruit thereon, and *found none*. Yahweh gives orders to the vinedresser to cut it down. Matthew Henry says “this parable primarily refers to the people and nation of the Jews.”^[63] The three years is referring to the ministry of Christ, and how He “came unto His own [people], and His own received Him not.” (John 1:11) Let’s face it, the Jews disappointed Yahweh and His Son’s expectations.

On Friday of Passion Week, Yeshua curses a barren fig tree full of leaves, despite the fact that it was not the season for ripe fruit (Mk 11:13). By the following morning (a Sabbath), the fig tree had withered to its roots (Mk. 11:20). Yeshua forbade any man from trying to eat fruit from whatever that fig tree represented. It behooves the Messianic Movement^[64] to ponder their love affair with Judaism as they soberly reflect upon the implications of this parable. For there can be little doubt that Yeshua is using the fig tree to represent the Jews who have rejected the Messiah.

In this same vein, it is interesting that Yeshua again used the fig tree to illustrate the kind of faith his disciples would need to overcome the opposition they would experience at the hands of the Jews: “If you had faith as tiny as a mustard seed, you could say to this fig tree, ‘Be uprooted and **replanted in the sea!**’ and it would obey you.”^[65] The sea being a metaphor for the Gentile nations in the OT, it is interesting that the Jews were judged and dispersed throughout the nations in 70 A.D. due in large part to their opposition to the Gospel being taken to the Gentiles. I Thes. 2:14:

For you, brethren, became followers of the [Jewish Christian] congregations of God which in Judea are in the Messiah Yeshua; for ye also have suffered like things of your own countrymen (Macedonia), even as they have of the Jews: (15) Who both killed the Lord Yeshua, and their own prophets, and have persecuted us, and they please not Elohim/God, and are contrary to all men—**forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they might be saved**—to fill up their sins always; *for the wrath is come upon them of late.*”

The foregoing passage is a verse of scripture that you are not likely to find read in any Messianic congregation. Many scholars accuse the apostles Paul and John of making anti-semitic statements, and yet they themselves were Jewish to the core. But they had learned to do

something many messianics have not: to distance themselves from their brethren and the rabbis who had rejected Yeshua. The kippahs, the being called ‘rabbi’, the substitution of Adonai for Yahweh’s sacred name, the refusal to call upon/worship Yahweh’s name, the use of patently unbiblical rules for determining the calendar, the setting of Shavuot on Sivan 6 every year instead of counting 50 days in order to get there, and the 15th Passover, are all ways in which followers of Yeshua are slavish to rabbinic tradition instead of the plain instructions of Scripture.

Yahweh Will Yet Choose Jerusalem

Zephaniah 3:1-2 is a prophetic description of Jerusalem as it stood in Jeremiah’s day, in Yeshua’s day, as well as our day today:

Woe to her that is filthy and polluted, to the oppressing city! She obeys not the voice; she received not correction; she trusted not in Yahweh. Her princes within her are roaring lions, her judges are evening wolves...her priests have polluted the sanctuary, they have done violence to the Torah.

And yet Zephaniah’s contemporary Zechariah prophesied that “Yahweh will yet choose Jerusa-lem.” Zechariah 2:12:

And Yahweh shall inherit His portion Judah in the holy land, and shall choose Jerusalem again.

I Corinthians 11:31 says that “if we would judge ourselves, we will not be judged.” It is ludicrous to suggest, as Monte Judah does, that Christians and Messianics need to get their attitude right with respect to the Jewish revival of the old Levitical system and Temple ritual. I say we are too pre-occupied, in this generation, with the creations of man, and not enough with the Creator and His Son’s sacrifice. I’ll take the great anti-type over the type any day.

Malachi 3 says some interesting things that bear upon the above. Notice Verse 1 and following:

Behold, I will send my Messenger, and He shall prepare the way before Me, and the Lord whom ye seek shall suddenly come to His temple, even the messenger of the Covenant, whom ye delight in; Behold He shall come, says Yahweh of Hosts. (2) And who may abide the Day of His coming? And who shall stand when He appears. For He is like a refiner’s fire, and like fuller’s soap; 3 And He shall sit (the language of Judgment) as a refiner and purifier of silver; and He shall purify the sons of Levi, and purge them as gold and silver, that they may offer unto Yahweh an offering in righteousness. **Then shall the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant** unto Yahweh, as in the days of Old, and as in former years. And I will come near to you to judgment.

These verses show that Yeshua is going to enter into judgment with the Levitical service being practiced when He returns. Only after Yeshua has thoroughly purged His threshing floor, and purified the sons of Levi, subsequent to the Second Coming, only then will the offering of Judah and Jerusalem be pleasant to Yahweh, and not before.

Is it possible that Monte Judah’s preoccupation with re-establishing the literal third temple in Jerusalem has caused him to discredit the book of Hebrews? After all, this is the book which points us to the “city of the living Elohim, the heavenly Jerusalem...and to Yeshua, the mediator of the New Covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than Abel[’s sacrifice].” (Hebrews 12:22, 24) Obviously these concepts are antithetical to Monte Judah’s philosophy, and he is looking to men to make Jerusalem a praise, instead of Yahweh (Zeph. 3:20):

When that time comes, I will bring you in; when that time comes, I will gather you and make you the object of fame and praise among all the peoples of the earth--when I restore your fortunes before your very eyes, says Yahweh.

That time has not yet come, otherwise we would not be talking about a Jewish nation that can't even decide whether homosexuality is a sin. No, these prophecies are talking about Messiah Yeshua personally taking a hand in the re-gathering of the dispersed of Judah whose final judgment is yet to come. The Messianic prophet Arthur Katz taught the same thing, but was marginalized by the mainstream Messianic movement.

The Head Covering Halakhah in the Messianic Movement

The Talmudic period (200-700 AD) formulated no laws regarding the *yamulka*, or male head covering. Yet later rabbis made a *minhag* ^[66] stating that a follower of rabbinic Judaism may not walk four cubits without covering his head. It also states that a Jewish male is not to pray without covering his head. David Berent, a learned Jewish man I once met who believed in Yeshua and who called upon the name of Yahweh, once told me his research had uncovered that a famous medieval rabbi in Poland had formalized the *yamulka* for his followers there in order to differentiate Jewish men from their Christian counterparts. This is quite interesting, because the Apostle Paul, who seems to have been ordained by Yahweh to address specific issues such as this one in his pastoral epistles, clearly forbade head coverings for the men in the Church (I Corinthians 11:4). The Greek word used three times in I Corinthians. 11 (vs. 4, 6, 7) is *κατακαλυπτομαι*, literally signifying something down upon or covering the head. ^[67] He makes it quite clear that this is because the man's head is the invisible Christ. The custom for the women was the same as in the Torah ^[68], i.e. she was to have a visible sign of authority down upon her head in order to remind the angels, the demons, herself and the world that her authority was a visible human being, i.e. she was willingly submitting to the human authority of her father or her husband. In I Corinthians 11, Paul is particularly concerned that the woman should demonstrate her submission to this order in the Church service if she wishes to prophesy or pray. Nothing could be clearer.

Many modern religious leaders pretend that Paul's teaching on head-coverings for women is not clear, or assume that the women's hair is her covering (an interpretation which the Greek will not allow, since a completely different Greek word—*peribolaiou*—is used to describe her hair in I Corinthians 11:15). The truth is that Paul teaches that it is very unbecoming for a woman to NOT have a head covering during prayer; that she might as well be totally shaved or shorn as to have her head unveiled with the symbol of authority. Paul defended this custom against those who wanted to be contentious by saying "we have no other custom." Amish and Mennonite groups who have upheld the validity of Paul's teaching have a far greater harmony and stability in the home to show for it. No matter how people interpret or apply Paul's writings on women's head-coverings, it is plain that men are to do the opposite and not cover their head.

One must ask Messianics the question, "Why is the rabbinic tradition requiring men to have a head covering adhered to, when Paul's clear teaching on the subject is disregarded?" The truth of the matter is that it all boils down to what we are willing or not willing to practice in our faith, and who we are trying to impress.

It is not hard to strip the Messianic male leadership of their excuses for not obeying the Gospel which Paul taught. The simple truth is that the very same *yamulka* that rabbinic Judaism insists that its males wear is the same kind of covering that violates Paul's injunctions to the males in his congregations. For those of us who think figuratively, it becomes crystal clear that the visible (male) head covering is the natural outgrowth of accepting visible human authority based on handed-down tradition. I suppose there is a certain comfort, especially if one is female, in being under the headship of a human hierarchy, which may explain why the NT uses a woman to symbolize the Church is Israel. If one puts something visible on his head, what is he symbolizing, but that other human beings have dictated his *halakhah* instead of the invisible Christ.

The Tradition of the Elders

"*The Pharisaic Paradosis*" is the name of a very insightful and scholarly article by renowned Jewish historian A.I. Baumgarten.^[69] *Paradosis* sounds like a disease, but it is much more than that. It is a spiritual malady that has affected countless well-meaning believers in the Torah of Moses for 2200 years. It is a religious tradition of laws going back to the time of the Maccabees that many Jews recognized as being extra-Biblical, as adding to the Torah of Moses. The Greek word used to refer to these traditions is *παρὰδοσις*, which means "customs, laws, ideas, or traditions handed down or transmitted from one generation to another." What we wish to look at is how this parallel^[70] tradition gained respectability in the eyes of the masses of Jewry by the time of the Second Temple, and specifically the kind of methods that Pharisees used to equate their teaching with that of Moses. But first it is necessary that we establish that these Pharisaic *paradosis* were the subject of serious disputation. The Sadducees rejected it. In *Antiquities of the Jews*, written by first century history Josephus, the two sects are described as engaging in "controversies and serious differences" over these traditions.^[71] Why? Because the Sadducees received only those laws hand down in the written law of Moses. The *paradosis* were not. Secondly, the Sadducees felt that the traditions of the Pharisees led to pointless self-denial. Pointless, that is, if you don't believe in an after-life. Why give up pleasure unnecessarily in pursuit of an illusion of righteousness when there may not even be a resurrection of the just anyway, according to the Sadducees? Philosophically, the Sadducees were only interested in the here and now, particularly in acquiring political power and wealth.

The Essenes rejected it. According to Baumgarten, when the Pharisees are accused of following *שְׂרָרוֹת לְבָבָא* in the Qumran scrolls^[72], it is attacked as human willfulness rather than divine law.^[73]

The Herodians rejected it. Herod's biographer and closest advisor—Nicolaus of Damascus—the one who defended his will before Augustus Caesar—disliked the Pharisees, accusing them of "pretending to observe the laws of which God approves." These were no doubt laws they themselves had devised.

And of course Yeshua of Nazareth rejected it. In Mark 7 is an explicit attack upon the tradition of the elders, brought on by the Pharisees confrontation over Yeshua allowing the 5000 to eat bread without washing their hands:

Then the Pharisees and scribes asked Him, "Why do your disciples not walk according to the tradition of the elders (Greek = *παρὰδοσιν των πρεσβυτέρων*)?"

What we wish to focus on here is the term *παρὰδοσιν των πρεσβυτέρων*, translated "tradition of the elders." Josephus uses the same phrase in *Ant.* 10.4.1 § 51. Baumgarten is correct in concluding that carefully crafted terminology was one of the means by which the Pharisees

vaunted themselves into the religious center-stage of first century Judaism. It was a way of claiming great antiquity for their *paradosis*. Notice that Yeshua rejects their terminology and calls their traditionalism the “commandments of men.”

Before the time of the Maccabees, the elders were members of the *gerousia* of Jerusalem. Stating that their traditions were “of the elders” might have been an attempt by the Pharisees to connect their traditions with the leading center of power in pre-Maccabean Jerusalem.^[74] Stating that their teachings were “of the elders,” of the *gerousia*, would have significantly enhanced the prestige of their traditions, according to Baumgarten.^[75]

CALL NO MAN FATHER

Laying aside, for the time being, the blatant violation of Matt. 23:8, 10 by the vast majority of Messianic congregations who indulge in calling their pastors ‘rabbi’, I would like my readers to turn their attention to Matt. 23:9. and realize that Pharisaic Judaism had a several hundred year head-start on violating the Savior’s injunction to “Call no man your father upon earth: for one is your Father, which is in heaven.” The passage says nothing about what you call your physical father. The context of the passage is that we all have one spiritual Father and no one else is entitled to that designation. But what if you’re a sect of Judaism trying to gain credibility, a foothold as it were, with other unaffiliated Jews, in, let’s say the second century B.C. Baumgarten suggests that this is when the Pharisees started calling their prominent teachers and rabbis “father,” in order to equate them with the patriarchs and Moses.

Since the Pharisees were not priests, they had no lineage or family ties to the priesthood. Most ancient cultures, especially the Jews, accepted religious traditions handed down from father to son (see Amos 2:4b). The Apostle Paul spoke in Gal. 1:14 how he had advanced in the Jews religion above many of his peers, being exceedingly zealous of the traditions of his fathers (Gr. *πατρικων* = of paternal ancestors). These traditions *had been handed down to him through his own father*, for Paul tells us he is the son of a Pharisee (Acts 23:6). Most scholars assume a link between Gal. 1:14 and the Pharisaic *paradosis*. In the context of the strength of Jewish tribal tradition, and the importance placed upon patriarchy, it is doubtful that the schools of the Pharisees had displaced the family as the main instrument for transmitting Jewish tradition from one generation to another. By the second century of the Christian era, however, all eyes began to look to the Pharisees for authority in religious matters.

The handing down of traditions was particularly true of priestly traditions (*C. Apion* 1.7 § 36). The Jewish arguments for Jerusalem over against Mt. Gerizim as the legitimate place where men ought to worship mostly hinged around the high priests having received their office from their father.^[76] The Pharisees, on the other hand, were scholastic, similar to Hellenistic schools, headed by scholars.^[77]

“The notion [in the 1st Century B.C.] that such a school possessed traditions concerning the religious laws to be observed by the nation would have been revolutionary in all the ancient world...Pharisaic tradition, as a nonpriestly school tradition, was therefore extremely vulnerable.”^[78]

So what did the Pharisees do? They engaged in a piece of legal fiction that must have seemed quite brash to the first generation of Jews who saw them do it. Returning to Baumgarten’s article on the Pharisaic *paradosis*:

When the Pharisees chose *מסרות* (*masorot*) as the name of the laws they observed not written in the Bible, they were investing those traditions with the prestige of the written word [because the term] means the written text of the Bible even in rabbinic sources.

Baumgarten sees this as part of the Pharisaic response to early Sadducaean^[79] charges that the Pharisees had attempted to attach “the questionable to the unassailable.”^[80]

The term *masorot* ‘*Abot*—traditions of the fathers—is the name of a tractate of the Talmud. In it, the founders of rabbinic Judaism of the first century B.C.--Hillel and Shammai—are called ‘*Abot ha olam*, or “fathers of the universe,” or alternately, “fathers of eternity.”^[81] R. Akiva and other prominent rabbis are also called fathers. Students of rabbis were called their *b’nai*, or “sons.”

Calling the Pharisaic tradition that “of the fathers” was a very clever way for them to make a statement to the Jewish community worldwide: “Our rabbis are ‘*abot* just as Moses and the prophets were.”^[82] To quote Baumgarten:

“The status of Pharisaic leaders as ‘*abot* seemed so obvious to the heirs of the Pharisees that they called the tractate that began with the old list of scholars *Abot*.”

As for calling Shammai and Hillel “fathers of eternity/universe,” that is just the kind of blasphemous title one would expect from a religion emanating from Babylonia.^[83] The fact that they held contradictory opinions on every matter except “the washing of the hands” did not inhibit the Talmudic rabbis from saying--“the words of both are the words of the living Elohim.”^[84]

“The scribes and the Pharisees have seated themselves in Moses’ seat.” That is how the NASB translates Matt. 23:2. They either read Baumgarten or really did their homework. We have learned that the terms *paradosis* of the elders and ‘father’ as a spiritual title for the rabbis was a deliberate attempt by the Pharisees to aggrandize their movement and their schools. In defending their traditionary law, they hoped to raise its status from that of mere schools of men to the patrimony of the nation. As Yeshua indicated, they did whatever they did, “to be seen of men.” Any suggestion on the part of Messianic or Church of God sabbatarian leadership that somehow Yahweh placed them in Moses’ seat is spiritual insanity in the light of the truths presented in this study. There is One Lawgiver who is able to save or destroy, and He gave but one Law to His servant Moses. Those who honor this parallel tradition to the holy writ by wearing *yamulkas*, calling their leader ‘rabbi’, and keeping the Jewish fixed calendar, are also supporting a whole host of questionable and contradictory practices outlined above and many, many more, some of which dishonor our Messiah in very direct ways. Coming out of Babylon means much more than coming out of Rome and all her daughter churches. It also means coming out of Babylonian Talmudic torah practices that do not line up with Moses’ Torah. The Karaites during the Middle Ages accomplished this feat without Yeshua and without holy Spirit. Messianic Jews and others who believe in Yeshua the Messiah must do no less by the Holy Spirit. After all, John 16 says the Counselor^[85], the Holy Spirit, will lead us into all truth. This reliance on human interpretations has manifested itself a number of ways. Those in the Messianic movement wishing to heed this call to repentance should take a look at the following errors:

- Sivan 6 Pentecost. This requires the waving of the barley Wavesheaf offering on *Abib* 16. But this, in turn, prevents Yeshua from fulfilling the sign of His Messiahship given in Matt. 12:40, that He would be in the tomb 3 days and 3 nights, since there is only 1½ days between sundown on the 14th (when Yeshua was entombed) to the morning of the 16th when He had to fulfill the

Wavesheaf (if one reckons by the Pharisees). More than one teacher supporting the Sivan 6 Pentecost and ‘three days and three nights in the tomb’ has stated that Yeshua did not need to fulfill the Wavesheaf. Our answer to that is that if Yeshua was not accepted by the Father as the first of the Firstfruits, then none of us can be received or accepted by the Father either. His fulfillment of the Wavesheaf is as important as His resurrection from the dead. We must believe in both if we hope to be among the barley harvest firstfruits. Yeshua is “the firstfruits of them that slept,” as Paul so aptly put it. This is why I have endeavored to discover the year (31 A.D.) when Yeshua could be a full 3 days and 3 nights in the tomb to fulfill the sign of Jonah, and then fulfill the Wave Sheaf offering (after those 3 days and 3 nights had been completed). Thanks to powerful modern astronomy software, and the increase of knowledge in the latter days (Daniel 12:4), that search for the crucifixion year can be truly ascertained. All the details provided by secular and Gospel historical accounts can be accommodated by that year, and that year alone.

Before moving on to the next point, it is important that we correct one additional error of the rabbis, who teach that the Law was given on Sivan 6 (Exod. 19-20). But Exod. 19:1 says they arrived and camped in front of Mt. Sinai on the third new moon, *בַּחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁלִישִׁי* of Sivan (the 3rd month). The LXX says they washed clothes and sanctified themselves the next day (*επαυριον*) and the day following—i.e. till the third day of Sivan. The Law was given on that third day (Sivan 3), not on Sivan 6. Therefore, the rabbis have added to the Word here in order to arrive at a Sivan 6 date for the events of Exodus 19, apparently in order to justify their proprietary method of counting the weeks to Pentecost.

- Calling the Feast of Trumpets “Rosh Hoshanah” (the head of the year despite the fact that Exodus 12:1 calls the first day of *Aviv* in the spring the head of the year). The entire Jewish calendar is built around the *molad* of Tishri, not around *Abib* at all. Similarly, the phrase “when the year was expired” can be shown in II Chron 36:10 (KJG) to refer to Adar, at the very end of the year just before Nisan/Aviv.
- The transference of the solemnities of Passover from the evening of the 14th of Nisan to the evening of the 15th of Nisan. The Bible places it early on the 14th of Nisan. The Jewish Passover *Seder* celebrated on Nisan 15 conflates the events of the 14th, i.e. the passing over of the death angel, with the events of Nisan 15, the first leg of the Exodus from Rameses to Succoth. There is no clearer fact in the Synoptic Gospels than the fact that Yeshua ate the Passover with the Twelve early on *Nisan* 14th (Matt 26:18, Mk 14:12, Lk 22:16). Further, it is evident that the Pharisees and Jewish leaders did not eat the Passover until the 15th of *Aviv*, as per the account in John 18:28. The Torah states that the lambs were killed at dusk (“between the two evenings” in Hebrew), not mid-afternoon.

The Conclusion of the Matter

We, therefore, conclude that those who teach such things have an agenda. It is not just to make the disciples of Jesus more Torah-observant, but turn them into the sort of good Pharisees that they believe Yeshua and his disciples were. No one can be seeking to exonerate the Pharisees of complicity in the trial and execution of Yeshua, fail to cite the plain indictments against the Pharisees by Yeshua that their teaching was leaven, fail to acknowledge they were a movement not planted by the heavenly Father, and then turn the scriptures on their head by saying that Yeshua and his disciples were, for all practical purposes, Pharisees, unless they are bent on making Torah-leaning Christians into disciples of orthodox Judaism and the Oral Law. In light of the foregoing, the modern Messianic movement in some respects makes more sense when

seen as an ecumenical movement promoting acceptance of Jews, of Judaism, of the state of Israel, and of the upcoming Temple, its construction and Levitical services. However, Paul said, whatsoever you do, do it unto Yahweh. If, in our effort to keep Torah, we get side-tracked by the false purveyors of Oral Torah, we end up with the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, and will in no case enter into the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew. 5:20). Yeshua continually emphasized that his teachings were from the heavenly Father, from ABOVE, and in John 8:23 said,

“You are from beneath. I AM FROM ABOVE. You are of the world. I am not of this world.”

Too many Messianic believers seek to make Yeshua a product of His own generation and Jewish culture. In doing this they are remolding the Messiah into someone who is more acceptable to modern Judaism, but Yahweh cannot bear fruit through such prevarication.

The purpose of this exposé is not to malign Messianic leaders, or to say their writings are not profitable. Messianics have profound insights into the Hebrew roots of the Gospel. This article is a warning to separate the wheat from the chaff in their teachings and say “Beware of the leaven.”

Does any of this really matter? For most Messianic believers, the main concern is that doctrines about the Jewishness of Yeshua, the typology and importance of the Jewish festivals, the Sabbath, the unclean meat laws—are all held in common. It is true that it is important to find areas of commonality so believers can come together to worship. While it is important to respect differences of opinion, we should not be so anxious for unity that we overlook blatant disregard for scriptural truth. Errors such as the ones highlighted in this paper can, and do, lead to a misreading of the Gospel message. Like Yeshua’s opening words in the Olivet Discourse in Matt. 24, we should “Take heed that no man deceive you.” Let us hold fast the Word of Yahweh, not man.

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^[1] Samaritan religion used lunar conjunction to start the months, instead of the crescent used by Jews and Babylonians; they kept Sunday for Pentecost, agreeing with Sadducees and Karaites.

^[2] Origen, the great scholar and linguist of the early third century, taught that Simon Magus was from Samaria, and took his version of Christianity to Rome, where he gained a strong following. The Enc. Britannica 11th Edition has a very long article covering this topic and the influence of Simon Magus.

^[3] The first to point this out were the conversos in Spain who informed Catholic authorities that the Talmud had perverted the law of Moses into traditionalism, the religion of rabbinic Judaism. This led to the first systemic effort to persecute Jews in opposition to the approach which had been followed during the previous thousand years, when Church policy was based on Augustine’s advice, in essence—“leave them alone, so that their lives will be an example to Christians of the curse that accrues from rejecting Christ.”

^[4] [The Hebrew Yeshua vs.the Greek Jesus](http://www.HebrewYeshua.com) by Nehemia Gordon, Hilkiah Press, www.HebrewYeshua.com

^[5] [Galatians: A Torah-based Commentary in First Century Hebraic Context](#) by Avi ben Mordechai

^[6] Notice the passage does not say that Yahweh put them in Moses seat, but that they simply “seated themselves” in Moses seat [see the NASB], and presumed to interpret Moses to the people. “Moses seat” was also an actual stone chair in the 1st C. synagogues from which the Hassan read from the Torah.

^[7] Papias (100 A.D.), Origen (220 A.D.), Eusebius (330 A.D.), Julius Africanus, Jerome (400 A.D.), *et al.*

- ^[18] George Howard's book the *Hebrew Gospel of Matthew* compares unique variant reading in the Shem Tov Matthew with rabbinic quotes of the same verses which date to the early Middle Ages to prove that Shem Tov's source dates to the early Middle Ages. My opinion from reading Howard's translation of Shem Tov, is that there is nothing that bars Shem Tov from being a close reflection of the original Gospel as written by Matthew in Hebrew!
- ^[19] *The Hebrew Yeshua vs. the Greek Jesus*, Nehemiah Gordon. Hilkiah Press, 2005.
- ^[10] Messianic Jews would be hard-pressed to find a precedent during the Talmudic period for the practice of men wearing a yamulka. It cannot be found in the Talmud, according to Nehemia Gordon, who was raised to become a rabbi by next of kin who were themselves rabbis.
- ^[11] "A Primitive Hebrew Gospel of Matthew," *Journal of New Testament Studies*, Vol. 34, 1988, p. 63.
- ^[12] *The Jews in the Time of Jesus* by Stephen M. Wylen, page 164.
- ^[13] Although here Wylen says it was not until after 70 A.D. that men were called "rabbi." However, there are passages in the four gospels that contradict this, especially in Shem Tov's Matthew (Mt. 23:8, 10).
- ^[14] Wylen, page 164.
- ^[15] *Ibid.*, page 164
- ^[16] This commandment is not too mysterious for you, nor is it far off; it is not in heaven, that you should say, 'Who will ascend into heaven for us and bring it to us, that we may hear it and do it?'
- ^[17] Wylen, page 164
- ^[18] *The Gospel According to St. Mark*, Baker Book House, Grand Rapids, MI. (1982), p. 124.
- ^[19] *Ibid.* page 165.
- ^[20] "Rabbi" literally means "my great one", hence, "my master."
- ^[21] Who amazed the teachers of Torah at the Temple with his knowledge at the age of 12 (Lk 2:47).
- ^[22] *The Law of the Husband* may be read at www.americaspropheticdestiny.com.
- ^[23] Education Director and Editorial Board of *Messiah* magazine, Board member of First Fruits of Zion.
- ^[24] One is left scratching one's head and wondering if that was not the actual intent of the author.
- ^[25] The lawyers were experts on the Oral Law and its rabbinic interpretation.
- ^[26] The Sabbath-observant Church of God groups also depend on this text to support following the rabbinic fixed calendar.
- ^[27] Wylen, p. 71.
- ^[28] See marginal note by E. W. Bullinger in *The Companion Bible* for last phrase in Isa. 29:13.
- ^[29] Scott is a major messianic linguistic scholar who attacks Western/Greek modes of thinking that establish dualistic either/or paradigms, instead of what Scott calls Hebrew block logic.
- ^[30] The Bazaar of Caiaphas, i.e. the tables of the moneychangers, which Yeshua overthrew two, possibly three times, during two separate Passover seasons, in order to cleanse His father's house, the Temple.
- ^[31] P. 74—Edersheim.
- ^[32] King of the Jews, Pg. 70, Lancaster says "[The Sadducees] were the sect responsible for the crucifixion."
- ^[33] Webster's defines credulous as "willing to believe or trust too readily, esp. without adequate evidence."
- ^[34] The Jews in the Time of Jesus, Stephen M. Wylen, page 160.
- ^[35] The Talmud says Yesu (their derogatory term for Christ) was hung on a tree and stoned to death for the crime of blasphemy. John 10:31-33 confirms this fact. Prestigious scholar Ernest L. Martin makes a strong case that Jesus was stoned in his book *Secrets of Golgotha*, and cites other authors who knew this was true.
- ^[36] Even the NAS translation assumes that the cohort here implies Romans soldiers. Our opinion is that we are talking of the Temple police.
- ^[37] Failure to note this point, so evidently set forth at the beginning of John's book (Jn. 1:19, 24), has led to scholarly fables accusing the Apostle John of becoming anti-Semitic. He was anti-establishment, however, because the Jews' religious leadership was greedy, blind, hypocritical and murderous (just for starters).
- ^[38] Yeshua single-handedly prohibited commercial activity in the huge outer court of the Temple on no less than three occasions during His ministry, as we demonstrate in our book Chronology of the Passion Week.
- ^[39] Proverbs 29:4
- ^[40] Strange, isn't it, how that which we seek to preserve and protect by our own will, we end up losing.
- ^[41] From the Greek presbyteros, meaning an older head of household having reputation for integrity and knowledge in the local community.
- ^[42] See Acts 13:27. Also, Albert Baumgarten has shown that the Pharisees deliberately chose the term "elders" to enhance the prestige of their traditions and leaders. See page 22 of this paper.
- ^[43] Aorist tense of Greek φανερωω = to bring to light, to reveal, make known.

- [144] See *The Companion Bible*, Bullinger, marginal note on John 17:11.
- [145] See footnotes 1 & 2. Bullinger's marginal note confirms that Gr. *gnorizo* means *made known*.
- [146] Abraham and Isaac "called upon the Name of Yahweh." (Gen. 12:8, 13:4, 21:33)
- [147] Appendix #32 in Bullinger's *Companion Bible* list all 134 places where the Hebrew text was changed from 'YHWH' to 'Adonai' by the sopherim scribes. They make for an interesting study on how doctrine can affect transmission of the text. At least the sopherim noted exactly where they made the alterations. However, to justify this kind of activity, is to incur guilt under the 3rd Commandment, as well as Deut. 4:2, 12:32, Prov. 30:6—"Do not add to His Words, lest He rebuke you, and you be found a liar."
- [148] Preserved by the Jewish community in Spain during the Middle Ages.
- [149] See Howard's ground-breaking work in *The Hebrew Gospel of Matthew*, Mercer Univ. Press, 1995.
- [150] Cf. the famous rabbinic passage, *Tosefta Shabbath*, 13.5: "The margins and books of the minim (Christians) do not save." The debate then follows about what to do with heretical books that have the divine name in them. R. Jose suggests the divine name should be cut out and the rest of the document burned. R. Ishmael and R. Tarphon say the entire books including the divine name should be destroyed.
- [151] Since "no man has ever seen God the Father" (I John. 4:12), Yeshua was the Lord of the Old Testament.
- [152] This man was the highly respected High Priest at the time of the Roman destruction of Jerusalem.
- [153] www.americaspropheticdestiny.com
- [154] *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, p 894.
- [155] Chapter 7 of his book *Secrets of Golgotha*, goes into great detail about these events.
- [156] cf. Hennecke-Schneemelcher, *The New Testament Apocrypha*, vol. I, pp. 150, 153).
- [157] The odds against this being happenstance are astronomical.
- [158] Seeing how the Pharisees had just spent the last two centuries establishing the legitimacy of their authority in the face of the established authority of the Levitical priesthood.
- [159] Luke 21:6
- [160] II Thes. 2:4 says he will "sit in the Temple of God, showing himself that he is God."
- [161] See Ernest Martin's *The Temples that Jerusalem Forgot*, available from Assoc. for Scriptural Knowledge.
- [162] See Matthew Henry Notes for Luke 13:7.
- [163] *Ibid.*
- [164] The same warning applies to all the Torah-observant, sabbatarian, Church of God organizations who cannot think their way out of the rabbinic Jewish calendar and rabbinic interpretations of the holy days.
- [165] Luke 17:6--*Complete Jewish Bible*, David A. Stern.
- [166] A *minhag* is new law based on a custom or precedent practiced by the majority over several generations.
- [167] Definition taken from Vine's *Expository Dictionary of Old Testament and Testament Words*, p. 252.
- [168] The book of Numbers has a law of jealousy where the wife has to *uncover her head* when she drinks the water mixed with dust from the Temple to test her fidelity. In Genesis 24 Rebecca covers her head when coming into the presence of Isaac, her betrothed.
- [169] *Harvard Theological Review* 80:1 (1987).
- [170] Running parallel, or alongside the law of Moses, and competing with it for people's obedience.
- [171] Ant. 13.10.6 § 298.
- [172] 1 QH 4 7, 11
- [173] The Pharisaic Paradosis, HTR 80:1, p. 71.
- [174] It is to that period of Jewish history we must look for the origin of this terminology.
- [175] *Ibid.* page 74
- [176] Ant. 13.3.4 § 78
- [177] Elias Bickerman, *Studies in Jewish and Christian History*, p. 259-69.
- [178] A.I. Baumgarten, "The Pharisaic Paradosis", *Harvard Theological Review* (1987), p. 72
- [179] Strong arguments could be brought forward at this point that Essene, Samaritan (and later Herodian) groups were leveling similar charges against the Pharisaic 'laws' as early as the 2nd Century B.C.
- [180] *Ibid.*, p. 73.
- [181] *Ibid.*, see also Wylen, p. 148.
- [182] Baumgarten, *ibid.*, p. 74.
- [183] The rabbis who compiled the Babylonian Talmud were concentrated around their academies in Baghdad.
- [184] Wylen, *op cit.*, p. 51.
- [185] The Greek word *parakletos* can mean comforter or counselor.