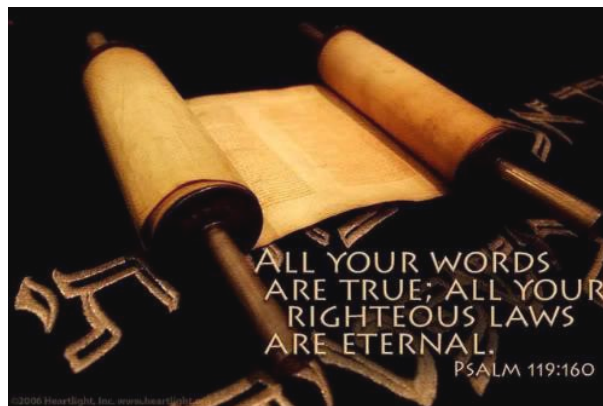


Torah Related Studies for Disciples of Yeshua

*If you love Me...keep My commandments
John 14:15*



by
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Session One

The Torah of Adonai – Psalm 19:7–11



Introduction: The Overall Structure of the Psalm

The Psalm divides nicely into three sections:

- Verses 1–6: The Revelation of God through observing His created world
- Verses 7–11: The Revelation of God in His written word (the Torah)
- Verses 12–14: The Application of God’s revelation to the life of the believer

Section 1: The Glory of God is revealed in His creation

- The vast expanse of the heavens gives witness to all mankind
- The heavenly bodies (sun, moon, stars) consistently regulate time in the universe
- The greatness of the luminaries reveals the power of God

Section 2: The Salvation of God is revealed in His inspired word (the Torah – God’s teaching)

- The Torah touches every aspect of life
- The Torah gives God’s way of regulating life as He ordained it
- The majesty of the Torah reveals the love of God

Section 3: The child of God is known by his or her willingness to apply the Torah to life

- The child of God is warned about that which would bring trouble
- The child of God is rewarded when he or she obeys God’s Torah
- The child of God learns the joy of forgiveness from God’s Torah
- The child of God grows in love for God as he or she learns of God in the Torah

The Heart of the Psalm: The Value of God’s Torah (Teaching) Verses 7–11

The poetic parallelism of these verses is quite obvious. In each of the first four lines, a statement is made regarding the *character* of God’s Torah, and then its *effect* in the life of a child of God.

Characteristic of the Torah	Effect of the Torah Upon the Individual
The Torah of the LORD is perfect	restores the soul
The Testimony of the LORD is sure	makes the simple wise
The Precepts of the LORD are right	make the heart rejoice
The Commandment of the LORD is pure	enlightens the eyes

The next four lines of this section of the Psalm establish four more *characteristics* of the Torah followed by four statements regarding the *value* of the Torah:

Characteristic of the Torah	Value of the Torah
The Fear of the LORD is clean	It is eternal (enduring forever)
The Judgments of the LORD are true	It is completely righteous (righteous altogether)
The Torah is more desirable than gold	It has extreme value (more than fine gold)
The Torah is pleasurable (sweeter than honey)	It offers full satisfaction (sweeter than even the best part of the honeycomb)

We will understand the tremendous message of this Psalm regarding the Torah, if look more closely at each of the Hebrew terms found in the section under study. First, we should note that the Psalmist uses a number of different terms when he speaks of the Torah:

English	Hebrew	Meaning
Torah (Law)	תּוֹרָה (<i>torah</i>)	from the root יָרָה, “to point out,” “to teach,” “instruction”
Testimony	עֵדוּת (<i>‘eidut</i>)	meaning “witness,” thus, that which gives witness to God’s truth
Precepts	פְּקֻדִּים (<i>pikudim</i>)	meaning “instructions, proper procedures”
Commandment	מִצְוָה (<i>mitzvah</i>)	meaning “commandment,” “commission to a specific task”
Fear	יִרְאַה (<i>yir’ah</i>)	meaning “fear,” “reverence,” “respect,” “awe”
Judgments	מִשְׁפָּטִים (<i>mishpatim</i>)	meaning “law,” “legal judgment,” what is right or proper in contrast to what is unlawful or improper

Each of these terms are used to identify the Torah of the LORD, and as such, each of the terms gives us additional insight into the nature of the Torah. Thus, the Torah of God is:

- **His direct Teaching.** In His mercy He has given us His instructions for living. Since He is our Creator, He knows our weaknesses, and He knows what is best for us. By giving us His Torah, He has provided us with instructions so that we can live life to the fullest, because we know what is right and what is wrong.
- **A Witness of God’s own character.** Since the Torah gives to us God’s own teaching, it also reveals to us the person and nature of God Himself. If we want to know God, we will study and obey His Torah.
- **Procedures for every aspect of life.** God created us to live upon this earth. Through His Torah, we are given principles that work in life. If we follow His instructions, we can expect them to work for His glory and our good.
- **Commandment:** By knowing and obeying God’s commandment, we know who He is, who we are in relationship to Him, and what our purpose is in life (i.e., to love God and to love our neighbor).
- **The way to demonstrate a true Fear of God:** The Torah has no value for those who have no relationship with God. For those who are not bound by covenant to the One Who gave the Torah, it is considered a burden or restricting one’s freedom. To those who have come to fear God, the Torah is received as the loving instruction of a Father Who intends to bless us.

- God's **Judgments** regarding what is right and what is wrong: we are not left to determine a standard of what is proper or improper; what is legal or illegal; what is right or wrong. God has revealed to us His standards for righteous living.

Thus, the very terms used by the Psalmist to refer to the Torah reveal the essential nature of the Torah.

The Psalmist also adds additional characteristics of the Torah to more fully explain its nature:

English	Hebrew	Meaning
Perfect	תָּמִים, <i>tamiym</i>	“complete,” “without fault” (same word used of sacrificial animals which were to be “without blemish”), “impeccable,” “honest”
Sure	אָמֵן, <i>'aman</i>	“that which endures,” “steadfast,” “immovable,” “permanent,” “reliable,” “faithful,” that which can always be trusted
Right	יָשָׁר, <i>yashar</i>	“straight,” “proper,” “upright,” “just,” turning neither to the right or to the left; always on track
Pure	בָּר, <i>bar</i>	“without admixture,” “unsoiled,” “pristine”

From these words we learn much about God's Torah:

- We never need fear that God's Torah will lead us in a harmful path. Everything that God has given to us in His instructions is good for us. Every part of the Torah comes from God Who is Himself “perfect.”
- God's Torah is not temporary, or applicable only for a period of time. It “endures forever,” because it is the eternal word of the Eternal One. It is “permanent” and “steadfast” – “immovable.” God's instructions work in all times, for all people, in all cultures. It doesn't change. We can always count on it to be the same.
- Times change, and cultures change, but mankind's basic nature remains the same. Thus, God's Torah is always on track—it is always “right” because God gave the Torah to match the needs of His people.
- We don't need to analyze the Torah to pick what is “good” and avoid what is “bad.” The Torah only contains what is “pure” and therefore good for us. We dare not lean on our own understanding. Rather, in all our ways, when we acknowledge His way, we may trust that it is right.

But the Psalmist also gives additional descriptions to describe how the Torah assists the believer. These are given in four phrases which may be grouped (through poetic parallelism) into two:

English	Hebrew	Meaning
restoring the soul	שׁוּב, <i>shuv</i> , “return;” נֶפֶשׁ, <i>nefesh</i> , “soul”	When we get off track, the Torah is a means of pointing us back to God, to His ways, and to His Messiah.
makes the simple wise	חָכָם, <i>chakam</i> , (hif) “make wise” פֶּתִי, <i>petiy</i> , “young,” “naive”	The Torah is a source of great wisdom, because it was given to us by the all-wise, all-knowing One.
makes the heart rejoice	שָׂמַח, <i>samach</i> , “rejoice,” “happy” לֵב, <i>leiv</i> , “heart,” “inner self”	When we walk in the ways of Torah, we discover the true joy of life, lived in the presence of God.
enlightens the eyes	אָר, <i>'avar</i> , “be light,” “make light” עֵין, <i>'ayin</i> , “eye”	The Torah gives us insight into the difficult decisions of life. Its precepts help us make the right decisions.

Once we come to realize that the Torah is the self-revelation of the unchanging, eternal God, we likewise appreciate its great value and worth. The Psalmist gives four more descriptions of the Torah that affirm its true value:

English	Hebrew	Meaning
Clean	טָהוֹר, <i>tahor</i> , “ceremonially clean”	The Torah is perfectly suited for those who desire to please God; it contains His way of service/worship
True	אֱמֶת, <i>'emet</i> , “trustworthy,” “constant,” “faithful”	The Torah remains the same from day to day, and from generation to generation
Desirable	חֵמֶד, “to treasure something”	When one realizes the value of Torah, it becomes one’s greatest treasure
Sweet	מְתוֹק, “sweet,” “pleasant”	To those who draw close to God, the Torah is pleasing; it satisfies one’s spiritual longing

To these, the Psalmist adds two more descriptions of the Torah in terms of its existence within God’s universe:

English	Hebrew	Meaning
Endures forever	עוֹמֶדֶת לְעֶד, <i>'omedet la'ad</i>	The Torah, as the Torah, remains or “stands” forever
Righteous altogether	צַדִּיק יַחְדָּו, <i>tzad'qu yachdaiv</i>	The Torah is not self-contradictory. All of its parts are perfectly woven together to present a righteous way of living

These descriptions of the Torah extol its functionality within the lives of God’s chosen people. Describing the Torah as “ceremonially clean” emphasizes its use in the worship of God. In the same way that only a “clean” animal could be offered as a sacrifice, so the Torah presents itself as the acceptable norm or *halachah* for those who wish to “draw near” to the Almighty. But it is also noteworthy that the Psalmist combines “endures forever” with his description of the Torah as “ceremonially clean.” This teaches us that the Torah endures or remains the pattern of life for the righteous throughout all the generations of God’s people. This concept corresponds to Yeshua’s words in Matt 5:17–20, in which He teaches the eternal nature of the Torah.

Furthermore, when the Psalmist describes the Torah as “true” (אֱמֶת, *'emet*), it emphasizes the covenant nature of the Torah. *'emet* is often combined with the Hebrew word חֶסֶד (*chesed*, “lovingkindness”) to denote “covenant faithfulness” and is found in covenant contexts (cf. Gen. 24:27, 49; 47:29; Ps 89:14). God gave the Torah as a covenant to Israel, and as such, He remains faithful to it as an enduring covenant. To suggest that the Torah has been abolished or rendered ineffective is likewise to suggest that God has broken His covenant with Israel. This would impugn His faithfulness.

But our Psalm teaches just the opposite. The Psalmist combines “righteous altogether” with his description of the Torah as “true.” By this he means that as a single unit, God maintains the Torah as His covenant with Israel and He does so because of His righteousness. So the foundation of the enduring

value of the Torah is the very righteous nature of the Almighty. To teach that the Torah has been abolished impugns the righteousness of God.

Finally, having described the Torah in all of its eternal attributes, the Psalmist relates how God's people view the Torah. First, he describes it as a "treasure" of great value, worth more than the finest gold. Accepting the Torah as the eternal revelation of God's very character, and as the loving instruction of our King, we realize that it is far more valuable than any material treasures we may possess. For it is in following the righteous ways of God's instructions that we are able to enjoy to the fullest those earthly possessions also given to us by the Almighty.

Secondly, as we come to appreciate the Torah as a great treasure, we realize how much it satisfies our deepest longings, for it reveals to us the manner in which God desires to dwell with us—it constantly points us to His Messiah, and the way of salvation He has secured for His people. When we feed upon the Torah, we find out how sweet it really is. This parallels how the Psalmist describes the function of the Torah in our personal lives. It "restores the soul," meaning that on the path of life, the Torah constantly teaches and reminds us of God's ways. Thus, it causes us to return our thinking back to align with God's thoughts. It gives instruction to us, so that where we are ignorant or naive, it instructs us in God's way of living. In so doing, it causes the heart to rejoice. Apart from God's light, we wander in the darkness—we lose our way. But when the light of the Torah shines forth, we are able to find our way back to Him, and in so doing, we experience genuine joy and contentment. "In Your light (Torah), we see light" (Ps 36:9).

With these truths about the Torah in mind, the Psalmist concludes this Psalm with a recognition of his own weakness, and the manner in which the divine revelation of God assists and guides him. He is "warned" (זָהָר, *zahar*) about those things that would be harmful, or would cause him to act contrary to God's will. He notes that in keeping them there is "great reward" (עֲקֵב רַב, *'eigev rav*). "Reward" here may have the sense of "wages," or what one receives at the end of a day's labors. The Psalmist views his life as a journey, and he realizes that the Torah gives him the way to walk, and promises to bring him to his desired destination. As such, the Torah guides him to the place of his final "reward."

Yet the Psalmist also recognizes his own weakness. Even though he possesses the very instructions of God in the Torah, he knows that he doesn't know it perfectly, nor is he able to follow it perfectly. As such, he recognizes that he is still left to God's mercies and forgiveness. He pleads for God's help in acquitting him from "hidden" things, that is, those things that he is unaware of because of his lack of understanding. In his weakness, he asks for God's mercy. But he also requests that God should keep him from "presumptuous sins," meaning sins that flow from a heart of pride. Even though the Psalmist has the Torah, he recognizes his own weakness to keep it as he desires.

He therefore concludes the Psalm with a pronouncement of his faith in God as he humbly approaches Him as Fortress (Rock) and Redeemer: "Let the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in Your sight, O LORD, my rock and my Redeemer." In understanding the Torah for what it truly is, the Psalmist is brought back to a full reliance upon God as the One Who protects and redeems. The Psalmist in no way suggests that he could earn his own righteousness, or somehow secure his own salvation before God. The Torah has taught him this, for it teaches the need for sacrifice (shedding of blood) in the face of transgressions. Therefore, receiving the Torah as the treasure of God's own revelation, he seeks to



walk in its ways as an expression of his love for God, while at the same time pleading for God's help and mercies in the view of his own weaknesses.

Summary

Expanded Paraphrase as Commentary: Psalm 19:7–11

The Instructions for living righteously that God has given us are completely without defect, and as result, they bring us back onto the path of right living when we have strayed or found ourselves lost.

As we grow and mature in our relationship with God,

His Instructions for living are the source of true knowledge.

God has given witness of Himself to us in His Instructions for living,

and thus these Instructions are steadfast, reliable, and unchanging,

because God Himself is steadfast, reliable, and unchanging.

This means that His Instructions for living meet the genuine needs of mankind

from generation to generation, in every culture, and in every circumstance.

In God's Instructions for living, we find His specific teaching and procedures for all issues of life,

and these procedures, when followed, bring success in the various issues we face in our lives.

As a result, when we follow what God has given us in His Instructions for life,

we find true happiness and joy.

God's Instructions for life tell us what we should do, and what we should not do.

They offer to us wisdom and instruction that we otherwise would never know.

God's Instructions for living teach us about God Himself,

and cause us to marvel at His greatness,

forming within our own hearts a deep fear and respect for His majesty.

We come to recognize in these Instructions for living

the manner in which we may have close and enduring fellowship with Him.

In fact, in these Instructions for living, we come to appreciate the covenant relationship we have with Him.

We see in them God's way of looking at things,

and we realize that these Instructions for living are a complete revelation of what it means to live righteously.

When we realize how precious His Instructions for life are,

we recognize that they are more valuable to us than anything else we possess.

Moreover, we come to love and desire His Instructions for life

because they are sweet like honey.

They are not a burden whatsoever,

but we long to feed on them more and more.

Session Two

What is the New Covenant and Does It Replace the Torah?

It has been the a standard teaching throughout the centuries of the Christian Church that the New Covenant, established by Yeshua's death and resurrection, has replaced the Torah. This teaching has also resulted in dividing the Scriptures into two parts, usually labelled the "Old Testament" and the "New Testament," which is just another way of saying "Old Covenant" and "New Covenant." Accordingly, the "New Testament" forms the primary Scriptures for the believer in our times, with the "Old Testament" only providing background and illustration for what the "New Testament" explicitly teaches. It is not uncommon to hear the slogan: "the New is in the Old contained; the Old is by the New explained." As a result, many Christians would hold the position that they are required to obey what the "New Testament" teaches, and that the requirements of the "Old Testament" are no longer applicable, but were for a bygone era.

But is this an accurate understanding of the New Covenant? Is the New Covenant a replacement for the Tanach (the Torah, Prophets, and Writings)? If we honestly intend to seek a biblical answer to this question, we must study what the Bible itself says about the New Covenant. The only time the Tanach speaks of the New Covenant is in Jeremiah 31:31–34:

31 "Behold, days are coming," declares the LORD, "when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah,
32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them," declares the LORD.
33 "But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days," declares the LORD, "I will put My Torah within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people.
34 "They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them," declares the LORD, "for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more."

The New Covenant is made with the House of Israel and the House of Judah

- from Jeremiah's perspective, the New Covenant was still future
- the New Covenant is national in its scope: it pertains to the physical offspring of Jacob and to those from the nations who have joined her through faith in her Messiah

The New Covenant would be enacted at a time when Judah and Israel are reunited

- v. 33 – "This is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel" – whereas at first Jeremiah



names both the house of Judah and the house of Israel, he concludes by naming only the house of Israel. By this we understand that he saw the reuniting of Judah and Israel into a single nation once again.

The New Covenant will be different than the covenant enacted at Sinai

- v. 32 – “not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke...”
- as the next verses show, however, the contrast is not in the covenant itself, but in the manner in which Israel receives the covenant. The nation rebelled against the covenant given at Sinai, but the New Covenant will be fully received and embraced by the nation of Israel.
- As far as God is concerned, the covenant He made with Israel at Sinai is eternal (Ex 31:16; Lev 24:8). The nation herself may be unfaithful, and forfeit the blessings of the covenant, but the covenant itself remains intact because of God’s promise.

The New Covenant will be different because it will be written on the heart of Israel

- v. 33 – “I will put My Torah within them and on their heart I will write it...”
- God does not have two Torahs! When He refers to “My Torah,” He means the eternal revelation He gave to Moses on Mt. Sinai. The same Torah against which Israel rebelled will be the Torah that is written upon her heart, the evidence of her new heart will be that she will obey God’s statutes and ordinances.
- Only God can change the heart, and He promises to do so for Israel. We read in Ezekiel a passage with a number of similarities to the Jeremiah prophecy of the New Covenant:

Ezekiel 11:17 “Therefore say, ‘Thus says the Lord GOD, “I will gather you from the peoples and assemble you out of the countries among which you have been scattered, and I will give you the land of Israel.”’
 18 “When they come there, they will remove all its detestable things and all its abominations from it. 19 “And I will give them one heart, and put a new spirit within them. And I will take the heart of stone out of their flesh and give them a heart of flesh, 20 that they may walk in My statutes and keep My ordinances and do them. Then they will be My people, and I shall be their God.

The New Covenant will be different because her obedience to God will be on a national scale

- v. 34 – “...for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them”
- to “know the LORD” does not mean to “know about the LORD,” but to have close and intimate fellowship with Him in the context of a covenant. Note that God portrays His relationship with Israel as that of a marriage covenant: v. 32, “I was a husband to them.”

The New Covenant will be based upon God forgiving Israel of her sin

- v. 34 – “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”
- Forgiveness of sin is only possible through the eternal sacrifice of Yeshua: Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.” Acts 10:43 “Of Him all the prophets bear witness that through His name everyone who believes in Him receives forgiveness of sins.” Heb. 9:22 “And according to the Torah, almost all things are cleansed with blood, and without shedding of blood there is no forgiveness.”
- Thus, the New Covenant will be fulfilled in Israel at a time when as a nation, she turns to Yeshua in faith, and receives through Him forgiveness of sin.

This means that the New Covenant is not yet fulfilled

- the dispersed people of Israel have not yet been reunited as a single nation
- Israel, as a nation, has not yet evidenced an obedience to God in faithfulness
- Israel, as a nation, has not yet turned to Yeshua as the true Messiah, in order to receive forgiveness of sins

The characteristics of the New Covenant are evident in the lives of all true believers

- In every generation, God has proven His faithfulness to His promises by preserving a remnant of His people: Rom. 9:27 ‘Isaiah cries out concerning Israel, “Though the number of the sons of Israel be like the sand of the sea, it is the remnant that will be saved”’
- This remnant is comprised of both Jews and non-Jews whom God has drawn to Himself, and who have been saved by faith in Yeshua.
- All of the remnant have the Torah written on their hearts, desire to be faithful to God, and seek to obey Him by walking in His ways.
- As such, the remnant comprises the first fruits of the eventual harvest. The remnant participates in the realities of the New Covenant in anticipation of its future fulfillment in the nation of Israel.

The New Covenant does not replace the Torah, it establishes the Torah

- Rom. 3:31 Do we then nullify the Torah through faith? May it never be! On the contrary, we establish the Torah.
- The New Covenant anticipates the time when the regathered nation of Israel is given a new heart upon which is written the Torah. This will be the result of Israel’s repentance and faith in her Messiah, Yeshua.
- In every generation there has existed, and exists today, a remnant of believers who evidence the genuine characteristics of the New Covenant: faithfulness to God through the Torah that is written on their hearts, having had their sins forgiven through faith in Yeshua.
- The remnant exists as the first fruits of the eventually final harvest, that is, the full salvation of Israel.

- As followers of Yeshua, we participate in the New Covenant of which He is the mediator
- Therefore, our lives should be characterized by obedience to the Torah that has been written on our hearts.
- As believers in Yeshua, and thus New Covenant members, we are part of the faithful remnant of Israel, having been baptized into the same “body” by the same Spirit.

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Session Three

Has God's Way of Salvation Always Been the Same?

Introduction

It is not uncommon to find the teaching that before the coming of Yeshua, people were saved by keeping the Law, while after the death and resurrection of Yeshua, salvation was offered as a gift of faith. But this way of thinking 1) misunderstands what salvation is in the first place, and 2) fails to reckon with the clear teaching of the Scripture. When we understand God's way of salvation as given to us in the Scriptures, we will see that God has always saved sinners as matter of His sovereign grace, based upon the sacrifice of Yeshua as payment for sin, applied to the sinner through faith.

Mankind's Dilemma: The Holiness of God and Mankind's Sin

- The high cost of our salvation (covenant fellowship with God) results from God's holiness
 - God never changes: His attributes are perfect and infinite
 - This means His holiness is infinite and eternal
- Isaiah 6:1–7 as a picture of God's holiness and His method of salvation

1 In the year of King Uzziah's death I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and exalted, with the train of His robe filling the temple. 2 Seraphim stood above Him, each having six wings: with two he covered his face, and with two he covered his feet, and with two he flew. 3 And one called out to another and said, "Holy, Holy, Holy, is the LORD of hosts, The whole earth is full of His glory." 4 And the foundations of the thresholds trembled at the voice of him who called out, while the temple was filling with smoke. 5 Then I said, "Woe is me, for I am ruined! Because I am a man of unclean lips, And I live among a people of unclean lips; For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts."

- Isaiah's vision of the Almighty
 - He is the Master (Lord) of His people [note that the vision is cast within the Temple]
 - He is the King: "sitting on His throne" = Ark of the Covenant (cf. Ps 80:1, "enthroned upon the cherubim;" also Is 37:16).
 - He is majestic: "high and lifted up"
 - He is unapproachable
 - "smoke filled the Temple" = incense
 - Seraphim covered their faces (essence of one's being) and feet (creaturely attributes)

- He is infinitely holy and glorious:
 - “Holy, holy, holy”
 - “the whole earth is filled with His glory”
- When Isaiah saw the glory of God, he immediately recognized his own sinfulness
 - “woe is me, surely I am destroyed” (דָּמָה, *damah*, “to be silent, cease to exist”)
 - “I am a man of unclean lips” = my whole inner being is unclean, cf. James 3:1ff)
 - “I dwell among people of unclean lips” = all of mankind is essentially unclean
 - the reason Isaiah recognized that he had no hope was that he had seen God as infinitely holy:

“For my eyes have seen the King, the LORD of hosts.”
- **Conclusion: Sinners cannot dwell in the presence of the Almighty**
- God’s remedy for Isaiah’s hopeless condition (Is 6:6–7):

6 Then one of the seraphim flew to me with a burning coal in his hand, which he had taken from the altar with tongs. 7 He touched my mouth with it and said, “Behold, this has touched your lips; and your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven.”

- burning coal taken from the altar = altar of incense. This is a picture of Yeshua’s intercession
- touched to the lips of Isaiah to purify his sin: “your iniquity is taken away and your sin is forgiven” (literally, “your sin is atoned for,” תְּכַפֵּר, *techupar*, from כָּפַר, *kipper*, “to atone”)
- only God’s provision of atonement allowed Isaiah to remain in His presence
- Important principles illustrated by this passage
 - God’s holiness requires payment for sin: “your iniquity is taken away.” The coal of the Altar of Incense stands for the final work of Yeshua in His role as priest. He intercedes for us on the basis of His death, as payment for sin.
 - God cannot simply negate sin because His justice demands payment for sin (atonement)
 - God’s method of forgiving sinners is not merely one choice out of many possibilities
 - God’s method of forgiving sinners flows from the infinite nature of His own character
 - In order for God to remain holy and to have fellowship with sinners, the penalty for their sin must be paid, and they must be made holy.
- **Conclusion: God alone is able to provide a remedy for sin**

What is Sin?

- Sin is an attempt to diminish God’s glory: “all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God” (Rom 3:23)
 - mankind’s created purpose is to bring God glory, because we were created in His image



- mankind's rebellion against God attempts to:
 - make God out to be less than He truly is (blasphemy)
 - indicate that He is only one of many gods (idolatry)
- Since God is infinitely holy, a transgression against Him is an infinite transgression
 - sinful mankind has marred the image of God that he carries. As such, he is giving the wrong message about God
 - sinful mankind, failing to fulfill his created role of God's image-bearer, gives forth the message that God has failed as the Creator
- **Conclusion: mankind is helpless to affect his own forgiveness, since he could never offer an infinite payment for his sin**

Only an Infinite Atonement Could Pay for an Infinite Transgression

- Only Messiah Yeshua is able to offer an infinite atonement because He alone is eternal and infinitely holy
 - Messiah, the unblemished Lamb of God, Is 53:9 –

His grave was assigned with wicked men, yet He was with a rich man in His death, because He had done no violence, ***nor was there any deceit in His mouth.***

- “nor was there any deceit in His mouth” – this is exactly opposite of how Isaiah describes himself in the vision of God's glory. Isaiah and the people had “unclean lips.”
- this description of the Messiah is given to indicate that He is without sin
- every sacrifice brought into the Tabernacle and Temple was to be without blemish. This foreshadowed the sinless character of the Messiah Who would offer Himself as our sacrifice or payment for sin

1Pet. 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Messiah. 20 For He was foreknown before the foundation of the world, but has appeared in these last times for the sake of you 21 who through Him are believers in God, who raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory, so that your faith and hope are in God.

- **Conclusion: only Yeshua's death could pay the penalty for sin, and thus salvation is possible only through Him**

If Yeshua is the only way for salvation, how were people saved before He came?

- the promise of Messiah was revealed from the beginning (Gen 3:15)
- God opened the eyes of some to understand that the Messiah would come to make atonement for their sins, and He gave them faith to believe in Him. Examples are:
 - Abraham: Gen 15:6; John 8:56 – “Abraham longed to see My day, and he saw it!”
Paul teaches that Abraham was justified by faith, the same way we are justified (Rom 4:10ff)
 - Moses: Hebrews 11:24–26 – “considering the reproach of Messiah greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was looking to the reward.”
 - David: Acts 2:22ff – “...he looked ahead and spoke of the resurrection of the Messiah”
Paul uses David as an example of someone who had his sins forgiven by faith in Yeshua (Rom 4:6–8).
 - Yeshua taught that the Torah and Prophets spoke of Him as the Savior, Lk 24:25–27
 - Acts 4:12, “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”
- **Conclusion: all who were saved before Yeshua’s coming put their faith in the coming Messiah**

Did the sacrifices in the Tabernacle and Temple atone for sin?

Lev. 4:26 ‘All its fat he shall offer up in smoke on the altar as in the case of the fat of the sacrifice of peace offerings. Thus the priest shall make atonement for him in regard to his sin, and he will be forgiven.

- But if the bringing of sacrifices actually atoned for sin, why would Isaiah tell the Israelites to stop bringing their sacrifices?

Is. 1:13 “Bring your worthless offerings no longer, incense is an abomination to Me. New moon and sabbath, the calling of assemblies — I cannot endure iniquity and the solemn assembly.

- It was not the sacrifice itself that brought about atonement for sin, but the faith of the one who brought the sacrifice. Since the people of Israel during Isaiah’s time were only “going through the motions” when they brought sacrifices, the prophet instructs them to stop.
- The prophet’s answer for what the people *should* do is found in the following verses:

Is. 1:16 “Wash yourselves, make yourselves clean; Remove the evil of your deeds from My sight. Cease to do evil, 17 Learn to do good; Seek justice, Reprove the ruthless, Defend the orphan, Plead for the widow.

- “Wash yourselves” = seek genuine repentance = a change of heart
- “remove evil” = confession of sin = accepting God’s definition of sin & His way of forgiveness
- “seek justice” = obedience = the fruit of genuine faith

If sacrifices could have secured eternal salvation, there would have been no need for Yeshua’s death

- Yet Isaiah makes it clear that the death of the Messiah was necessary in order to atone for sin:

But He was pierced through for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; The chastening for our well-being fell upon Him, and by His scourging we are healed. . . .
 . . . He was cut off out of the land of the living for the transgression of my people, to whom the stroke was due?
 . . . By His knowledge the Righteous One, My Servant, will justify the many, as He will bear their iniquities.
 . . . Yet He Himself bore the sin of many, and interceded for the transgressors. Isaiah 53

- Thus, sacrifices in the Tabernacle and Temple were divinely appointed “sign posts” pointing to God’s method of forgiving sins. They pointed forward to the coming Messiah Who would be the “Lamb of God.” Yeshua as the promised Suffering Servant was the object of faith for those who truly believed.
- **Conclusion: it was necessary for Yeshua to come and offer Himself as the Lamb of God, because only His death could satisfy the justice of God in order to declare sinners righteous**

Heb 10:4 For it is impossible for the blood of bulls and goats to take away sins.

Even the ancient Rabbis realized and taught that the sacrifices themselves were not sufficient

But one of them, Caiaphas, who was high priest that year, said to them, “You know nothing at all, nor do you take into account that it is expedient for you that one man die for the people, and that the whole nation not perish.” . . . he prophesied that Yeshua was going to die for the nation, and not for the nation only, but in order that He might also gather together into one the children of God who are scattered abroad. John 11:49–52

“When Israel offer up the daily sacrifices on the altar . . . the Holy One, blessed be He, remembers the binding of Isaac. (Mid. Rab. *Leviticus* 2.11)
 “On this day” (i.e., day of atonement, Lev 16:30) “on the mountain of the Lord, Isaac’s ashes shall be seen, heaped up and standing for atonement. *Rashi* (on Gen 22:14).
 “The Rabbis said: His name (Messiah’s name) is ‘the leper scholar,’ as it is written, Surely he hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted” (b.Sanhedrin 98b)

- God is eternally and infinitely holy. As such, He will not forgive sins without payment.
- Sin is an infinite transgression against God. It's penalty, then, is also infinite.
- Since mankind is finite, there would never be a way for anyone to pay for their sins
- This means that the only way to have one's sins forgiven is through the infinite sacrifice of Yeshua
- Thus, all who are saved, in every era, have forgiveness of sins because of Yeshua's sacrifice
- This means that all who are saved have placed their faith in the Messiah
- There has only and always been one way of salvation for sinners: through faith in Messiah Yeshua

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Session Four

Is the Torah Divided (Moral, Ceremonial, Civil)?

Introduction

From the time of the 2nd Century CE, and the division of the Synagogue and emerging Christian Church, the issue of the Torah was raised. How could the newly formed Christian Church distinguish herself from the Synagogue out of which she had her origins, if she continued to live out the Torah? The Sabbath, festivals, food laws, and other Torah directives made the newly formed Christian Church look far too much like the Synagogue. Thus began the move to distinguish those parts of the Torah that the Church felt were enduring, and those that no longer had relevance for Christians.

This was done in a number of ways. In some cases, the emerging Christian Church of the 2nd and 3rd Centuries allegorized parts of the Torah. For instance, the Sabbath was no longer viewed as an actual day of the week that was to be set apart from the other days of work, but as fulfilled in the “spiritual rest in Christ.” The food laws were transformed into teaching about “spiritual food,” that is, what one believed rather than what one actually ate. In time, the Christian Church adopted the view that the “New Testament” formed the only rule for the life of a Christian, and that the “New Testament” emphasized the moral laws of the Torah to the exclusion of the so-called ceremonial and civil aspects.

Examples in the Church Creeds

Although the Law given from God by Moses, as touching Ceremonies and Rites, do not bind Christian men, nor the Civil precepts thereof ought of necessity to be received in any commonwealth; yet notwithstanding, no Christian man whatsoever is free from the obedience of the Commandments which are called Moral.

The Thirty-Nine Articles (1563 CE)

19.3. Besides this law, commonly called moral, God was pleased to give to the people of Israel, as a church under age, ceremonial laws, containing several typical ordinances, partly of worship, prefiguring Christ, His graces, actions, sufferings, and benefits; and partly, holding forth divers instructions of moral duties. All which ceremonial laws are now abrogated, under the New Testament.

20.1 But, under the New Testament, the liberty of Christians is further enlarged, in their freedom from the yoke of the ceremonial law, to which the Jewish Church was subjected...

Westminster Confession of Faith (1646 CE)

Definitions and examples of how the Torah is often divided

- **Moral:** those aspects of the Torah that govern one's ethical decisions and actions
 - usually considered to be summed up in the Ten Commandments
 - prohibition against stealing, sexual sins, murder, false witness, rebellion against authority, etc.
- **Ceremonial:** those aspects of the Torah that deal with modes and methods of worship
 - the sacrificial system in the Tabernacle or Temple
 - ceremonial clean and unclean
 - the Appointed Times (festivals)
 - tzitzit, mezzuzah, tefillin, and other symbols
 - food laws
- **Civil:** laws governing the Israelite society in general
 - property laws (sabbatical year [*sh^emitta*]; Jubilee [*yovel*])
 - laws relating to servants; indentured slaves; debts; ownership of property
 - marriage laws; divorce laws
 - laws relating to contracts; oaths

How this perspective is taught and applied by some Christian teachers

- the “Moral Law” is binding for all times and for all people
 - the “Moral Law” defines what is sin
 - the “Moral Law” remains the standard of life for Christians
 - the “Moral Law” is reiterated in the “New Testament” and thus is to be obeyed
- the “Ceremonial and Civil Law” no longer has application to Christians
 - these laws have been replaced by the teachings of Yeshua and His Apostles
 - these laws were only temporary, as a foreshadow of the “better” teaching of Yeshua
 - these laws may contain enduring *principles*, but they have been replaced
- the “Ceremonial and Civil Law” may have some application for Jewish people
 - these aspects of the Torah have become cultural “markers” of the Jewish people, to distinguish them from other people groups
 - these are not binding upon the Jewish people, however, but are valuable only for Jewish identity
 - Thus, the “Ceremonial and Civil Laws” are not a matter of *obedience* but of *culture*

Evaluating this teaching: is this what the Scriptures teach?

- The Torah (God’s teaching) is presented in the Scriptures as a single whole, not as divided into various parts. Note Exodus 22:19–29 as an example:

Moral: 19 “Whoever lies with an animal shall surely be put to death. 20 “He who sacrifices to any god, other than to the LORD alone, shall be utterly destroyed. 21 “You shall not wrong a stranger or oppress him, for you were strangers in the land of Egypt. 22 “You shall not afflict any widow or orphan. 23 “If you afflict him at all, and if he does cry out to Me, I will surely hear his cry; 24 and My anger will be kindled, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall become widows and your children fatherless.

Civil: 25 “If you lend money to My people, to the poor among you, you are not to act as a creditor to him; you shall not charge him interest. 26 “If you ever take your neighbor’s cloak as a pledge, you are to return it to him before the sun sets, 27 for that is his only covering; it is his cloak for his body. What else shall he sleep in? And it shall come about that when he cries out to Me, I will hear him, for I am gracious.

Moral: 28 “You shall not curse God, nor curse a ruler of your people.

Ceremonial: 29 “You shall not delay the offering from your harvest and your vintage. The firstborn of your sons you shall give to Me.

- the Torah is given as a combination of laws and statutes that govern all aspects of life
- it is impossible to entirely distinguish between Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil
 - taking a person’s cloak as a pledge involves acting in a moral way within the transaction. A creditor who refuses to return the cloak in accordance with the agreement has committed a moral transgression
 - the offering of the first fruits is considered “Ceremonial,” but if one fails to bring the first fruits, he has dishonored God, which is a Moral aspect of the Torah

Yeshua and His apostles taught the unity of the Torah

- Matthew 5:21–48
 - vv. 21–26: murder, hatred (Moral); presenting an offering (Ceremonial); going to court (Civil)
 - vv. 31–32: divorce (Civil); improper divorce causes adultery (Moral)
- 1Cor. 9:9; 1Tim. 5:18
 - “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing” (Deut 25:4)
 - Paul applies this to the right of workers to be paid
 - apparently Paul considered what some call a “Civil” law to remain valid after Yeshua’s death, resurrection, and ascension
 - Paul derives a moral aspect (payment of a laborer) from a “Civil” law

It is impossible to divide between Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil laws

- Often, Moral Laws connect with matters of worship (ceremony) and society (civil)
 - “you shall not bear false witness” (Moral)
 - if one bears false witness in a court of law, it often has “civil” effects
 - if one has wronged his brother (Moral), he is to forego offering a sacrifice (Ceremonial)
 - if one moves the boundary marker of his neighbor (Civil), he has committed a Moral offense (stealing property)
- In the end, the dividing of the Torah into Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil components was done in order to relegate significant parts of the Torah as no longer necessary.

When the Prophets speak of the reign of Messiah, they envision life within the whole Torah

- Ezekiel 36:24–28

24 “For I will take you from the nations, gather you from all the lands and bring you into your own land. 25 “Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you will be clean; I will cleanse you from all your filthiness and from all your idols. 26 “Moreover, I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; and I will remove the heart of stone from your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. 27 “I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes, and you will be careful to observe My ordinances. 28 “You will live in the land that I gave to your forefathers; so you will be My people, and I will be your God.

- Ezekiel is speaking about the regathering of Israel
- when Israel is regathered, she is given a new heart and the Spirit
- the result is that Israel walks “in My statutes” and is careful to observe “My ordinances”
- in other parts of Ezekiel, the “statutes and ordinances” include charging interest (18:17), keeping the Sabbath and festivals (20:13, 16; 44:24), dealing faithfully with pledges (33:15), etc.
- As far as Ezekiel is concerned, when Israel is regathered in the millennial age, she obeys the whole Torah, not just the so-called Moral aspects of the Torah

- Isaiah 56:6–7

6 “Also the foreigners who join themselves to the LORD, to minister to Him, and to love the name of the LORD, to be His servants, every one who keeps from profaning the sabbath and holds fast My covenant; 7 Even those I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”

- Isaiah speaks of a time when the Temple will be re-established, and burnt offerings and sacrifices will be re-instituted. Obviously, the “Ceremonial” aspects of the Torah will be observed.

- Zechariah 9:7; 14:16, 20

Zech. 9:7 And I will remove their blood from their mouth and their detestable things from between their teeth. Then they also will be a remnant for our God, and be like a clan in Judah, and Ekron like a Jebusite.

Zech. 14:16 Then it will come about that any who are left of all the nations that went against Jerusalem will go up from year to year to worship the King, the LORD of hosts, and to celebrate the Feast of Sukkot.

Zech. 14:20 In that day there will be inscribed on the bells of the horses, “HOLY TO THE LORD.” And the cooking pots in the LORD’s house will be like the bowls before the altar. 21 Every cooking pot in Jerusalem and in Judah will be holy to the LORD of hosts; and all who sacrifice will come and take of them and boil in them. And there will no longer be a Canaanite in the house of the LORD of hosts in that day.

- these passage in Zechariah foretell the time of Israel’s regathering, and the re-establishment of the millennial Temple in Jerusalem
- the Torah statutes of clean and unclean foods will once again be observed
- the ordinances and statutes regulating the proper observance of the Festivals will be observed
- the Torah statutes of clean and unclean vessels will once again be observed
- the Torah statutes regarding ceremonial purities will once again be observed
- **Conclusion: the so-called “Ceremonial” and “Civil” statutes of the Torah have not been abolished, since they clearly remain viable in the future millennial reign of Messiah**

We cannot observe many of the statutes and ordinances of Torah today

- It is often argued that since we cannot observe many of the statutes and ordinances of Torah today, it means these have been abolished and only the Moral parts of Torah remain
 - since we do not live in the Land of Israel, much of the Torah is not applicable
 - since there is no Temple, and no functioning Priesthood, many laws cannot be observed
- But the Scriptures speak differently! Note the example of Israel in exile, Deut 30:1–3:

1 “So it shall be when all of these things have come upon you, the blessing and the curse which I have set before you, and you call them to mind in all nations where the LORD your God has banished you, 2 and you return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today, you and your sons, 3 then the LORD your God will restore you from captivity, and have compassion on you, and will gather you again from all the peoples where the LORD your God has scattered you.

- Moses is speaking of a time when Israel, because of her disobedience, would be exiled to the land of her enemy
- The promise of God is, that when Israel is exiled, if she will “return to the LORD your God and obey Him with all your heart and soul according to all that I command you today,” then God would hearken to her and return her to the Land
- This means that it must be possible to obey the LORD according to all the commandments, even when exiled away from the Land, the Temple, and the Priesthood
- **Conclusion: when Israel would obey all of the commands that were possible to obey while she was in exile, God would reckon this as full obedience**

From this we learn...

- Obedience to God’s Torah is possible even when we are unable to observe all of the Torah because we live outside of the Land and there is no Temple or Priesthood
- What God desires is a willingness to obey all that is available to us
- What God is looking for is a willing heart of obedience, submitting to all that He has instructed us to do as an expression of our love to Him

Conclusion: What have we learned?

- The Torah is a unified whole: it cannot be broken up into Moral, Ceremonial, and Civil parts
- The Torah is given to us for all aspects of life. Life itself is integrated, not compartmentalized: our relationship to God and to one another are intertwined in our life of faith in Yeshua
- Yeshua and His Apostles recognized the Moral dimensions of all the commandments
- The Prophets foretell a time when the Torah as a whole will be re-established in the reign of Messiah
- The fact that we are unable to fulfill Torah commandments related to the Land, the Temple, and the Priesthood does not mean we are unable to obey God’s Torah. What God requires of us is a willingness to obey all that we can.

Session Five

Acts 15: Is the Torah Only for the Jews?

Acts 15 contains the account of a council that was convened in order to settle a dispute over exactly how the Gentiles were to be received within the synagogues of The Way. The primary question put forward to the council was whether or not Gentiles needed to undergo the ritual of a proselyte in order to be saved, that is, in order to have *bona fide* membership in God's covenant of salvation.

Paul and Barnabas had arrived at Antioch after their journey through Asia minor, and some men from Judea arrived, teaching that unless Gentiles were "circumcised according to the custom of Moses," they could not be saved. The issue was debated, but not resolved, and so it was decided that they should go to Jerusalem, and present the matter to the other Apostles and elders.

Thus, the primary issue presented to the Jerusalem Council was whether Gentiles needed to become proselytes in order to have full membership within the Jewish synagogues of The Way.

The narrative describing the proceedings of the Jerusalem Council contains essentially three parts: Peter's speech, James' speech, and the written edict that was carried to the congregations.

Peter's Speech: Acts 15:7–11

7 After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, "Brethren, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that by my mouth the Gentiles would hear the word of the gospel and believe. 8 "And God, who knows the heart, testified to them giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He also did to us; 9 and He made no distinction between us and them, cleansing their hearts by faith. 10 "Now therefore why do you put God to the test by placing upon the neck of the disciples a yoke which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear? 11 "But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Yeshua, in the same way as they also are."

- Peter affirms that God had divinely chosen him to launch the mission to the Gentiles, by going to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10)
- He reminds the council that the Gentile believers received the Spirit in the same way that the Jewish believers had previously received the Spirit at Shavuot (Acts 2)
- That the Spirit empowered the Gentile believers in the same manner as He had empowered the Jewish believers proved beyond doubt that they had been fully received in God's family, even though they had never undergone the ritual to become Jews. Receiving the same Spirit, in the same way, proved their full acceptance.

- Those who were insisting that the Gentiles become proselytes, were
 - testing God
 - putting an unbearable yoke of commandments upon the Gentile believers “which neither our fathers nor we have been able to bear”
 - suggesting that the Gentiles were saved by some other means than by God’s grace

What does it mean “to test God?”

- questioning that what He has done is good or right
- attempting to hinder the work He is doing

What is the “yoke of commandments” to which Peter refers?

- “yoke” (ζυγός, *zugos*; יוֹג, ‘*ol*’) was used by the rabbis to refer to “willing submission to the Torah and to the rule of God.”
- the rabbis considered both the written and the oral Torah to constitute the “yoke of commandments”

R. Eleazar the Modiite said: He who profanes holy things and despises the festivals, and shames his associate in public, and makes void the covenant of Abraham our father, and gives interpretations of Torah which are not according to *halachah*, even though he possess Torah and good deeds, he has no portion in the world to come.

(m.*Avot* 3:11)

- the established rulings of the Sages (*halachah*) was to be received, and any who did not adhere to the established *halachah* were considered without hope for the world to come
- the interpretations of the Torah by the Sages (the oral Torah) was considered as having equal importance with the Torah itself
- Peter is referring to the many traditions of the fathers (oral Torah) when he speaks of the “yoke of commandments” which they were unable to bear

How were those who insisted that the Gentiles become proselytes teaching contrary to grace?

- the prevailing rabbinic teaching in the 1st Century CE was that “all Israel have a place in the world to come” (m.*Sanhedrin* 10:1)
 - this was based upon Is 60:21, “... all Your people are righteous” (referring to Israel)
 - the Jews had been chosen to be God’s covenant people, and were therefore guaranteed a place in the world to come as long as they remained faithful to the Torah
- by suggesting that the Gentiles needed to become Jews in order to be part of God’s family, the teachers from Jerusalem were saying that salvation was based upon one’s Jewishness rather than by faith in Yeshua

James' Speech: Acts 15:13–18

13 ... James answered, saying, “Brethren, listen to me. 14 “Simeon has related how God first concerned Himself about taking from among the Gentiles a people for His name. 15 “With this the words of the Prophets agree, just as it is written [Amos 9:11–12] 16 ‘After these things I will return, and I will rebuild the sukkah of David which has fallen, and I will rebuild its ruins, and I will restore it, 17 So that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, and all the Gentiles who are called by My name,’ 18 Says the Lord, who makes these things known from long ago.

- James agrees with Peter’s previous report, and affirms that the salvation of the Gentiles was the work of God to take for Himself “a people for His name”
 - James does not use the normal word for “people” when referring to the Gentiles (ἔθνος, *ethnos*) but rather he uses λαός (*laos*), used of Israel throughout Acts
 - in describing the chosen Gentiles as “a people for His name,” James may well be alluding to Zech 2:11 –

“Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you.

- James next quotes from Amos 9:11–12, a prophecy of the restoration of Israel
 - the fallen Sukkah of David refers to the Davidic dynasty. The restoration of Israel comes about by the re-establishment of the Davidic throne. This is a prophecy of Messiah’s reign.
 - the re-establishment of Israel under the Davidic Messiah will also bring about the ingathering of the Gentiles (the Lxx of Amos 9:12 has ἔθνος) to join Israel as God’s people
- for James, the current ingathering of the Gentiles through the preaching of the Gospel is the beginning of the fulfillment of Amos’ prophecy
- the believing Gentiles are “called by God’s name,” meaning they have come into covenant relationship with God. As such, they constitute God’s people, meaning they have been grafted into Israel (to use Paul’s analogy, Rom 11)

The written edict of the Jerusalem Council: Acts 15:

19 “Therefore it is my judgment that we do not trouble those who are turning to God from among the Gentiles, 20 but that we write to them that they abstain from things contaminated by idols and from fornication and from what is strangled and from blood.

- requiring the Gentiles to become proselytes (be circumcised according to the custom of Moses) would trouble them
 - it would send them the wrong message, that salvation was based upon being Jewish
 - it would require them to adhere to all of the traditions of the elders (oral Torah)

- The Four Stipulations for the Gentiles

v. 20
abstain from
things contaminated by idols
fornication
meat taken from strangled animals
blood

v. 29
abstain from
things sacrificed to idols
blood
meat taken from strangled animals
fornication

Why only these four things?

- all four of these prohibited things were common place in the pagan temples of 1st Century Israel
 - meat offered to idols, along with wine libations, and other offerings
 - fornication = temple prostitutes
 - meat from strangled animals: some sacrificial animals were strangled before being offered
 - the blood of the sacrifice was often drunk by the presiding priest, and sometimes by those attending the pagan ritual
- these were specifically chosen in order for the Jewish community to accept the Gentile believers
 - this was particularly true since the Gentiles were not required to become proselytes
 - in the 1st Century, the Jewish community presumed all Gentiles were idol worshippers
 - the pagan temple was far more than a place of idol worship: depository for public records, financial institutions, community events, etc.
 - the Gentiles had to prove beyond doubt that they had entirely forsaken idolatry

Were these four things a complete “list” of what was required of the Gentile believers?

- No – it was presumed that they would follow the whole Torah as they came to understand it through the study of Moses every Shabbat, v. 21:

“For Moses from ancient generations has in every city those who preach him, since he is read in the synagogues every Sabbath.”

- Paul, who surely agreed with the conclusion of the Jerusalem Council, instructs both the Jews (circumcised) and the Gentiles (uncircumcised) to keep the commandments, 1Cor 7:19 –

Circumcision (being Jewish) is nothing, and uncircumcision (being Gentile) is nothing, but what matters is the keeping of the commandments of God.

Why are these four stipulations referred to as a “burden?” (v. 28)

“For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to lay upon you no greater burden than these essentials:

Did James and the Apostles think that the Torah was a burden?

- James refers to the Torah in his epistle, written before the Jerusalem Council:

James 2:8 If, however, you are fulfilling the royal Torah according to the Scripture, “You shall love your neighbor as yourself,” you are doing well.
James 2:12 So speak and so act as those who are to be judged by the Torah of liberty.

- James refers to the Torah as
 - the royal Torah, that is, the Torah of King Yeshua (מֶלֶךְ הַמָּשִׁיחַ, *Melech haMashiach*)
 - the Torah of liberty. For those who have faith, the Torah is liberating, for it instructs us in the way that we should go
- James in no way pictures the Torah as a burden. Rather, he views the Torah as a gift of liberty from the King

Why, then, did the Apostles call the Four Stipulations a “burden?”

- obeying the Four Stipulations would require the Gentiles to conform to some amount of man-made laws (oral Torah). The written Torah nowhere prohibits food offered to idols, nor does it specifically state how an animal is to be slaughtered. It only prohibits eating blood.
 - avoiding meat offered to idols or meat from animals that had been strangled would essentially mean that the Gentile believers would need to purchase their meat from Jewish sources in order to be certain none of the meat had come from the pagan temples.
 - avoiding meat offered to idols or meat from animals that had been strangled may also have meant that Gentile believers had to avoid the common market
 - since the pagan temples functioned as general community centers, limiting their involvement in the temple precincts may have caused the Gentile believers additional problems
 - financial institutions (banks) were often found in close proximity to the pagan temple
 - community councils may have convened in the pagan temple precincts
- in requiring the Gentiles to conform to some rabbinic traditions, there was always the strong possibility that they would be required to conform to a growing list of *halachah*

Summary and Conclusion

- The primary issue presented to the Jerusalem Council was whether or not Gentiles needed to become proselytes in order to be received within the covenant family of God. The unwavering answer to this question was that both Jews and Gentiles become members of God's covenant family the same way: through faith in Yeshua as a matter of God's grace.
- However, in order for the Gentile believers to be fully integrated into the synagogue communities of The Way, they would have to prove beyond doubt that they had entirely forsaken any aspect of their previous idolatry. This meant that they would need to distance themselves from the idolatrous rituals of the pagan temples.
- The Four Stipulations drawn up by the Jerusalem Council enumerate things that regularly occurred in the rituals of the pagan temples.
- The Four Stipulations were not an exhaustive list of *halachah* for the Gentiles, but an essential list of things they must avoid in order to prove their break with idolatrous practices.
- It was presumed that as the Gentile believers were received within the synagogues of The Way, they would learn the Torah week by week and would grow in their ability to live it out.
- The conclusion was that the Gentiles should be received as equal members of the covenant community on the basis of their faith in Yeshua, and not through a ritual (proselytism) that offered them a "Jewish status."

Session Six

Did Paul Give Up the Torah (1Cor 9:19–23)?

From early centuries in the Christian Church, Paul has been read as a Jew who abandoned the Torah, and with it, his Jewishness. If we begin by presuming that Paul forsook Torah and his own Jewish identity, it is not difficult to read some of his writings as supporting this notion. For instance, 1Cor 9:19–23 is usually interpreted to mean that for Paul, the Torah had been set aside in favor of following Yeshua, and that its only value was to build a bridge for evangelism to his Jewish brethren. Many Christian commentators interpret this passage to mean that when Paul was with the Jews, he acted like a Jew, not because he had to, or because it was his preference, but because he wanted to win them to Messiah. Conversely, so it is taught, when Paul was with the Gentiles, he accepted a Gentile manner of life, abandoning things like the Sabbath, kosher food, etc.

But if we were to accept this common interpretation of the passage before us, we would have to admit that Paul was theologically two-faced. That is because elsewhere, he speaks very highly of the Torah. In Romans he calls the Torah holy, righteous, and good, and declares that it is spiritual in nature (7:12, 14). Moreover, in Rom 3:31, Paul teaches that faith establishes the Torah rather than nullifying it. And in 1Cor 7:19, he admonishes both Jews and Gentiles to “obey the commandments.” Furthermore, Paul testified before the tribunal in Rome: “I had done nothing against our people or the customs of our fathers” (Acts 28:17). How could he say that if, in fact, he had all but abandoned the “customs of the fathers” when they were not convenient for him? He wrote to Timothy that he had served God “the way my forefathers did” (2Tim. 1:3), which hardly could have been the case if he regularly abandoned a Torah life while living among the Gentiles.

So when we come to this text in 1Cor 9, we have one of two options: either we admit that Paul is entirely hypocritical, or there is another way to interpret the passage. I think we know that Paul was not a hypocrite, so it requires that we re-read this text with an eye to understanding it in concert with what Paul has said elsewhere about the Torah:

19 For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a slave to all, so that I may win more. 20 To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Torah, as under the Torah though not being myself under the Torah, so that I might win those who are under the Torah; 21 to those who are without Torah, as without Torah, though not being without the Torah of God but under the Torah of Messiah, so that I might win those who are without Torah. 22 To the weak I became weak, that I might win the weak; I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some. 23 I do all things for the sake of the gospel, so that I may become a fellow partaker of it.

The larger context of 1Corinthians 9:19–23

- Paul addresses the problems of schisms within the Corinthian community of believers
 - divisions existed because people were championing various teachers: Paul, Apollos, Cephas (1:10–12; 3:22)
 - divisions over immoral behavior: 5:1ff
 - divisions over how to resolve legal issues: pagan courts were not to be used, 6:1ff
 - divisions over the influence of pagan temples: 6:12ff
 - temple prostitution was contrary to the believer’s calling to holiness, and the fact that every believer is the temple of the Holy Spirit
 - other rituals and ceremonies in the pagan temples
 - divisions over issues of marriage and divorce: 7:1ff
 - divisions over food and the pagan temples: chapters 8–10
- Paul’s primary emphases:
 - followers of Yeshua were to live lives of holiness
 - followers of Yeshua were voluntarily to give up their personal freedoms for the sake of the gospel and for the sake of their fellow believers

The immediate context of 1Corinthians 9:19–23

- Paul offers his own life as an example of what it means to forfeit one’s personal freedoms for the sake of the gospel, and its success in the life of others
 - 9:1–13 Paul had the right to be supported by those to whom he ministered
 - 9:14–18 Paul gave up his right to remuneration in order to make his ministry more effective
 - Yeshua had taught that it was the right of those who labor in the gospel to gain their living from the gospel, v. 14
 - Paul voluntarily gave up his right to be remunerated, because he did not want his detractors to be able to accuse him of preaching the gospel for financial gain, vv. 15–18
- Paul’s willingness to forfeit his own rights and freedoms is the immediate background out of which he makes his statements in 9:19–23

The structure of 9:19–23

- v. 19: over arching statement: “I became a slave to all so that I might win more”
- vv. 20–22: the manner in which Paul became a “slave to all”
 - various groups of people
 - various ways in which Paul gave up his own rights for the sake of others
- v. 23: conclusion: Paul’s motivation was for the success of the Gospel

The parallel structure of 9:20–22

Two phrases to describe the Jewish community that had rejected Yeshua as Messiah

Two phrases to describe the community of The Way, that included many Gentile believers

20 To the Jews I became as a Jew,

so that I might win Jews;

to those who are under the Torah, as under the Torah

though not being myself under the Torah,

so that I might win those who are under the Torah;

21 to those who are without Torah, as without Torah, though not being

without the Torah of God but under the Torah of Messiah,

so that I might win those who are without Torah.

22 To the weak I became weak,

that I might win the weak;

I have become all things to all men,

so that I may by all means save some.

Understanding the parallel structure

- Paul refers to two groups of people, not four
 - Jews who had not yet confessed Yeshua as Messiah
 - Gentile believers, who were the primary focus of Paul's ministry
- Each of the two groups is described by a double designation
 - the first designation is general, and the second more specific
 - Jews / those under the Torah
 - those without Torah / weak
 - the first group (the larger Jewish community): described from Paul's perspective
 - the second group (followers of Yeshua): described from the perspective of the larger Jewish community

9:19 - Slave to all

- Paul gave up the right to be supported by those to whom he ministered
- instead, he worked with his hands to support himself and others (cf. 1Cor 4:12; 1Thess 2:9; 2Cor 11:7; Acts 20:33–34)
- he was a “slave to all” in the sense that he “worked without pay.”
 - he did not want to appear as though he was “selling the Gospel” (1Thess 2:3)
 - he did not want to require support from those he served (especially the Gentile community)

9:20 – “To the Jews I became as a Jew, so that I might win Jews; to those who are under the Torah, as under the Torah though not being myself under the Torah, so that I might win those who are under the Torah;”

- Paul was a Jew, and he lived as a Jew, so how could he “become a Jew?”
- Paul is speaking specifically of the Jewish community who had rejected Yeshua
 - he further identifies this Jewish community as “under the Torah”
 - “under the Torah” = relying upon Jewish identity as their means of righteousness before God
 - “under the Torah” = believing that obedience to Torah (written and oral) maintained their covenant relationship with God
 - Paul admits that he is not “under the Torah”
 - he did not find his righteousness before God on the basis of his Jewishness
 - he did not rely upon conformity to the “traditions of the elders” (oral Torah) as a means of maintaining his covenant relationship with God
 - Yet Paul submitted to the authority of the Synagogue in order to maintain his membership within the Jewish community
 - Five times Paul submitted to scourgings by the Synagogue rulers (2Cor 11:24)
 - By submitting to the punishments of the Synagogue authorities, he maintained his membership within the Synagogue community

“All those who are liable to extirpation (being cut off) who have been flogged are exempt from their liability to extirpation, “as it is said, And your brother seem vile to you” (Deuteronomy 25:3)—“once he has been flogged, lo, he is tantamount to your brother. . . .” (m.*Makkot* 3:15)

- Paul was probably accused of blasphemy, because he continue to affirm that Yeshua was the true, divine Messiah
 - Paul may have been accused of idolatry, because he ate with Gentiles
 - Obviously, Paul was guilty of neither charge, yet he submitted to the punishment as though he were guilty, in order to remain as a “brother” within the Jewish community
- **Conclusion: “became a Jew to the Jews” means maintaining his membership within the unbelieving Synagogue community by forfeiting his own freedom and submitting to their rule**

9:21–22, “to those who are without Torah, as without Torah ...To the weak I became weak...”

- Those “without Torah” were the Gentiles, often in the majority in the synagogues of The Way
 - they did not grow up learning Torah
 - they were labelled as “without Torah” by the traditional Synagogue
 - since they had not become proselytes, they had not taken upon themselves the “yoke of the commandments” as the rabbis understood them
 - thus, they were viewed by the Jewish community as “without Torah”
- When Paul identified himself with the synagogues of The Way, he knew that he likewise would be classed as “without Torah” by his Jewish community
 - Paul was willing to be viewed this way for the sake of the gospel (gave up his own rights)
 - Paul adhered to the written Torah as the primary authority. He was therefore willing to forego the “traditions of the elders” (oral Torah) when it contradicted the Scriptures or his work as Yeshua’s emissary

- Paul affirms that neither he, nor the people of The Way, were actually “without Torah”

“though not being without the Torah of God but under the Torah of Messiah...”

- he affirms the “Torah of God” = the eternal, unchangeable words of Moses
- he affirms the “Torah of Messiah” = literally “in the Torah of Messiah”, meaning the manner in which Messiah had taught and modelled obedience to the Torah
- “to the weak I became weak”
 - note the different language: he does not say he “became *as* weak,” but that he actually was weak
 - “weak” for Paul meant having no ability to claim God’s favor

Rom. 5:6 For while we were still helpless (weak), at the right time Messiah died for the ungodly.

- the word “helpless” in Rom 5:6 is the same word translated “weak” in our text (ἀσθενής, *asthenes*)
- from the perspective of the unbelieving Jewish community, the Gentiles were “weak” in terms of gaining righteousness before God, because they were not Jewish
- Paul affirmed the truth of the Gospel, that no one can claim right-standing with God on the basis of one’s own ethnicity
- Paul openly confessed that he, like the Gentiles, was “weak” or “helpless” before God’s throne of righteousness
- Paul, as a Hebrew of Hebrews, confessed that righteous standing before God was not on the basis of his Jewishness, but through faith in Messiah alone
- **Conclusion: Paul affirmed his identity with the Gentile believers, because he believed he was saved in the same way that they were: by faith in Yeshua alone**

“I have become all things to all men, so that I may by all means save some.”

- This concluding statement of Paul must be interpreted in view of the immediate context
 - Paul did not become a thief in order to win thieves
 - Paul did not disobey God in order to win sinners to the Gospel
 - Paul conformed to the rule of the unbelieving Synagogue in order to maintain his membership within the community of his Jewish brothers and sisters
 - Paul identified with the Gentile believers in order to live out the truth of the Gospel, that all are saved by faith in Messiah alone
- In all of this, Paul maintained a life of obedience to God
 - he lived out the “Torah of God”
 - he lived out the Torah as taught and modelled by his Master, Yeshua

Notes

Session Seven & Eight

Does the Indwelling Spirit Replace the Torah?

It is not uncommon in our day to hear people emphasize the “leading of the Spirit” to the exclusion of the role of God’s Torah in the lives of His people. The “rules” of the Torah are no longer needed, it is claimed, since we now have the Spirit to guide us. But is this what the Scriptures teach? What exactly is the role of the Holy Spirit in terms of teaching the believer what is right and wrong?

We will seek to investigate this important matter along the following lines:

1. What was the role of the Holy Spirit before the coming of Yeshua?
 - the work of the Spirit in the Tanach
 - John 7:39; 14:17, etc.
2. What was the significance of the outpouring of the Spirit on the Shavuot following Yeshua’s death and resurrection (Acts 2)?
 - the reason the Spirit was given on Shavuot
 - the fulfillment of Yeshua’s promise
 - the manifestation of the Spirit as a revelation of the purpose of His being given
3. What is the role of the Spirit in the life of the believer now?
 - to aid the Apostles in writing the Apostolic Scriptures
 - to guide the believer in accordance with the Scriptures
 - to enable the believer to actively participate in the work of the kingdom

The Spirit of God was active in the Tanach

- The Spirit of God was active in the creation of the universe: Gen 1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.
- The Spirit of God was active in convicting (“striving with”) mankind of sin: Gen. 6:3 Then the LORD said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”
- The Spirit of God filled Bezalel, Aholiab and the other craftsmen, empowering them to build the various parts and implements of the Tabernacle: Ex. 31:3 “I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship” (cf. 35:31)
- The Spirit of God filled the 70 elders of Israel: Num. 11:17 “Then I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take of the Spirit who is upon you, and will put Him upon them; and they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you will not bear it all alone.”
- The Spirit of God gave enabled common men to prophecy: Num 11:26, “And the Spirit rested upon

them (now they were among those who had been registered, but had not gone out to the tent), and they prophesied in the camp.”

- the Spirit of God was given to Joshua, endowing him with wisdom for leadership: Deut. 34:9 “Now Joshua the son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him; and the sons of Israel listened to him and did as the LORD had commanded Moses.”
- the Spirit of God empowered the Judges (Othniel, Gideon, Jephthah, Samson)
- the Spirit of God was given to Saul and David as the anointed kings of Israel: 1Sam. 16:13 “Then Samuel took the horn of oil and anointed him in the midst of his brothers; and the Spirit of the LORD came mightily upon David from that day forward.”
- the Spirit of God was given to those who assisted Saul as king: 1Sam 19:20 “... the Spirit of God came upon the messengers of Saul; and they also prophesied.”
- the Spirit of God enabled the Prophets of old to speak: (for example) Mic. 3:8 “On the other hand I am filled with power — with the Spirit of the LORD — and with justice and courage to make known to Jacob his rebellious act, even to Israel his sin.”
- the Spirit of God led the people of Israel in their journeys: Is 63:14 “As the cattle which go down into the valley, the Spirit of the LORD gave them rest. So You led Your people, to make for Yourself a glorious name.”
- the Spirit of God was abiding in the midst of Israel as God’s chosen people: Hag. 2:5 “As for the promise which I made you when you came out of Egypt, My Spirit is abiding in your midst; do not fear!”
- the building of Zerubbabel’s Temple was done through the power of the Spirit: Zech. 4:6 “Then he said to me, ‘This is the word of the LORD to Zerubbabel saying, ‘Not by might nor by power, but by My Spirit,’ says the LORD of hosts.”
- the Spirit of God was active in sanctifying the believing Israelites: Mal 2:15 “But not one has done so [acted unfaithfully to his wife] who has a remnant of the Spirit. And what did that one do while he was seeking a godly offspring? Take heed then to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.”
- **Conclusion: the Spirit of God was active both in the nation of Israel as well as in the individual lives of those who demonstrated genuine faith in God and His promise of Messiah**

The Spirit of God was active in the process of salvation

- God has only one way of salvation: faith in His promised Messiah as the sacrifice for sin
 - this was just as true before the coming of Yeshua as after His coming
 - if there were more than one way of salvation, there would have been no need for Yeshua to die for sins

- Circumcision of the heart
 - Paul teaches that circumcision of the heart is accomplished only by the work of the Spirit:

Rom. 2:29 But he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that which is of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the letter; and his praise is not from men, but from God.

- Yet Moses commanded the people to circumcise their hearts and promised that this would be the work of God upon them:

Deut. 10:16 “So circumcise your heart, and stiffen your neck no longer.

Deut. 30:6 “Moreover the LORD your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the LORD your God with all your heart and with all your soul, so that you may live.

- Apart from the work of the Spirit, Messiah is veiled (unknown) from the Torah (2Cor 3:17–18). Yet surely those who were true believers before His coming placed their faith in Him:

Gen. 15:6 Then he [Abraham] believed in the LORD; and He reckoned it to him as righteousness.

Psa. 32:1 How blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered!

2 How blessed is the man to whom the LORD does not impute iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no deceit!

- Apart from the work of the Spirit, the Torah brings condemnation, damnation, and death. Yet surely the true believers of old were saved by God’s grace:

Rom. 8:2 For the Torah of the Spirit of life in Messiah Yeshua has set you free from the Torah of sin and of death.

Rom 8: 7 because the mind set on the flesh is hostile toward God; for it does not subject itself to the Torah of God, for it is not even able to do so, 8 and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. 9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Messiah, he does not belong to Him.

- it is clear that the believers of old were able to submit themselves in obedience to the Torah:

Psa. 19:7 The Torah of the LORD is perfect, restoring the soul; The testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple. 8 The precepts of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart; The commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

Psa. 119:1 How blessed are those whose way is blameless, who walk in the Torah of the LORD. 2 How blessed are those who observe His testimonies, who seek Him with all their heart. 3 They also do no unrighteousness; they walk in His ways.

Psa. 119:11 Your word I have treasured in my heart, that I may not sin against You.

- it is by the work of the Spirit of God that an individual knows he is saved:

Rom. 8:16 The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God,

- those who were saved before the coming of Yeshua knew they were children of God:

Job 19:25 “As for me, I know that my Redeemer lives, and at the last He will take His stand on the earth.

Heb. 11:13 All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth.

- even before the Spirit was poured out at Shavuot (Acts 2), the gospel included the message of being born again by the Spirit:

John 3:5 Yeshua answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit he cannot enter into the kingdom of God.

- No one can know the thoughts of God apart from the work of the Spirit in revelation and illumination:

1Cor 2: 9 “Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him.” 10 For to us God revealed them through the Spirit; for the Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. 11 For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.

- it is certain that the believers of old knew the truth about God
- Paul quotes Is 64:4 here, in which Isaiah is describing the revelation of God at Sinai

- Sanctification (being made holy) is the work of the Spirit:

Gal. 5:16 But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not carry out the desire of the flesh.

- David confessed that he walked obediently before the Lord:

Psa. 26:1 Vindicate me, O LORD, for I have walked in my integrity, and I have trusted in the LORD without wavering.

- the Psalmist requests the leading of the Spirit

Psa. 143:10 Teach me to do Your will, for You are my God; Let Your good Spirit lead me on level ground.

- Paul teaches that those who are led by the Spirit are the children of God:

Rom. 8:14 For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

- Paul teaches that those who do not have the “Spirit of Messiah” do not belong to Him:

Rom. 8:9 However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him.

- + note that the “Spirit of God dwells in you” is parallel to “have the Spirit of Messiah”
- + the presence of the Spirit in one’s life is the proof of genuine salvation
- + where there true believers before the coming of Messiah?
- salvation is possible only through the regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit:

Titus 3:5 “He saved us, not on the basis of deeds which we have done in righteousness, but according to His mercy, by the washing of regeneration and renewing by the Holy Spirit”

- **Conclusion: the Spirit is always active in the salvation of sinners. He opens the eyes of the soul (illumination), He brings the soul to life (regeneration), He gives faith (justification), and enables the believer to walk in obedience to God’s Torah (sanctification). Apart from the work of the Spirit, no one is saved.**

What is meant, then, by John’s words, that the “Spirit was not yet given?”

John 7:37 Now on the last day, the great day of the feast, Yeshua stood and cried out, saying, “If anyone is thirsty, let him come to Me and drink. 38 “He who believes in Me, as the Scripture said, ‘From his innermost being will flow rivers of living water.’” 39 But this He spoke of the Spirit, whom those who believed in Him were to receive; for the Spirit was not yet *given*, because Yeshua was not yet glorified.

- This teaching of Yeshua, regarding the work of the Spirit, parallels His promise to send the Spirit:

Luke 24:49 “And behold, I am sending forth the promise of My Father upon you; but you are to stay in the city until you are clothed with power from on high.”

- Yeshua promised His disciples that after His ascension, the Spirit would empower them to initiate the harvest of the nations through the proclamation of the Gospel
- the disciples were to wait in Jerusalem until they were given this special empowering of the Spirit, and then they were to begin their mission in Jerusalem, going throughout Judea, Samaria and eventually to the far reaches of the world (Acts 1:4–5)
- when Yeshua promises “rivers of living water,” He is referring to the gathering in of the harvest

of the nations through the proclamation of the gospel, empowered by the Spirit

- when John comments that “the Spirit was not yet *given*,” he’s referring to the fact that the Spirit had not yet empowered Yeshua’s disciples to begin the task of evangelism to the nations, which would eventually bring the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise: “in you all the families of the earth will be blessed” (Gen 12:3, cf. Gen. 18:18; 22:18; 26:4; 28:14).

What is meant by John’s words, that the Spirit “abides with you and will be in you?”

John 14:16 “I will ask the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may be with you forever; 17 that is the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it does not see Him or know Him, but you know Him because He abides with you and will be in you.

- Yeshua promised to send the Spirit with power to assist His disciples in carrying out the mission of gathering in the nations
- what is the meaning of “abides with you and will be in you?”
 - the preposition “in” can have a number of meanings in the Greek: “by,” “among,” “with”
 - in the Lxx, the same combinations of prepositions means “between” Ex 31:13, “...for this is a sign with Me and in you throughout your generations...”
 - the disciples already “knew” the Spirit, meaning they had already experienced His presence and His enabling
 - the Greek text has a variant here: other manuscripts read “abides with you and is in you” (present tense rather than future tense)
 - note Is 63:11, “...He who put His Holy Spirit in the midst of them” (ποῦ ἐστὶν ὁ θεὸς ἐν αὐτοῖς τὸ πνεῦμα τὸ ἅγιον) - same construction as Jn 16:17
 - in the context, the promise of Yeshua regarding the Spirit is that He would continue to abide with the disciples, and would be active in them even after Yeshua ascended to the Father
 - particularly, the promise of the Spirit was for the success of the disciples’ mission. Yeshua’s request to the Father was that the Spirit would come with special enabling to accomplish the ingathering of the Gentiles

The giving of the Spirit at Shavuot (Acts 2)

- Why on Shavuot?
 - Shavuot is connected to Pesach (Passover) through the counting of the omer
 - + beginning on the second day of Unleavened bread, each family was to bring an omer of the barley harvest into the temple as first fruits of the harvest
 - + the bringing of the omer lasted for a full seven weeks (49 days), then Shavuot was celebrated. 49 + 1 is the picture of the sabbatical years (49) and the Jubilee (50th). Thus, Shavuot represents the Jubilee

- + the Jubilee is the time when all things return to their rightful owner
- Shavuot celebrates the completed harvest. Symbolically, it represents the completed harvest of the nations, when all of God's chosen ones have been gathered into His family
- Shavuot also marked the giving of the Torah
 - Ex. 19:1 “In the third month after the sons of Israel had gone out of the land of Egypt, on that very day they came into the wilderness of Sinai.”
 - + “on that very day” = “rosh chodesh” (beginning) of the third month
 - + the time frame is given so that we would know that the Torah was given on the 6th of the third month = Shavuot
 - God had promised that the Torah would eventually be given to all the nations
 - + the Davidic covenant:

2Sam. 7:18 Then David the king went in and sat before the LORD, and he said, “Who am I, O Lord GOD, and what is my house, that You have brought me this far? 19 “And yet this was insignificant in Your eyes, O Lord GOD, for You have spoken also of the house of Your servant concerning the distant future. And this is the Torah for mankind, O Lord GOD.

- God had made an enduring covenant with David, promising that his kingship would be the only legitimate dynasty ruling over Israel
- David recognizes that the covenant God had made with him had its fulfillment in the “distant future.”
- David also recognized that it was through the reign of Messiah that the Torah would come to all mankind
- + the Prophets foretold that the Torah would go to all the peoples

Is. 42:1 “Behold, My Servant, whom I uphold; My chosen one in whom My soul delights. I have put My Spirit upon Him; He will bring forth justice to the nations. 2 He will not cry out or raise His voice, nor make His voice heard in the street. 3 A bruised reed He will not break and a dimly burning wick He will not extinguish; He will faithfully bring forth justice. 4 He will not be disheartened or crushed until He has established justice in the earth; and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His Torah.”

- it is the work of Messiah to bring justice (=Torah) to the nations
- “coastlands” (צִי, 'iy) refers to the regions farthest away from Israel
- the completion of the work of the Servant of the Lord, is when He brings justice to all the nations. He will not become weary, but will accomplish this task.
- the power of the Spirit, enabling the Messiah to accomplish this task, is demonstrated in the giving of the Spirit at Shavuot (Acts 2)
- **Conclusion: the reason the Spirit was given at Shavuot was to signal the beginning of the harvest of the nations through revealing the Torah to them, for the goal of the Torah is the Messiah (Rom 10:4).**

The manifestation of the Spirit at Shavuot (Acts 2) teaches this same thing

Acts 2:1 When the day of Shavuot (Pentecost) had come, they were all together in one place. 2 And suddenly there came from heaven a noise like a violent rushing wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. 3 And there appeared to them tongues as of fire distributing themselves, and they rested on each one of them. 4 And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit was giving them utterance. 7 They were amazed and astonished, saying, “Why, are not all these who are speaking Galileans? 8 “And how is it that we each hear them in our own language to which we were born?

- The Spirit manifested His presence through the rushing wind
 - the people were gathered in the portico of Solomon, in the Temple precincts
 - + they were celebrating the festival, which would have been done at the Temple
 - + the crowds gathered about them
 - the rushing wind was symbolic of the presence of God and of His glory

2Sam. 22:11 “And He rode on a cherub and flew; And He appeared on the wings of the wind. 1Kings 8:10 It happened that when the priests came from the holy place, the cloud filled the house of the LORD, 11 so that the priests could not stand to minister because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD.

- The Spirit manifested His presence through the gift of languages:
 - the message of God had previously been given only in the Hebrew language
 - now, the ingathering of the nations had begun, the harvest was being gathered
 - thus, the message is heard in every language
 - the Rabbis had taught that the Torah was given in seventy languages (meaning all the languages of the world)

R. Johanan said: What is meant by the verse, The Lord giveth the word: They that publish the tidings are a great host? (Ps 68:12) — Every single word that went forth from the Omnipotent was split up into seventy languages. The School of R. Ishmael taught: And like a hammer that breaketh the rock in pieces., just as a hammer is divided into many sparks, so every single word that went forth from the Holy One, blessed be He, split up into seventy languages.

- to the Jewish believers who were gathered on the day of Shavuot, the manifestations of the Spirit was reminiscent of the giving of the Torah at Sinai on Shavuot
- the many languages reinforced the fact that now the Torah would go to all the nations
- the giving of the Spirit was the “power from on high” for which the disciples were to wait before they ventured forth to accomplish the mission of evangelizing the nations

- the Spirit manifested His presence through tongues of fire resting upon each one
 - even as the Rabbinic teaching connected “sparks” of fire with the giving of the Torah, so the Spirit manifested His empowerment for world evangelism through tongues of fire on the very day (Shavuot) when the giving of the Torah was being celebrated
 - the symbolism of the tongues of fire resting on each one was to emphasize that each one, now endowed by the special enabling of the Spirit, was to be engaged in the evangelism of the nations. *The harvest was underway!*
- **Conclusion: the giving of the Spirit on Shavuot (Acts 2) was directly connected to the giving of the Torah on Sinai, not as a means to replace the Torah. The empowerment of the Spirit was given to Yeshua’s disciples so that they could take the Torah to the nations, leading them to Messiah, and gathering them into the family of God.**

The ongoing work of the Spirit in the believer

- the Spirit equips the remnant of Israel (believers in Yeshua) to be a light to the nations
 - this involves having boldness to share the message
 - this involves living in a way that is set apart to God so that one’s life is a witness of Messiah
 - this involves working together within the community of faith (“body of Messiah”)
 - so that each one becomes mature in the faith
 - so that together a community can maintain a clear witness of Messiah

Eph 4:11 And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of service, to the building up of the body of Messiah; 13 until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fullness of Messiah. 14 As a result, we are no longer to be children, tossed here and there by waves and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, by craftiness in deceitful scheming; 15 but speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him who is the head, even Messiah, 16 from whom the whole body, being fitted and held together by what every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.

- a special work of the Spirit was to enable the Apostles to write the Apostolic Scripture (Jn 14:25–26)
- the Spirit equips believers with spiritual gifts (χαρίσματα, *charismata*; πνευματικά, *pneumatika*, cf. Rom 12:6; 1Cor 12:1; 14:1)
 - the gifts of the Spirit are for the building up of the body of Messiah, not for personal gratification or personal growth: 1Cor. 12:7 “But to each one is given the manifestation of the Spirit for the common good.”
 - the gifts of the Spirit are always exercised within the community of the believers, not privately
 - the Spirit enables each believer to use his or her unique abilities for service within the kingdom of Messiah

- note the example of Bezalel and Aholiab:

Ex. 31:1 Now the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 2 “See, I have called by name Bezalel, the son of Uri, the son of Hur, of the tribe of Judah. 3 I have filled him with the Spirit of God in wisdom, in understanding, in knowledge, and in all kinds of craftsmanship, 4 to make artistic designs for work in gold, in silver, and in bronze, 5 and in the cutting of stones for settings, and in the carving of wood, that he may work in all kinds of craftsmanship. 6 And behold, I Myself have appointed with him Aholiab, the son of Ahisamach, of the tribe of Dan; and in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill, that they may make all that I have commanded you:

- the craftsmen were “filled with the Spirit of God in wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and in craftsmanship”
- yet they were already skilled: “in the hearts of all who are skillful I have put skill”
- the Spirit enabled the craftsmen to utilize their God-given abilities to construct the Tabernacle as God desired

Summary

- The Spirit of God has always been active in the process of saving sinners. No one can be saved apart from the illumination, regeneration, faith-giving, and sanctifying work of the Spirit of God.
- The passages in the Gospels, often interpreted to teach that the Spirit of God was inactive before the incarnation of Yeshua, when studied in context, simply promise the on-going work of the Spirit in accomplishing God’s plan of salvation.
- The new work of the Spirit, as a result of Yeshua’s victory over sin, is specifically in the harvest of the nations. This is in fulfillment of the Abrahamic promise that God would bless all of the families of the earth.
- The outpouring of the Spirit came on Shavuot (Acts 2) in order to emphasize that through the power of He would give, the revelation of God (the Torah) would now go to all mankind. By pouring out His Spirit in this kind of enabling, the harvest of the nations and the teaching of the Torah are combined.
- The giving of the Spirit at Shavuot (Acts 2) did not negate the Torah! Rather, the outpouring of the Spirit enabled the disciples of Yeshua to carry God’s revelation to all the nations, making disciples for Yeshua who would obey all that He had commanded (Matt 28:18–20).
- The abiding presence of the Spirit within the believing community equips and enables Yeshua’s disciples to continue the work of bringing in the nations, through the testimony of the believing community (edification), and the spreading of the message of the Gospel (mission).

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Session Nine

Jews and Gentile in the Body of Messiah

One of the major issues that confronted the early congregations of The Way was the relationship between Jewish and Gentile believers. This was because the prevailing theology of the Jewish community was that God had entered into covenant with Israel and not with the nations. As more and more Gentiles came to faith in Yeshua, the Jewish community felt like their distinct identity as God's chosen people was being compromised. How could Israel maintain her distinction from the nations if the synagogues of The Way were populated by a majority of Gentiles? As the percentage of Gentiles increased, some of the Jewish leaders determined that the only way to maintain the distinctive identity of the Jewish community was to require the Gentiles to become proselytes, and thus to be given the status as Jews. In this way, Jewish identity would be maintained.

But Paul realized that if being part of the community of believers required Gentiles to “become Jews,” then something had been added to the simple message of the Gospel, in which sinners are brought into the family of God through faith in Yeshua, something that was anathema. As such, he emphasized the equality of Jew and Gentile within the body of Messiah by affirming that membership in God's family is not on the basis of one's people-group status, but only through faith in Yeshua and in the salvation He secured for sinners.

The Scriptures utilize two metaphors to teach us how God brings people into His family. These two metaphors are Adoption and Marriage.

The Metaphor of Adoption

Adoption in the Ancient Near East

- Adoption was done primarily for legal purposes
- Adoption was often done to secure an inheritance for the adopted individual
- Adoption in the Ancient Near East most often pertained to:
 - slaves: to give them legal, family status
 - wives: to give them the ability to legally inherit their husband's wealth
 - children: to secure family status to those who were not one's physical offspring
- It is important to understand what adoption entailed, and what its purpose was in the ancient world of the Bible, because understanding this will help us appreciate the *meaning* of adoption as a metaphor in the Scriptures

An example of an adoption document from Egypt

... Nebnufer, my husband, made a writing for me, the musician of Setekh Nenufer, and made me a child of his and wrote down unto me all he possessed, having no son or daughter apart from myself. "All profit that I have made with her, I will bequeath it to Nenufer, my wife ..."

(Rabinowitz, "Semitic Elements in the Egyptian Adoption Papyrus Published by Gardiner," *JNES* 17 (1958), 145-46.)

Note the following:

- the adoption of the wife gives her legal status as a daughter
- the ability for the wife to obtain her husband's wealth after he dies depends upon her status as his daughter

This helps us explain Hebrews 9:16

For where a covenant is, there must of necessity be the death of the one who made it.

- The author to the Hebrews understands "covenant" to include a "covenant of adoption" for the purpose of inheritance

Israel as God's adopted child

Ezek. 16:1 Then the word of the LORD came to me, saying, 2 Son of man, make known to Jerusalem her abominations 3 and say, 'Thus says the Lord GOD to Jerusalem, "Your origin and your birth are from the land of the Canaanite, your father was an Amorite and your mother a Hittite. 4 As for your birth, on the day you were born your navel cord was not cut, nor were you washed with water for cleansing; you were not rubbed with salt or even wrapped in cloths. 5 No eye looked with pity on you to do any of these things for you, to have compassion on you. Rather you were thrown out into the open field, for you were abhorred on the day you were born."

- God adopts Israel in order to make her His covenant partner
 - Ezekiel goes on to describe Israel's maturing and God's covenant of marriage with her
 - this combines the ANE metaphor of adoption of a child in order to secure a wife
 - God clothes Israel, takes her as His wife, and commits Himself to her in covenant

... I also swore to you and entered into a covenant with you so that you became Mine," declares the Lord GOD. (Ezekiel 16:8)

Adoption as sons

- Paul uses the metaphor of “adoption” to describe the blessings that God bestowed upon His chosen people
- Speaking of “his kinsmen according to the flesh,” Paul describes the blessings given to Israel:

Rom. 9:4 who are Israelites, to whom belongs the adoption as sons, and the glory and the covenants and the giving of the Law and the temple service and the promises, 5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Messiah according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

- Note the present tense: “to whom belongs” (not “belonged”)
- Even though Israel has rejected Yeshua, her adoption remains constant—Israel is still God’s “firstborn son” (Exodus 4:22) by adoption

Adoption as sons in Messiah

- The goal of the “adoption as sons” is that God’s chosen ones might be redeemed from the curse of the Torah

But when the fullness of the time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Torah, so that He might redeem those who were under the Torah, that we might receive the adoption as sons. Because you are sons, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, “Abba! Father!” Therefore you are no longer a slave, but a son; and if a son, then an heir through God. Galatians 4:4-7

- “Under the Torah” means “under the penalty that the Torah prescribes for rebellion against God”
- “Adoption as sons” has full redemption in Yeshua as its goal
- Sonship by adoption secures the blessings of the Father, the gift of the Spirit, necessary for conformity to The Son
- Adoption gives the children legal status in God’s family = heir

Elect from the nations adopted

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, “Abba! Father!” The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Messiah, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him. Romans 8:15–17

- The elect from the nations are adopted in exactly the same way that Israel was adopted
- The elect from the nations therefore share in all of the same privileges and responsibilities as sons in the covenant
 - heirs: all adopted sons have the same legal status
 - assurance of sonship by the presence of the Spirit
 - suffering with the natural-born Son, Yeshua our Messiah

Adoption secures final redemption

- All the children of God are secure in their adopted status, yet we await our full redemption in the world to come

For we know that the whole creation groans and suffers the pains of childbirth together until now. And not only this, but also we ourselves, having the first fruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our body. Romans 8:22-23

- Since adoption secures one's status as a member of the family, it also secures one's final and full redemption
- My identity as a member of God's chosen people guarantees my place in the world to come
- Thus, everyone adopted into the covenant people of God (His family) will inevitably fulfill the very purpose of creation itself: the dwelling of God in the midst of His people (Col. 3:10-11)

Our adoption: God's eternal plan

- From eternity, God chose us to be children in His family

Blessed be the God and Father of our Master Yeshua Messiah, who has blessed us with every spiritual blessing in the heavenly places in Messiah, just as He chose us in Him before the foundation of the world, that we would be holy and blameless before Him. In love He predestined us to adoption as sons through Yeshua Messiah to Himself, according to the kind intention of His will, to the praise of the glory of His grace, which He freely bestowed on us in the Beloved. Ephesians 1:3-6

- Our adoption into God's family is a matter of His eternal plan
- He set His love on us (chose us) before He fashioned the universe
- He intended that all of His chosen ones should be holy and blameless (= never to be condemned)
- The purpose of our adoption: to extoll the glory of His grace

Adoption as sons and our identity

- God's family is made up of adopted children: the descendants of Jacob and the chosen ones from the nations
- The descendants of Jacob are not "natural sons" with the elect of the nations being "adopted sons." All of God's children are adopted. Yeshua is the only "natural" Son in relationship to the Father.
- This means that we all have equal status as children of God
- This means there is no hierarchy among the adopted children
 - all are heirs to all aspects of the covenant
 - all have equal responsibility to the Father
 - all are becoming more like Yeshua, the natural Son
- As adopted children, we owe our Identity in God's family entirely to His grace, for there was nothing in any of us that attracted Him to adopt us

The Metaphor of Marriage***Our Identity as God's Bride***

- Israel is pictured as the bride of Adonai

I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me in righteousness and in justice, In lovingkindness and in compassion, And I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness. Then you will know Adonai. Hosea 2:19–20

Thus says Adonai, "I remember concerning you the devotion of your youth, The love of your betrothals, Your following after Me in the wilderness, Through a land not sown. Jer 2:2

- However, Israel is pictured as the unfaithful wife of Adonai

Jer. 3:6 Then Adonai said to me in the days of Josiah the king, "Have you seen what faithless Israel did? She went up on every high hill and under every green tree, and she was a harlot there.

As the unfaithful wife of Adonai, Israel is sent away

Jer. 3:7 “I thought, ‘After she has done all these things she will return to Me’; but she did not return, and her treacherous sister Judah saw it. 8 “And I saw that for all the adulteries of faithless Israel, I had sent her away and given her a writ of divorce, yet her treacherous sister Judah did not fear; but she went and was a harlot also.

- Betrothal was a legal binding together of a man and his future bride
- During the betrothal period, Israel and Judah acted unfaithfully, and the betrothal was therefore nullified, awaiting a future generation of Israel who would be faithful

Adonai will bring unfaithful Israel back to Himself

Jer. 3:18 “In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.

Jer. 3:22 “Return, O faithless sons, I will heal your faithlessness.” “Behold, we come to You; For You are the LORD our God.

Our identity as God’s bride

- God is not a polygamist: He has only one wife
- The picture of marriage between God and Israel is a metaphor
- Metaphors are used to emphasize a particular truth
 - the marriage metaphor emphasizes the faithfulness of God
 - the marriage metaphor emphasizes covenant relationship
- The New Covenant envisions the time when unfaithful Israel returns to God and the betrothal is restored

Jer. 31:31 “Behold, days are coming,” declares the LORD, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah, 32 not like the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, although I was a husband to them,” declares the LORD. 33 “But this is the covenant which I will make with the house of Israel after those days,” declares the LORD, “I will put My law within them and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. 34 “They will not teach again, each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they will all know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them,” declares the LORD, “for I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.”

- The New Covenant is cast in marriage language
- “know me” is used of the unique relationship between a husband and wife

Our identity as God's bride

- The Gospels portray Yeshua as a bridegroom

And Yeshua said to them, “You cannot make the attendants of the bridegroom fast while the bridegroom is with them, can you? “But the days will come; and when the bridegroom is taken away from them, then they will fast in those days.” Luke 5:34–35

- John considers the return of Yeshua to be the time of consummation in the marriage metaphor

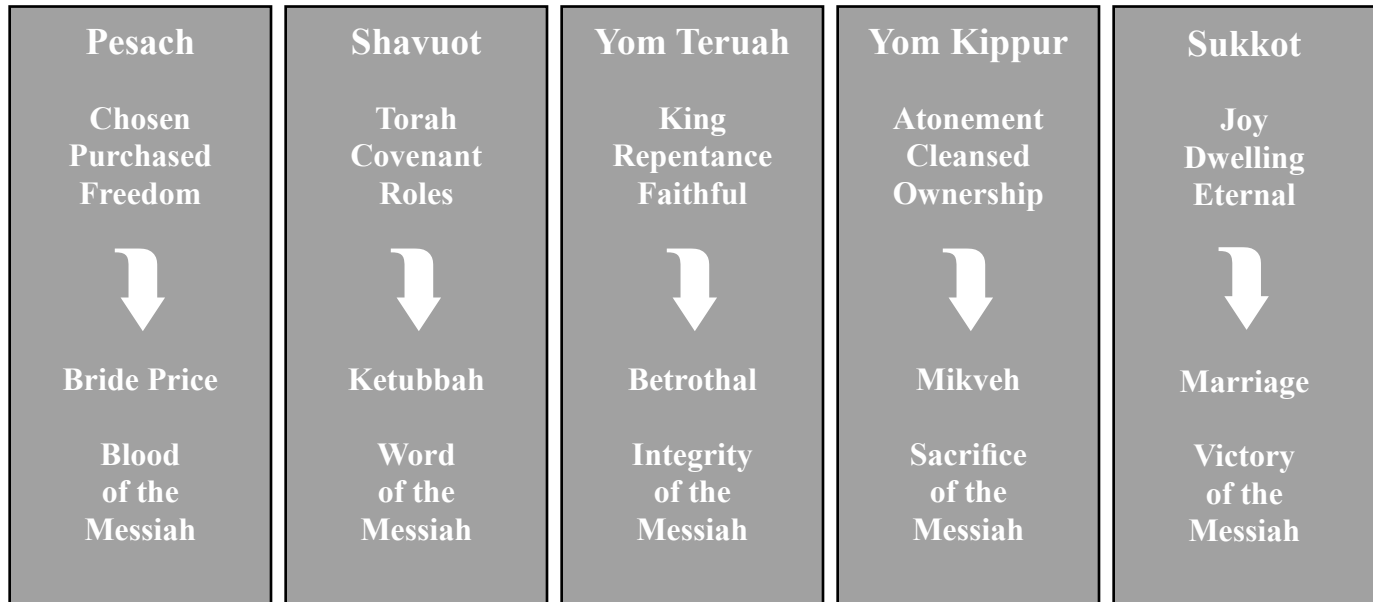
Then I heard something like the voice of a great multitude and like the sound of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, saying, “Hallelujah! For the Lord our God, the Almighty, reigns. “Let us rejoice and be glad and give the glory to Him, for the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has made herself ready.” It was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. Revelation 19:6-8

- Paul considers marriage itself as a picture of the relationship between the chosen people and Messiah

FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Messiah and the *ekklesia* (assembly).

Eph 5:31–32

- Once again, the biblical metaphor of marriage portrays one people (the chosen people) as married by covenant to God
 - The bride of God is one people – Israel
- Our identity as the bride of Messiah emphasizes
 - that He chose us (selection of the bride)
 - that He redeemed us (bride price)
 - that He entered into covenant with us (ketubbah)
 - that He remains faithful during betrothal (kiddushin)
 - that we will dwell together forever (consummation)

The Mo'edim: Picture of Marriage***Summary & Conclusion***

- As adopted children into the Family God, we all have equal status
 - Israel / Elect from the nations enter the family of God the same way
- The chosen people of God are pictured as His wife
 - one wife, not two
 - one covenant of marriage
 - same status for all; same privileges and responsibilities for all

Notes

Session Ten

How Did We Get Off Track?

It is not uncommon, when the people of God begin to recover an appreciation for the Torah and our connection with Israel as God's covenant people, that many wonder how it was possible that the emerging Church turned her back upon Israel, and ventured out to define herself as something entirely new and distinct from the ancient people of God. When we study the history of the emerging Christian Church, we discover that there were social and political issues that confronted the followers of Yeshua, which in turn brought about a shift in the interpretation and application of Scripture by the Church. The results of this shift in how the Bible was understood forged the path of anti-Semitism in the Church, which also strengthened her resolve in adopting an anti-Torah perspective of the Apostolic message.

Understanding how the Church eventually distance herself from the Hebrew roots of her faith will hopefully aid us in retracing the path back to the biblical perspective of God's plan for His people.

Getting into the covenant people of God

- The prevailing view of the Sages was that God had granted covenant membership to all who were born within Jewish families

Mishnah Sanhedrin 10:1 All Israelites have a share in the world to come, as it is said, "Your people also shall be all righteous, they shall inherit the land forever; the branch of my planting, the work of my hands, that I may be glorified" (Is. 60:21). And these are the ones who have no portion in the world to come: He who says, the resurrection of the dead is a teaching which does not derive from the Torah, and the Torah does not come from Heaven; and an Epicurean. R. Aqiba says, "Also: He who reads in heretical books, "and he who whispers over a wound and says, I will put none of the diseases upon you which I have put on the Egyptians, for I am the Lord who heals you (Ex. 15:26)." Abba Saul says, "Also: he who pronounces the divine Name as it is spelled out."

- therefore, according to the Rabbis, covenant membership was based up
 - identification as a Jew
 - maintaining a life of obedience to the Torah (not being "cut off" from one's people)
- But this was never the message of the Scriptures
 - Gen 12:3, "And in you all the families of the earth will be blessed."
 - Zech. 2:11 "Many nations will join themselves to the LORD in that day and will become My people. Then I will dwell in your midst, and you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me to you."

- Is 56:7, “Even those [foreigners] I will bring to My holy mountain and make them joyful in My house of prayer. Their burnt offerings and their sacrifices will be acceptable on My altar; For My house will be called a house of prayer for all the peoples.”
- Yeshua sought to return the people of Israel to the message of the Torah and the Prophets
 - forgiveness of sins comes only through the substitutionary death of an innocent sacrifice

Matt. 26:28 for this is My blood of the covenant, which is poured out for many for forgiveness of sins.

John 12:32 “And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself.”

John 14:6 Yeshua said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me.”

- faith in the Messiah was the means of becoming a member of God’s family

John 11:25 Yeshua said to her, “I am the resurrection and the life; he who believes in Me will live even if he dies, 26 and everyone who lives and believes in Me will never die. Do you believe this?”

- The Apostles of Yeshua continued to give this same message:

Acts 4:12 “And there is salvation in no one else; for there is no other name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.”

Acts 15:11 “But we believe that we are saved through the grace of the Lord Yeshua, in the same way as they also are.”

Acts 16:31 They said, “Believe in the Lord Yeshua, and you will be saved, you and your household.”

Rom 10:9 that if you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord, and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be saved; 10 for with the heart a person believes, resulting in righteousness, and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, “Whoever believes in Him will not be disappointed.”

1Pet 1:18 knowing that you were not redeemed with perishable things like silver or gold from your futile way of life inherited from your forefathers, 19 but with precious blood, as of a lamb unblemished and spotless, the blood of Messiah.

- Thus, the message of Yeshua and the Apostles, based upon the word of Moses and the Prophets, was at variance with the teaching of the Sages
 - The Rabbis were teaching that membership in God’s covenant (salvation) was based upon being Jewish (the flesh)
 - Yeshua and His Apostles were teaching that membership in God’s covenant (salvation) was through faith in God’s Messiah

This clash of theology also brought identity issues

- since the Rabbis taught that salvation was only possible for those who were Jewish, to admit that Gentiles could be saved without “becoming Jews” brought their own covenant status into question
 - there was a strong emphasis put upon the need for Gentiles to become proselytes (be accorded the status of a Jew)
 - there was increasing pressure to separate from Gentiles
- this increasing anti-Gentile position by the Rabbis caused particular stress upon the synagogues of The Way
 - Jewish believers were forced to accept either the teaching of the Rabbis or that of Yeshua and the Apostles
 - there was pressure in some believing communities (e.g., Galatia) for the Gentiles to become proselytes (become recognized as Jewish).
 - the foundational issue, however, was God’s way of saving sinners and bringing them into His covenant family
 - the Apostolic message remained firm: salvation (covenant membership, or a place in the world to come) was possible only by faith in Yeshua, and did not depend whatsoever upon one’s status as a Jewish person

Additional social and political pressure

- Religious tolerance granted to the Jews by Rome
 - in the Roman Empire, atheism was a capital crime
 - + the Emperor was considered to be a god, and veneration of the Emperor was required for all Roman citizens (bowing to him; offering him sacrifices and other votive offerings)
 - + worship of the Roman pantheon was also required of Roman citizens
 - the Jewish community had received an exception
 - + the Jews were not required to offer sacrifices to the Emperor or to the pagan gods
 - + the Jews were allowed to assemble for their own religious purposes
 - + the Jews were allowed to collect money to maintain their religious practice
- As long as the people of The Way remained a sect within Judaism, they were granted the privileges of the exception granted the Jewish people
 - they could assemble for religious reasons
 - they were not required to venerate the Emperor nor to participate in the pagan rituals of worship to the Roman pantheon
 - there was therefore a very strong incentive to be accepted by the larger Jewish community

The Jewish revolts against Rome

- in 66 CE the Jewish Zealots led a revolt against Rome
 - this was eventually put down by Titus, who also destroyed the Temple, 70 CE
 - the defeat meant that much of the Jewish community was dispersed, and had far less privileges
 - during the revolt, Jewish leaders were imprisoned, such as Paul
- in 130 CE, the Jews once again revolted against Rome, under the leadership of Bar Kochba
 - this revolt had the backing of the religious leaders, particularly R. Akiva
 - it was perpetrated when Hadrian, the Emperor, built a shrine in Jerusalem to Jupiter Capitolinus
 - the revolt was finally put down, with the final stand of the zealots at Mazada
 - as a result of the defeat, Jews were no longer allowed in Jerusalem
- these political upheavals put a great deal of pressure upon the followers of Yeshua
 - since in the Bar Kochba revolt, R. Akiva had proclaimed him as “messiah,” the believers were at odds as to whether they should join in the revolt. To do so appeared to accept the messianic claims of Bar Kochba
 - after the great defeat, when Jewish people were persecuted and dismissed from Jerusalem, there was the question whether the followers of Yeshua should continue to identify themselves as a “sect of Judaism”
 - Hadrian was somewhat more tolerant toward the “Christians.” He decreed that they would be prosecuted only when someone brought a legal charge against them

Identification with the Jewish community and Fiscus Judaicus

- the Jewish community was identified by the Roman government by the following markers:
 - circumcision of the males
 - eating only kosher foods
 - setting the Sabbath day apart from the six days of work
 - worship of only one God, and refusal to worship any other “deity”
 - celebration of their own festivals
 - abstaining from
- Following the destruction of the Temple and the defeat of the Jewish Zealots in 70 CE, the Roman government developed the “Jewish Tax” (*Fiscus Judaicus*)
 - it consisted of a tax equal to two days’ wages for every member of the household, from three to 60 years old
 - at first it was not exactly determined who qualified as a “Jew” for the tax. Those who maintained a connection to the Jewish community were presumed to be Jewish, and were taxed
 - as the Gentile believers, however, became more and more marginalized from the Jewish community, and as they themselves found less identity with the Jewish community and began to formulate their own identity as followers of Yeshua, it was natural that they should distance

- themselves from the Jewish community in order to avoid persecution, including the Jewish Tax
- eventually, the Roman government, under Domitian (81–96 CE), began to formulate more precise definitions of who was a Jew, and who was not. Thus, one of the consequences of the Jewish persecution, including the Jewish Tax, was that it forced individuals to identify their allegiance to the Jewish people.
 - Domitian’s successor, Nerva, ruled that a Jew should be defined as “those who followed their ancestral traditions.”
 - + this was defined as “following a Jewish way of living”
 - + this included the observance of Sabbath, the ritual of circumcision, abstaining from “unclean foods,” and the worship of the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
 - For the believing community, this caused a great upheaval
 - + Jewish believers in Yeshua felt compelled to retain the traditions of their ancestors while at the same time, confessing their strong faith in Yeshua as Messiah
 - + Gentile believers, on the other hand, had already felt distanced from the Jewish community
 - they had no strong, historical or cultural ties to the Jewish community
 - they had been rejected by a majority of the Jewish community since they were unwilling to become proselytes
 - they recognized that the majority of the Jewish community had rejected Yeshua as the Messiah
 - it was very difficult to suffer the persecution with the very Jewish community that had made life increasingly difficult for them as Gentile believers

The break between the “Church” and the “Synagogue”

- Following the Bar Kochba revolt, and the defeat of the Jewish zealots, the final break between the emerging Christian Church and the Synagogue occurred.
 - the congregations of “The Way” were comprised of a majority of Gentiles
 - these “Gentile congregations” had already distanced themselves from the unbelieving Jewish community
 - the need to identify themselves as “other” than a sect of Judaism was very great in their eyes
- The emerging Christian Church began to identified herself as distinct from the Synagogue by:
 - down playing the importance of the Sabbath
 - speaking against the Torah
 - a growing anti-Semitism (the Jews were responsible for crucifying Yeshua; rejected by God)
 - despising and prohibiting circumcision
 - developing her own ceremonies and rituals (different covenant signs, such as the Eucharist and Christian Baptism)

The need to reinterpret the Scriptures to support the separation from the Jews

- The increasingly Gentile Christian Church was being lead by Greek teachers
 - when the Gentile Church looked for leaders and teachers, she looked to those who had been trained in the Greek academies
 - foundational to the Greek literary education was the allegorical hermeneutic
 - the allegorical hermeneutic allowed the teachers to reinterpret the Scriptures to fit their needs
- The doctrine of Replacement Theology: the Church is the “New Israel”
 - early in the 2nd Century, the emerging Christian Church, using an allegorical hermeneutic, began to teach that “physical Israel” had been replace by “spiritual Israel.”
 - the promises that had been made to Israel in the Tanach were actually fulfilled in the newly born Christian Church
 - Epistle of Barnabas (90 CE – 110 CE)

Barn. 13:1 Now let us see whether this people or the former people is the heir, and whether the covenant is for us or for them. 2 Hear, then, what the Scripture says about “the people”: “And Isaac prayed for Rebecca his wife, for she was barren; and she conceived. Then Rebecca went off to consult the Lord. And the Lord said to her: ‘Two nations are in your womb, and two peoples in your belly; one people will dominate the other, and the greater will serve the lesser.’” 3 You ought to understand who Isaac represents, and who Rebecca, and concerning whom he has shown that this people is greater than that one.

Barn 14:3 And the Lord said to Moses: “Moses, Moses, go down quickly, because your people, whom you led out of the land of Egypt, has broken the law.” And Moses realized that once again they had made cast images for themselves, and he flung the tablets from his hands, and the tablets of the Lord’s covenant were shattered. 4 So, Moses received it, but they were not worthy. But how did we receive it? Learn! Moses received it as a servant, but the Lord himself gave it to us, that we might become the people of inheritance, by suffering for us.

- Justin Martyr (c. 150 CE): “Dialogue with Trypho”

Christ is the Israel and the Jacob, even so we, who have been quarried out from the bowls of Christ, are the true Israelitic race. (cxxxv)

God has from of old dispersed all men according to their kindreds and tongues; and out of all kindreds has taken to Himself your kindred [the Jewish people], a useless, disobedient, and faithless generation; and has shown that those who were selected out of every nation have obeyed His will through Christ, whom He calls also Jacob, and names Israel. (cxxxv, 3-5
For the circumcision according to the flesh, which is from Abraham, was given for a sign; that you may be separated from the other nations, and from us; and that you alone may suffer that which you now justly suffer ... (xvi, 2)

The Jewish people along with the Torah were disdained

- Early in the 2nd Century, the emerging Christian Church leaders were already teaching that the ways of Torah, which they described as “Jewish,” were unfit for sincere Christians.

“But again their scruples concerning meats, and their superstition relating to the Sabbath and the vanity of their circumcision and the dissimulation of their fasting and new moons, I do not suppose you need to learn from me, are ridiculous and unworthy of any consideration.”

(Letter of Diognetus, 4:1)

“That the Christians are right therefore in holding aloof from the common silliness and error of the Jews and from their excessive fussiness and pride, I consider that you have been sufficiently instructed...” (Letter of Diognetus, 4:6)

“Do not be led astray by those erroneous teachings and ancient fables which are utterly worthless. Indeed, if at this date we still conform to Judaism, then we own that we have not received grace.” (Ignatius to the Magnesians, 8)

“It is absurd to have Jesus Christ on the lips, and at the same time live like a Jew.” (Ignatius to the Magnesians, 10)

- Early in the 2nd Century, the festivals of the Torah had already been abandoned by the Christian Church. The Passover seder had been replaced by the Eucharist, and already it was being taught that the Eucharist was the means of salvation:

“Take care, then, to partake of the Eucharist; for, one is the Flesh of Our Lord Jesus Christ, and one the cup to unite us with His Blood, and one altar, just as there is one bishop assisted by the presbytery and the deacons, my fellow servants. Thus you will conform in all your actions to the will of God.” (Ignatius to Philadelphians, 4)

“Those who have become acquainted with the secondary (i.e., under Christ) constitutions of the apostles, are aware that the Lord instituted a new oblation in the new covenant, according to [the declaration of] Malachi the prophet. . . . For we make an oblation to God of the bread and the cup of blessing, giving Him thanks in that He has commanded the earth to bring forth these fruits for our nourishment. And then, when we have perfected the oblation, we invoke the Holy Spirit, that He may exhibit this sacrifice, both the bread the body of Christ, and the cup the blood of Christ, in order that the receivers of these antitypes may obtain remission of sins and life eternal.” (Ireneus, 130–200 CE)

- Less than 50 years after the death of the last Apostle (John), the emerging Christian Church has forsaken and despised her roots, turn as an enemy against the Jews, and left the clear and direct teachings of Yeshua and His Apostles.

Mandating Christianity: the 3rd and 4th Centuries

- the growing Christian Church, through the 2nd and 3rd Centuries, had gained a great amount of power, but still was unrecognized by the Roman Empire. This all changed when Constantine became Emperor of Rome.
 - since Christianity was legalized in the Roman Empire under Constantine, the Church Councils were given a much greater authority. Anti-Semitism rose sharply, and matters relating to the Torah (Sabbath, festivals, etc.) were outlawed

“We wish to make it known to the Jews and their elders and their patriarchs that if, after the enactment of this law, any one of them dares to attack with stones or some other manifestation of anger, another who has fled their dangerous sect and attached himself to the worship of God, he must speedily be given to the flames and burnt together with all his accomplices. Moreover, if any one of the population should join their abominable sect and attend their meetings, he will bear with them the deserved penalties.” (Constantine, 315 CE)

“We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews.” (Letter to bishops from Constantine, 325 CE [PG 20:1074-1080])

“It is not lawful to receive portions sent from the feasts of the Jews or heretics, nor to feast together with them.” (Council of Laodicea, c. 350 CE, Canon xxxvii)

“It is not lawful to receive unleavened bread from Jews, nor to be partakers of their impiety.” (most likely in reference to observance of Passover; Council of Laodicea, Canon xxxviii)

Slayers of the Lord, murderers of the prophets, adversaries of God, haters of God, men who show contempt for the law, foes of grace, enemies of their fathers' faith, advocates of the devil, brood of vipers, slanderers, scoffers, men whose minds are in darkness, leaven of the Pharisees, assembly of demons, sinners, wicked men, stoners, and haters of righteousness. (St. Gregory, 335-394 CE, *Homilies on the Resurrection*)

- in 321 CE, Constantine issued the decree making Sunday a mandatory day of rest:

“On the venerable Day of the Sun let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. In the country, however, persons engaged in agriculture may freely and lawfully continue their pursuits; because it often happens that another day is not so suitable for grain-sowing or for vine-planting; lest by neglecting the proper moment for such operations the bounty of heaven should be lost” (Letter of Constantine, 321 CE)

No turning back

- Once the Christian Church had turned her back upon the Synagogue, there was no turning back
 - she had defined herself as fundamentally different than the synagogue. In order to maintain her self-identity, she had to maintain her opposition to Israel
 - in order to define herself against the synagogue, the Church had adopted an allegorical interpretation of Scripture which she had to maintain
 - the Church's theological stance, that she was the "New Israel," made it impossible for her to ever seek reconciliation with the Synagogue, or ever to see herself as grafted into Israel
 - Ultimately, the anti-Semitism that so dominated the Church in modern times, and that supported Hitler's Holocaust, finds its roots in the early separation of the Church and Synagogue
- The Church's view of Israel is bound up with her view of the Torah
 - in rejecting Israel, she also was forced to reject the Torah, because living according to the Torah automatically forms a connection to Israel
 - in rejecting the Torah, the Church had to formulate her own "standards of righteousness"
 - ultimately, anti-nomianism (no enduring standards or laws) became a constant thread in Christian theology, in which "grace" is pitted against "law"
 - even in the Reformation of the 15th Century, which returned the Church to a new appreciation of the Scriptures and justification by faith, she could not bring herself to jettison Replacement Theology. In the end, Luther exhibited complete anti-Semitism in his writings

One modern evangelical answer to the dilemma of Israel and the Church: Dispensationalism

- during the rise of evangelicalism (late 18th-early 19th Centuries), the issue of the relationship of Israel and the Church was once again confronted
 - some evangelicals were uncomfortable with the Replacement Theology of the Reformation
 - having adopted a more historical, grammatical hermeneutic, the Scriptures were too clear about God's future plans for Israel
 - an emphasis upon eschatology (doctrine of the last things) and prophecy also brought God's enduring faithfulness to Israel back into the theological arena
- at the beginning of the 20th Century, evangelicalism began to develop Dispensational Theology as an answer to the Israel/Church dilemma. The basic aspects of Dispensational Theology are:
 - Israel and the Church are always distinct
 - what pleases God differs from one era to another
 - + thus, the Torah was good for the dispensation of ancient Israel
 - + in the "Church age," (beginning with Acts 2 and ending at the rapture when the Church is taken out of the world) however, the Torah has been suspended
 - God "shifted" His work from Israel to the Church, but will again focus upon Israel in the last days

- The problem with Dispensationalism
 - the Scriptures simply don't support the primary tenants of this hermeneutic
 - in Paul's Olive Tree metaphor, believing Gentiles (wild olive branches) are grafted into the tree along with Israel (natural branches)
 - the teachings of Yeshua are often relegated to the dispensation prior to the "Church Age," leaving one unable to make present-day applications of His instructions (e.g., Matt 5:17–20)
 - it essentially teaches that the only Scriptures that form the basis for right and wrong during the "Church Age" are those written to the Church, namely, Acts and the Epistles. In so doing, it arbitrarily dissects the Scriptures.

Summary: Seeking a biblical answer

- God has only made covenant promises to one people: Israel (the seed of Abraham). Apart from the covenant promise God has made to Israel, there is no salvation
- From the beginning, God revealed that He intended to bless all the nations in Abraham
- Even during the times of ancient Israel, some from the nations joined her in the worship of the One true God
- The prophets foretold a time when a great harvest of the nations would be gathered to faith in Israel's God and worship together with her
- The chosen ones from the nations do not replace Israel, nor is Israel set aside while God forms something new with the Gentiles
- Those who are saved from among the nations join Israel, enlarging the remnant until the time that God pours out His Spirit once again and brings all of Israel to faith in the Messiah (Rom 11:25-26)
 - one people of God
 - one way of salvation
 - one pattern for righteous living

Session Eleven

Battle lines: The Scriptures

Something is occurring in our time that is unprecedented: many believers are coming to a deep appreciation of Torah, the first five books of the Bible, which a great deal of the Church considers antiquated and irrelevant. People are coming together to form congregations and communities in which they can live out their faith in Yeshua in a Torah pursuant way. In doing so, they are reading the whole Bible, some of them for the first time, and finding out that the wisdom and instruction found in the Torah is a great delight. But they are also finding out that there are many questions for which they have no ready answers.

Moreover, many of these people have come to realize that the standard teaching they received from the Christian Church was in some cases incomplete, and in other cases simply wrong. They realize in a new way that the responsibility for knowing what the Bible teaches rests upon their own shoulders, and that they must take up the responsibility of being a “workman who does not need to be ashamed, accurately handling the word of truth” (2Tim 2:15).

But while there is a renewed hunger to know the God of the Scriptures, and a commitment to know the Scriptures for themselves, there is also a vulnerability that they encounter. Having realized that former teachers had, in some cases, led them astray, they are left to wonder who they can trust. As such, they may be vulnerable to false teachers who seek to undermine their faith, and lead them into error, especially teachers who appear to have great knowledge and experience in matters relating to the Torah. Indeed, those who are part of what we might call the “Torah moment” know for certain that they are engaged in a battle for the truth.

In any battle, it is essential to be aware of the tactics of the enemy. And experience has proven that the enemy of our souls regularly attacks Torah communities in two essential areas: what we believe about the Bible, and what we believe about Yeshua. The first attack comes as the enemy attempts to sow seeds of doubt regarding the authority of Scripture. In the second attack, the enemy seeks to undermine the truth of Yeshua’s deity. Obviously, the two are related. If we begin to question the authority of Scripture, we having nothing left upon which to depend when it comes to seeking the truth about who the Messiah is, and what His work will accomplish.

The Authority of the Scriptures - the Written Revelation of God

The Torah is the foundation

- The first written revelation of God are the Ten Words (Ten Commandments)

Ex. 31:18 When He had finished speaking with him upon Mount Sinai, He gave Moses the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone, written by the finger of God.

Deut. 9:10 “The LORD gave me the two tablets of stone written by the finger of God; and on them were all the words which the LORD had spoken with you at the mountain from the midst of the fire on the day of the assembly.

- the emphasis of “written by the finger of God” is that the first writing of Scripture comes directly from God Himself.
 - this means that it is entirely without error
 - this means that it is authoritative in every way
- the Ten Words form the exemplar or standard against which the subsequent Scriptures align
 - after receiving the Ten Words written upon the tablets of stone, Moses wrote down the remainder of the Covenant (as God had given it to him)
 - this was read in the hearing of the people

Ex. 24:7 Then he [Moses] took the book of the covenant and read it in the hearing of the people; and they said, “All that the LORD has spoken we will do, and we will be obedient!”

- here Moses takes the “book of the covenant” (סֵפֶר הַבְּרִית, *sefer hab'rit*) whereas the Ten Words are said to be written upon “tablets” (לוחות, *luchot*).
- the “book of the covenant” included more than just the Ten Words, meaning that Moses had written down what he had received from God upon the mountain

Ex. 24:3 Then Moses came and recounted to the people all the words of the LORD and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice and said, “All the words which the LORD has spoken we will do!”

- the words that Moses had written included “all the ordinances” (literally “words,” כָּל-דְּבָרֵי יְהוָה, “all the words of Adonai”).
- thus, the additional words that Moses wrote in the Book of the Covenant were still considered to be “the words of Adonai.” They carried the same authority as the Ten Words written upon the tablets of stone.

- Moses composed the remainder of the Torah (Five Books of Moses) according to the command of God, but we are not told exactly how or when he did this

Ex. 34:27 Then the LORD said to Moses, “Write down these words, for in accordance with these words I have made a covenant with you and with Israel.”

- the fact that the revelation of God given to Moses on Sinai constituted a covenant with the people of Israel, may help to suggest a scenario for the manner in which Moses composed the remainder of the Five Books
 - the Ten Words begin with “I am Adonai your God, who brought you out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery.” Commonly in treaties of the Ancient Near East, they begin with a description of the King who is making the covenant.
 - realizing that subsequent generations would need to know the story of the Exodus in order to understand the first of the Ten Words, Moses wrote that history
 - the history of the exodus required an explanation of how Israel came to Egypt in the first place, thus the Patriarchal narratives (Gen 12-50) were written.
 - the Patriarchal stories required an explanation of the choosing of Abraham in the first place, so the creation narrative and formation of the nations was added (Gen 1-11).
 - the need to construct the Tabernacle, set it up, and begin the service in the Tabernacle (including the priestly duties) required the writing of the remainder of Exodus and the laws contained in Leviticus.
 - to this was added the historical narratives of Israel’s journeys and their entrance into the Land (Numbers and Deuteronomy).
- Once the writings of Moses were established, they became the standard against which all subsequent writings were judged:

Deut 18:18 ‘I will raise up a prophet from among their countrymen like you [Moses], and I will put My words in his mouth, and he shall speak to them all that I command him. 19 ‘It shall come about that whoever will not listen to My words which he shall speak in My name, I Myself will require it of him. 20 ‘But the prophet who speaks a word presumptuously in My name which I have not commanded him to speak, or which he speaks in the name of other gods, that prophet shall die.’ 21 “You may say in your heart, ‘How will we know the word which the LORD has not spoken?’ 22 “When a prophet speaks in the name of the LORD, if it will not be the word or does not happen, that is the thing which the LORD has not spoken. The prophet has spoken it presumptuously; you shall not be afraid of him.

- the test of the prophet includes two aspects:
 - the thing spoken by a prophet is “not the word” (לֹא יְהִיָּה הַדְּבָר), meaning the matter (word) is not in concert with the word already given by God through Moses. This is reinforcement of the previous notice that speaking in the name of another god identifies the false prophet

- the thing spoken by the prophet “does not come” (וְלֹא יָבוֹא), meaning that something predicted by the prophet does not happen.
- the two tests of the prophet are therefore necessary
 - + his words can be received immediately if they align with the words given to Moses, meaning they do not contradict what God has already revealed, and therefore do not introduce anything contrary to the truth that God is the only God
 - + since the prophet may announce future events, one is not able to determine the prophet’s viability until such events occurred. If this were the only criteria, the status of the prophet could not be known for some time, especially if the events he prophesied were in the distant future.
- **Conclusion: the words of God, divinely inscribed upon the tablets, form the first exemplar. Moses’ subsequent words given to him by God, were in concert with the original Ten Words. From that point onward, all that would be received as the word of God would need to agree with the Torah. Anyone who came with a message that contradicted the Torah would be marked as a false prophet, or anyone who predicted events that did not come to pass.**

The Prophets & Writings agree with Moses

- By the time of the United Monarchy (the reigns of Saul, David, and Solomon), the Torah had been compiled into a recognized canon. The term “the Torah of Adonai” could be spoken of as something everyone recognized: “the Torah of Adonai is perfect, restoring the soul” (Ps 19:7), as well as the “Torah of Moses”

1Kings 2:3 “Keep the charge of the LORD your God, to walk in His ways, to keep His statutes, His commandments, His ordinances, and His testimonies, according to what is written in the Law of Moses, that you may succeed in all that you do and wherever you turn”

- the former prophets were writing around the time of the United Monarchy, and they had the written Torah as their guide. Thus, the Torah continued to be the touchstone for the people to judge the veracity of the prophets. Anything written that disagreed with Moses would not have been received.
- The later prophets then had the former prophets and the Torah of Moses as the measuring stick for their work.
- the Writings (the Psalms being the largest section) also conformed to what had been received from Moses and the Prophets. The fact that the Psalter, in its final compilation, begins with a “Torah Psalm” (Ps 1), indicates that the Psalms themselves conformed to the standard presented by Moses and the Prophets
- prior to the exile (587 BCE), the Torah and Prophets (up to that time) were recognized as a canon of Scripture
- by the 2nd Century BCE, all of the books of the Tanach were gathered together as the canon of Hebrew Scriptures

- in its original grouping, the Hebrew Scriptures consisted of 22 “books”
Torah – Gen, Ex, Lev, Num, Deut (5 books)
Prophets – Joshua, Judges/Ruth, Samuel, Kings, Isaiah,
Jeremiah/Lamentations, Ezekiel, The Twelve, Job, Daniel
Ezra/Nehemiah, Chronicles, Ezra (13 books)
Writings – Psalms, Proverbs, Qohelet, Song of Songs (4 books)
- When Yeshua and His Apostles refer to the “Scriptures,” they are referencing the Hebrew Scriptures as they were known in the 1st Century
 - neither Yeshua or His Apostles ever quote the Apocryphal Writings as Scripture
 - Yeshua refers to the three part division of the Tanach as the inspired Scriptures:

Luke 24:44 Now He said to them, “These are My words which I spoke to you while I was still with you, that all things which are written about Me in the Torah of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms must be fulfilled.”

- Tanach = Torah, Nevi'im (prophets), Ketuvim (writings)
 - the Psalms, constituting the largest section of the Writings, is used to refer to the whole section
- **Conclusion: Yeshua and His Apostles received the Hebrew Scriptures as we now have them as the canon of divine Scripture**

Yeshua and His apostles taught that the Scriptures were the work of the Holy Spirit

Mark 12:36 “David himself said in the Holy Spirit, ‘The Lord said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, until I put Your enemies beneath Your feet.”’ [quote from Ps 110]

- David did not write his words on his own: the Holy Spirit superintended his writing
- this was also the case with the prophets: Ezek. 2:2 “As He spoke to me the Spirit entered me and set me on my feet; and I heard Him speaking to me.”
- thus, the Apostles teach us that the Scriptures (the Tanach in their day) were written under the superintending hand of the Spirit:

2Pet 1:20 knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone’s own interpretation. 21 For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. [ESV]

- why does Peter begin with emphasizing “first of all?”
- in the previous context, Peter is describing his experience with Yeshua on the mountain of transfiguration (2Pet 1:16–18)
 - he does not negate the value of this experience
 - v. 18 - “we ourselves heard this very voice borne from heaven, for we were with him on the holy mountain.”
 - but then Peter goes on to write:

2Pet 1:19 And we have something more sure, the prophetic word, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts,

- even though the experience on the mountain was miraculous, Peter affirms that the written word of God (the prophetic word) is even more certain
- Peter therefore admonishes us to put the instructions contained in the Scriptures as more valid than our experiences, even those that may be miraculous
- this is because (“first of all,” v. 20) the words of Scripture are the very words of God

2Tim. 3:16 All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be competent, equipped for every good work.

- the Apostolic Scriptures were not yet written and gathered together as a received body of Scripture when Paul wrote this
- When Paul speaks of “all Scripture,” he’s referring to the canon of the Tanach
- the Scriptures are the means for equipping the “man of God” for “every good work”
- **Conclusion: the Scriptures gain their eternal value because they are the product of the Spirit of God, and thus are the very words of God**

The Apostolic Scriptures

- The Gospels were written by those who were eye witnesses of Yeshua
 - they were written at a time when many eyewitnesses of Yeshua were still alive
 - the Apostles could not have written spurious accounts without being challenged by those who had witnessed the events they describe
- Yeshua put His teachings on par with the Tanach:

Mark 13:31 “Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will not pass away.”
 Psa. 119:89 “Forever, O LORD, Your word is settled in heaven.”

- only the Apostolic Scriptures contain the words of Yeshua
- had the Apostolic Scriptures not been written, the promise of Yeshua, that His words would not pass away, would have been unfulfilled and rendered Him a false prophet
- therefore, the Apostolic Scriptures are a necessary part of the Scriptures as a whole

- the words of Yeshua were already considered authoritative by the early Apostles:

1Tim. 5:18 For the Scripture says, “You shall not muzzle the ox while he is threshing,” and “The laborer is worthy of his wages.”

Luke 10:7 “Stay in that house, eating and drinking what they give you; for the laborer is worthy of his wages. Do not keep moving from house to house.

- this saying of Paul links the words of the Torah (Deut 25:4) together with the words of Yeshua (Lk 10:7) and labels both as “Scripture”
- by the time of Paul’s writing (45-65 CE), the Apostolic Gospels (which were also in the process of being written) were being received as Scripture
- Paul’s epistles as well were being received as Scripture:

2Pet 3:15 “...just as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, 16 as also in all his letters, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.”

The self-authenticating nature of Scripture

- since the Scriptures are “God-breathed” (inspired), they carry within them the innate spiritual quality of God’s word
- the communities of God’s people, throughout the ages, have recognized this innate quality of the Scripture through:
 - their ability to transform lives by the work of the Spirit
 - through the accurate prophetic accounts they contain
 - through their consistent message with the canon of Scripture already received
- the canonization process was a recognition of the self-authenticating nature of Scripture
 - no council or group of leaders decided what was, and what was not Scripture
 - the various councils simply affirmed what the Scriptures had already manifested, that is, the quality of being inspired by the Holy Spirit

Were the Scriptures corrupted in the process of copying manuscripts?

- none of the “originals” are extant today, only copies
- the Hebrew scribes were extremely articulate in their work of copying the sacred text
 - the Masoretic text was finalized 900–1050 CE
 - the Dead Sea Scrolls, dated to 200 BCE–50 CE, are the earliest copies of the Hebrew Scriptures
 - remarkable consistency is found between the Dead Sea Scrolls and the Masoretic text, proving beyond doubt the accuracy of the scribal traditions

- there are literally thousands of manuscripts, parts of manuscripts, and scraps of the Apostolic Scriptures
 - these agree nearly 80% of the time
 - of the remaining 20%, the majority of differences are in matters of spelling, grammar, and easily determined scribal errors (e.g., skipping a line, copying a word twice, etc.)
 - of the remaining differences between the manuscripts, only a small percentage constitute significant variants
 - even where there are clear choices of readings between the manuscripts, none of these would change any basic doctrine or belief. In any single instance where a text may be in question, other Scriptures confirm the consistent, biblical teaching.
 - it is evident that the Holy Spirit was not only instrumental in the initial writing of Scripture, but also in its ultimate preservation from generation to generation

Were the Apostolic Scriptures originally written in Hebrew?

- Some among Torah communities are claiming that the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew, and that the extant Greek, Syriac, and other manuscripts were corrupted when the Church forsook her Hebrew roots
 - if this were the case, we would find some evidence of Hebrew manuscripts of the Apostolic Scriptures
 - to date, only very late copies of a Hebrew Matthew have been found (14th Century and later)
 - the notion that the Greek manuscripts have been tampered with does not bear up under scrutiny. The Greek manuscripts contain many aspects of theology that were “embarrassing” to the later Christian Church, which one would have expected them to change if they had, in fact, tampered with the texts:
 - + the Jewishness of Yeshua: Matt 12:28 “...you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel.”
 - + the Jewishness of Paul: Acts 23:6, “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees...”
 - + the humanity of Yeshua: Matt. 24:36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.”
- There is every reason to believe that the majority of the Apostolic Writings were originally written in Greek
 - Greek was the *lingua franca* of the Roman Empire
 - most of the communities to which the Apostles wrote were, in the majority, Gentile
 - even the Jewish communities of the 1st Century used Greek extensively
 - + until the followers of Yeshua became a driving force, the Lxx was regularly used in the synagogue
 - + Philo, a Jewish philosopher and writer, wrote all of his work in Greek
 - + Josephus, the Jewish historian, wrote his works in Greek

- from a purely linguistic standpoint, the majority of the Apostolic Scriptures read as though they were originally written in Greek
 - + the fact that Semitisms are found does not require a Semitic original
 - + the majority of the time, the Greek text does not bear the marks of being a translation
- the result of speculating that the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew is to undermine their authority
 - we all know that translations are inevitably biased by the translators
 - if all we have in the Apostolic Scriptures is a Greek translation of an original Hebrew, we cannot trust them
 - if such were the case, we are left without an accurate witness of the life of Yeshua, of His teachings, and of the subsequent Apostolic message
 - however, all of the data points clearly to the fact that most of the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Greek, and that the manuscripts that are left to us of the Apostolic Scriptures give accurate witness to the original writings
 - we believe that the God, Who inspired the original Scriptures, was also involved in maintaining their transmission through the centuries so that the word of God would be available to every generation
- **Conclusion: the claim that the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Hebrew or Aramaic is pure speculation without any basis in historical or linguistic fact**

Summary & Conclusion

- Satan knows that the word of God is the primary source of truth for God's people. Therefore, he will do all in his power to undermine the authority of the Scriptures.
- the Torah, given directly by God to Moses on Sinai, constitutes the first written revelation of God, and stands as the foundation for all subsequent Scripture.
- God continued to give His divine revelation through prophets. The test of a true prophet was twofold: 1) his words did not contradict God's revelation already given in the Torah, and 2) when he prophesied of future events, they came to pass.
- by the time of the United Monarch (ca. 1000 BCE), the Torah and the former Prophets were recognized as the received word of God.
- by 200 BCE, the entire Tanach (Torah, Prophets, and Writings) was gathered together as the received word of God. In the 1st Century CE, Yeshua and His Apostles clearly affirm the Tanach as the inspired word of God.
- The teachings of the Yeshua, and the writings of His Apostles were already circulating by the end of the 1st Century CE, and by the 2nd Century CE, had been recognized as inspired Scripture.
- Yeshua Himself put His own words on par with those of the Tanach when He affirmed that His words were eternal
- The Scriptures, being the product of human authors whose writings were superintended by the Holy

Session Twelve

Battle lines: Yeshua

Inevitably, the issue of Yeshua as God's Messiah is the dividing mark between those who are saved, and those who are lost.

John 3:36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but the wrath of God abides on him."

John 14:6 "Yeshua said to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but through Me."

From the very beginning of the Messiah's appearance as the incarnate Son of God, Satan attempted to do away with Him through Herod's wicked plot to kill the newly born sons in the vicinity of Bethlehem (Matt 2:16–17). Having failed in that attempt, Satan continued to seek ways to destroy the Messiah. He tried to overcome Him in the wilderness temptation (Matt 4) and eventually thought he had won the victory when, through godless hands (Acts 2:23), our Master was crucified. But, of course, what Satan thought was his victory, turned out to be his utter demise. Yeshua was crucified according to "the predetermined plan and foreknowledge of God," and in His death and resurrection, secured the eternal salvation of all His people.

Yet the enemy of our souls has not accepted defeat. "...Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour" (1Pet. 5:8). He continues his battle against Messiah by trying to undermine His person and thus, His saving work. It is no wonder, then, that in our day, the foundational issue of Yeshua is once again under attack. And primarily the point of Satan's attacks center on the issue of Yeshua's deity. If Yeshua can be portrayed as simply a good man, but not as the Son of God, then the enemy has won. For if Yeshua is merely a man and not God with us (Immanuel), then He is not the Savior of sinners. For no man, regardless of how good he might be, has the ability to forgive the sins of others. Nor is the death of a common man sufficient to meet the infinite demands of God as a sacrifice for sin. It is therefore essential that we understand the message of the Scriptures regarding the eternal, divine nature of Yeshua, and that we confess this mystery as a core element of our faith in God.

The mystery of the Divine One

1Tim. 3:16 By common confession, great is the mystery of godliness: He who was revealed in the flesh, was vindicated in the Spirit, seen by angels, proclaimed among the nations, believed on in the world, taken up in glory.

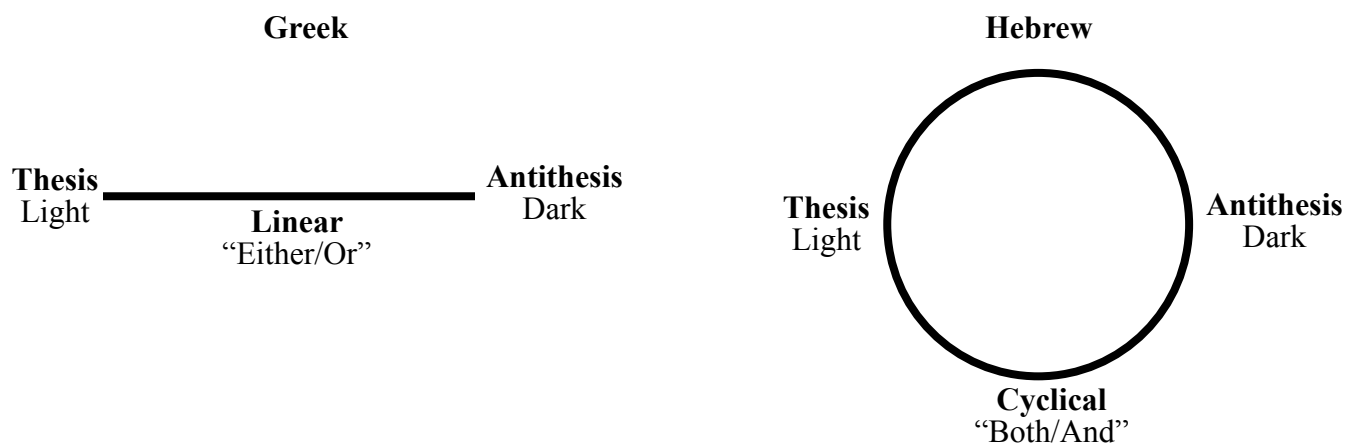
- Paul labels the incarnation as a "mystery" (μυστήριον, *musterion*)
 - this word speaks of "the private counsel of God" or "God's secret." It is something that *transcends normal understanding*

- it is something that cannot be fully explained by human rationale
- attempts to “unravel” the mystery of God will inevitably lead to error
 - this does not mean it is false simply because we cannot explain it
 - this does not mean that our faith is irrational (a “blind leap into the dark”)
 - it means that we recognize our inability to plumb the depths of God’s being

Comparing the Hebrew and Greek worldview

Category	Hebrew	Greek
Truth	That which is seen and experienced. I explain what is true by what I see in life and history; that which is concrete.	Contained in the realm of philosophy. I explain the truth in terms of ideas; that which is abstract
Values	That which is lived out within the realm of relationships; community, family	Found in the realm of ideas: that which is considered “good” and “bad” in terms of ethical concepts
Concepts	Action oriented. Note that the Hebrew language itself is dominated by verbs (actions).	Idea oriented. The idea of a thing is more important than the thing itself (Plato).
God	The “unseen One” is known through what He has done. He is described in physical ways (having eyes, ears, nose, hands). I describe God by His actions in history and in my own life (creation, exodus, Sinai)	God is known as an idea, a lofty esoteric concept, a philosophical category of “good.”
Theology	The truths of God are known in the realm of historical relationships (covenants) in which the invisible God manifests Himself through covenant relationships within time and space.	The truths of God are compiled into a list of ideas (creeds). One who “believes” in God agrees with a list of ideas (a “theological system”).
Man	Man is a whole, made up of material (body) and immaterial (soul/spirit). Both are necessary and equally important (proven by the belief in resurrection).	Man is a combination of parts, and is known when each part is analyzed and understood. The immaterial is more important than the material.

The path of knowledge (how I know what is true)



- The differences between the Hebrew and Greek models of thinking (worldview) are profound and important.
- The Greek model seeks to avoid “tension.” Truth is an “either/or” proposition. One finds oneself at one end of linear path, and all “facts” fit on the linear line.
 - All facts are integrated so that one fact must lead to the next fact (like dominos)
 - “step logic:” fact A, therefore fact B, therefore fact C, etc.
- The Hebrew model recognizes the necessity of “tension” and is therefore willing to live within this tension without seeking to resolve it in an “either/or” way.
 - “facts” that seem to contradict may still be true. This creates “tension” (like a rope for tying)
 - “box logic:” facts in box A may seem to contradict facts in box B
- Examples of “tension” in the Hebrew worldview
 - Who hardened Pharaoh’s heart? God & Pharaoh
 - God is wrathful / God is merciful
 - Messiah is the Lamb of God / Messiah is the Lion of Judah
 - Hell is black darkness / Hell is a fiery lake of fire (Jude 13; Rev 19:20)
 - whoever comes I receive / only those drawn by God come (John 1:12; 6:44)
 - life comes through death (Matt 10:39; John 12:24)
 - the one who is a servant (lowest position) is greatest of all (highest position) (Matt 20:26)
 - the way “up” is the way “down” (Phil 2:5ff)
 - God controls all things / prayer changes things (Rom 8:28; James 4:2; 5:16)
 - God dwells apart from sin / God dwells in the midst of Israel
 - God is uncontrolled / we grieve the Spirit of God by our sin
 - God is sovereign / evil exists in His universe
- Yet, in spite of these tensions, the Scriptures do not seek to resolve the tension through philosophical explanations. The greatest unresolved tension is the Incarnation.

John 1:1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.
 14 And the Word became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we saw His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth.
 18 No one has seen God at any time; the only begotten God who is in the bosom of the Father, He has explained Him.

- The Word (the *memra*) refers to Messiah, Who is identified as God
- The Word became flesh, meaning He was seen (cf. 1Jn 1:1, What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands, concerning the Word of Life”)
- Yet John has no problem saying that “no one has seen God at any time”
- There seems to be an obvious and apparent contradiction, but John finds no compulsion to attempt to resolve it. He willingly leaves the tension which the unexplainable mystery holds.

The pre-incarnate appearances of Yeshua in the Angel of the Lord

- The Angel of the Lord appears throughout the Tanach, doing things that only God could do
- Those to whom the Angel of the Lord appears recognize that they have “seen God”

Gen. 18:1 Now the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, while he was sitting at the tent door in the heat of the day.

17 The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do...?”

19 “For I have chosen him...”

22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the LORD.

- the LORD appears to Abraham as one of three men
- the man speaking identifies Himself as the One who had chosen Abraham
- Abraham recognizes the “man” with whom he spoke as God, the “Judge of all the earth”
- yet Moses does not give us any explanation of how the invisible God could reveal Himself to Abraham as a man!

Gen. 48:15 He blessed Joseph, and said, “The God before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac walked, the God who has been my shepherd all my life to this day, 16 The angel who has redeemed me from all evil, Bless the lads;

- Jacob wrestled with a man (Gen 32) whom he identified as “God,” calling the place where he wrestled “Peniel” (the face [presence] of God)
- in his blessing over Joseph, he equates “the angel” with God who had redeemed him from evil

Gen. 22:12 He said, “Do not stretch out your hand against the lad, and do nothing to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.”

- the Angel of the Lord calls to Abraham (v. 11)
- Yet the Angel of the Lord has the authority to overturn a direct command of God: v. 2, “Take now your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, and go to the land of Moriah, and offer him there as a burnt offering on one of the mountains of which I will tell you.”
- the Angel of the Lord states that Abraham had not withheld his son “from Me”
- Abraham calls the place *Adonai Yir'eh* (יהוה יראֵה), “Adonai is the Seeing One”

Ex. 3:2 The angel of the LORD appeared to him in a blazing fire from the midst of a bush
 4 When the LORD saw that he turned aside to look, God called to him from the midst of the bush...
 5 Then He said, “Do not come near here; remove your sandals from your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground.”
 6 He said also, “I am the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.”

- the Angel of the LORD is clearly identified as God
- the Angel of the LORD is the same as “the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob
- the presence of the Angel of Lord in the bush creates “holy ground”

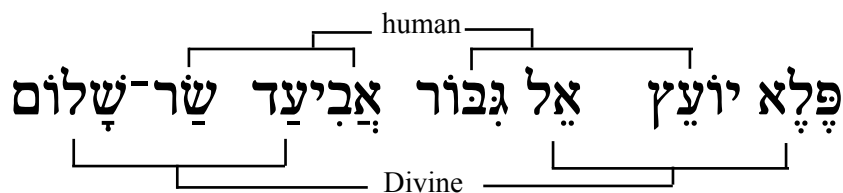
Ex. 23:20 “Behold, I am going to send an angel before you to guard you along the way and to bring you into the place which I have prepared. 21 “Be on your guard before him and obey his voice; do not be rebellious toward him, for he will not pardon your transgression, since My name is in him.

- God promises to send an angel before the people of Israel as they leave Egypt for the Promised Land
- the Angel is to be obeyed
- the Angel has the ability to pardon transgression
- the Angel “has My name” within Him = the very essence of God
- Other examples:
 - Num 22:22ff
 - Joshua 5:13–15
 - Judges 2
 - Judges 6:11ff
 - Judges 13:3ff
- **Conclusion: the appearance of the Angel of the Lord prepared the way for mankind to realize that God could be manifest in the flesh. Though mysterious, the incarnational reality of God was not contrary to His essential nature.**

The promise of Messiah as Immanuel (God with us)

Is. 9:6 For a child will be born to us, a son will be given to us; And the government will rest on His shoulders; And His name will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Eternal Father, Prince of Peace. 7 There will be no end to the increase of His government or of peace, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and righteousness from then on and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will accomplish this.

- the early Rabbis identified this text as speaking of Messiah. Note that the Targum explicitly states that this description is that of Messiah
- the context of Isaiah also identifies the coming child as One Who would accomplish only what God could do
- the names given to the child are the very attributes of God Himself
- the names reveal the human and divine nature of the Messiah

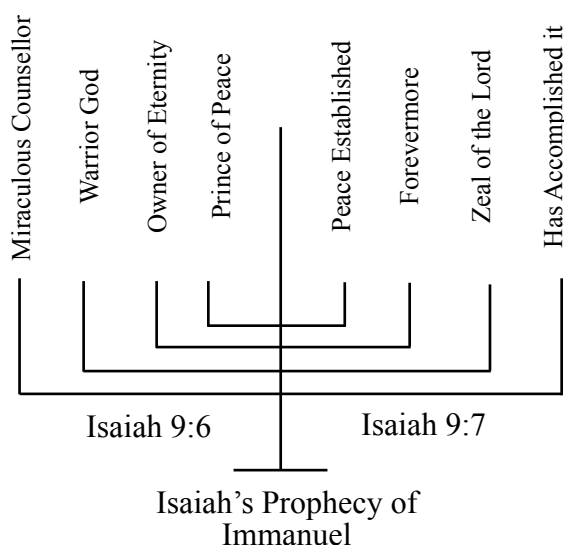


- Each name is a combination of a divine and human attribute, given in chiasmic arrangement

Divine		Human
Wonderful (פְּלֵא, "miraculous")	→	Counsellor
God (אֵל)	→	Warrior
Eternity	←	(Owner) Father
Shalom	←	Prince

- this corresponds directly with the following verse, again by chiasm (v. 7):

Verse 6	Verse 7
Wonderful Counsellor	will accomplish this
Warrior God	Zeal of the Lord of host
Owner of Eternity	from then on and forevermore
Prince of Peace	no end of His government or of peace



Zech 14:3 Then the LORD will go forth and fight against those nations, as when He fights on a day of battle. 4 In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which is in front of Jerusalem on the east; and the Mount of Olives will be split in its middle from east to west by a very large valley, so that half of the mountain will move toward the north and the other half toward the south.

- Zechariah foretells of the time when the LORD (יהוה) will fight for Israel
- In that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives. Does the invisible God have feet?
 - note Ex 24:10, “and they saw the God of Israel; and under His feet there appeared to be a pavement of sapphire, as clear as the sky itself.”
 - here, once again, we have the mystery of the incarnation, without further explanation or any attempt to explain what seems to be a clear contradiction

The witness of the Apostolic Scriptures to the Deity of Yeshua

John 8:58 Yeshua said to them, “Truly, truly, I say to you, before Abraham was born, I am.”

- Yeshua does not say “before Abraham was born, I *was*” but rather “I *am*.”
- in claiming to be “I am,” Yeshua made Himself one with the “I AM” of Ex 3:14
- those listening took up stones to stone Yeshua, because they recognized that in claiming to “I AM,” He had made Himself equally eternal with the Almighty
- This accords with Micah’s prophecy of the Messiah:

Mic. 5:2 “But as for you, Bethlehem Ephrathah, too little to be among the clans of Judah, from you One will go forth for Me to be ruler in Israel. His goings forth are from long ago, From the days of eternity.”

Rom. 9:5 whose are the fathers, and from whom is the Messiah according to the flesh, who is over all, God blessed forever. Amen.

- Paul is listing the blessings bestowed upon Israel by God
- some have tried to punctuate this sentence in such a way that the phrase “who is over all” is separated from the concluding phrase “God blessed forever.” However, the grammar and construction of the sentence favors the understanding that Paul was equating the Messiah with “God who is blessed forever.”

Acts 20:28 “Be on guard for yourselves and for all the flock, among which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers, to shepherd the assembly (*ekklesia*) of God which He purchased with His own blood.

- here, once again, the presupposition of the Apostle is that Yeshua is God, for it was Yeshua who shed His blood on behalf of sinners
- some Greek texts have “Lord” (κύριος) rather than “God” (θεός), but it is clear that the earliest and most trusted manuscripts have “God.” Some scribes, uneasy with the obvious implications of Paul’s words, changed the text to read “Lord.”

Titus 2:13 “looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Messiah Yeshua ...”

- the Greek construction (Granville Sharp’s rule) makes it clear that the terms “God” and “Savior” both apply to “Messiah Yeshua”
- here, once again, the presupposition of the Apostolic Writers was that Yeshua is God in the flesh.
- **Conclusion:**
 - **the Tanach anticipates the coming of a Messiah Who is, Himself, eternal, having the attributes of the Almighty, Who accomplishes what only God can do**
 - **the Apostolic Scriptures, including the witness of Yeshua Himself, affirm the eternal, divine nature of the Messiah Yeshua**
 - **if we deny the deity of Messiah, we stand against the uniform witness of the Scriptures**
 - **we don’t pretend fully to understand this mystery, but we affirm it.**

The Trinity Doctrine as an explanation for the mystery

- The Scriptures affirm the eternality of the Father, the Messiah, and the Holy Spirit
 - the Spirit of God is constantly spoken of as giving divine revelation to the prophets, yet Paul affirms that the Scriptures are “God-breathed”

- Peter equates the Spirit with God:

Acts 5:3 But Peter said, “Ananias, why has Satan filled your heart to lie to the Holy Spirit and to keep back some of the price of the land?
4 “...You have not lied to men but to God.”

- the Father, Messiah and Spirit are all accredited as being the Creator
 - Gen 1:1, “In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth”
 - John 1: 3 “All things came into being through Him (the Word), and apart from Him nothing came into being that has come into being.”
 - Ps 104:30 You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the ground.
 - Gen 1:2 The earth was formless and void, and darkness was over the surface of the deep, and the Spirit of God was moving over the surface of the waters.
 - Job 33:4 “The Spirit of God has made me, and the breath of the Almighty gives me life.”
- **Conclusion: the Scripture clearly speak of God as Father, Messiah (Son), and Spirit. This is without question**

But the Scriptures do not attempt an explanation of the mystery of the godhead

- The need to formulate the Trinity Doctrine in the 4th Century CE came as a result of the Christian Church being captivated by Greek thought
 - the center of Greek philosophy is the issue of “being:” what constitutes reality
 - as the Greek fathers contemplated the mystery of the Godhead, they were not satisfied to hold it as the mystery that it is
 - the conflicting ideas that the Scriptures present did not fit nicely into the Greek theological model
 - there was the need to understand the “constituent parts” of God
 - therefore, the Trinity Doctrine became a Greek answer to a Greek question
 - for thousands of years, the Hebrew scholars of Scripture never felt the need to seek a rational explanation for the mystery of God’s being. They lived in the tension of:
 - + the God who is invisible, yet seen
 - + the God who “wholly other” yet dwells among men
 - + the God who is Himself the controller of all things, yet is approachable, moved by man’s needs, and receptive to man’s cry for help (salvation)
- in some ways, the formulation of the Trinity Doctrine attempts to unravel the mystery of God Himself, and in so doing, falls short
 - Yeshua is described as “of the same substance” as the Father (Athanasian Creed, 31), yet God is revealed as having no “substance”
 - the formulation of the Trinity Doctrine became the substance of salvation. “He therefore that will be saved, must thus think of the Trinity.” In this way, a man-made “explanation” of the mystery became the primary focus of “salvation” in the Christian Church

- **Conclusion: the Scriptures clearly teach a plurality within the being of God, yet they do not attempt to explain this mystery. We align ourselves with Scripture by confessing this mystery to be true, not by accepting a man-made philosophical explanation for the mystery.**

Yeshua as the Eternal One: implications

- the truth of Yeshua's mysterious nature, as Immanuel, God in the flesh, is not a theological thought or axiom: it is an essential reality
- since our sin is against God, and since He is infinitely holy, our sin is likewise an infinite transgression
- only an sacrifice of infinite proportions could atone for an infinite transgression
- if Yeshua is not Himself infinite, He could never have accomplished atonement for sinners
- if we deny the mystery of Yeshua's deity, we, at the same time, deny that He could be the promised Messiah who "takes away the sins of the world" (John 1:29).
- rather, we must affirm what the Scriptures everywhere teach, that God would send His Son as Immanuel (God with us), and that through Him final atonement would be accomplished for all who would believe in Him.
- we admit that the incarnation is a mystery that is beyond us, yet we affirm it as true because God has declared it to be true

Rom. 11:33 Oh, the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are His judgments and unfathomable His ways! 34 For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who became His counselor? 35 Or who has first given to Him that it might be paid back to him again? 36 For from Him and through Him and to Him are all things. To Him be the glory forever. Amen.

Session Thirteen

Living Torah: Leaders & Teachers

I. A Biblical Pattern of Leadership for Torah Communities

A. Starting Point: Accepting the Apostolic Scriptures as the divinely ordained rule of *halalchah* for Torah Communities

1. this presupposes an acceptance of the Apostolic Scriptures as the inspired word of God
2. this presupposes that the Apostles of Yeshua were given the authority to make lasting *halachah* for the congregation of Messiah, Matt 16:13–20
 - a. Yeshua is the One building His *kehilah* (congregation)
 - b. He gives to Peter the authority to create binding *halachah* for the congregation made up of His disciples
 - c. this authority was extended to the remaining Apostles (cf. John 20:22), including Paul who was commissioned as an Apostle of Yeshua

B. The Apostolic Scriptures give only two offices of authoritative leadership within the congregation of Messiah

1. Overseers (ἐπίσκοπος, *episkopos*): note the use of the feminine noun (ἐπισκοπή, *episkope*) in 1Tim 3:1. The feminine noun is used to denote the *office* or *position of authority* invested in the overseer. The metaphor used of overseers is that of a shepherd (cf. Acts 20:28; 1Pet 5:2). Hebrew = רוֹעֶה, *ro'eh*
 - a. the primary duty of the overseer is twofold:
 - 1) to feed the congregation from the word of God, guarding the Apostolic message to make sure it is properly taught and lived out within the community
 - 2) to guard the congregation from doctrinal error and from those whose intent is to disrupt and divide the community
 - b. the Apostolic *halachah* limits the office of the overseer to men. There are no examples of female overseers in the Apostolic Scriptures, nor in the synagogue of the 1st Century CE
 - c. The term “elder” (πρεσβύτερος, *presbuteros*) Hebrew = זָקֵן, *zakein*, “old man,” “head of household,” “community leader.”
 - 1) originally the natural leader of a family/clan: father, grandfather, etc.
 - 2) thus the primary meaning is “leader,” “one having the authority within a family unit.”
 - 3) “elder” came to be used generally for anyone who fulfilled a leadership role within the community.
 - 4) note that qualifications for an elder are never given in the Apostolic Scriptures
 - 5) we should presume that the term was used generally for recognized leaders within the community; cf. Acts 14:23
2. Deacons (διάκονος, *diakonos*): the primary meaning is “servant” or “helper.” Hebrew = שָׂמַשׁ, *shamash*
 - a. the primary role of the deacons is in matters of administration as it pertains to the general function of the community
 - b. the office of deacon carried with it the necessary authority to fulfill the duties of the office
 - c. the office of deacon was held both by men and women (cf. Rom 16:1)
 - d. it may have been that deacons were sometimes a husband/wife team (cf. 1Tim 3:8ff)
 - e. were the men appointed in Acts 6 deacons? Perhaps they were the forerunners of the office as it was eventually established in the Apostolic community of The Way

C. Officials in the 1st Century Synagogue

1. the data is not certain; various sources (rabbinic, patristic, etc.) show divergent practices, and may reflect a lack of uniformity in general. It has become clear that one simply cannot speak of the 1st Century CE synagogue in monolithic terms.

2. in some cases, a given individual may bear more than one office or title, making it difficult to ascertain the exact function of given positions.
3. the Jewish community/synagogue functioned in both a religious and a political sense, and thus some offices within the synagogue were more social/political than religious.
4. Official titles/positions evidenced in the Apostolic Scriptures, rabbinic literature, epigraphic evidence, and patristic witnesses:
 - a) *archisynagogue* (cf. Mk 5:22, 35, 36; Lk 8:49; Acts 13:15; 18:8, 17) – most likely an honorary title given to a benefactor who either contributed the majority of funds for maintaining the physical and material dimension of the synagogue (including a building in some cases). This person may have contributed some leadership roles in both religious as well as social aspects of the synagogue community. Hebrew = ראש כְּנֶסֶת, *rosh kenestet*. There were, at times, more than one *archisynagogos* in a given synagogue community.
 2. *archon* (“ruler”) – at times an alternate title for *archisynagogos*, but at other times appears along side of the *archisynagogos*, perhaps as a “second in command,” or a kind of assistant to the *archisynagogos*. It may have been that the *archon* was chosen each year (at Rosh HaShanah).
 3. *pater synagoges* (“father of the synagogue”) – essentially an honorific title, denoting a major patron or benefactor of the community. The use of “father” (אב, *av*) to denote a position of authority, however, has long-standing evidence in Jewish sources (cp. אב בית דין, “head of the court”).
 4. *mater synagoges* (“mother of the synagogue”) – most likely an honorific title, given to a prominent, senior woman (or women). It appears to denote a woman who has contributed significantly to the material and spiritual welfare of the community.
 5. *presbyter* (“elder”) – perhaps a general term for “leader” without giving specific detail as to the function. The term is not found in documents from Rome and Egypt, and appears only infrequently in North Africa, Syria, and Palestine.
 6. *grammateus*, perhaps equivalent to the Hebrew “scribe” (סופר, *sopher*). Duties may have included those of “clerk,” keeping community records, handling correspondence, managing archives, keeping membership lists, and acting as a notary.
 7. *phrontistes* (φροντιστής) – “guardian, protector.” The duties of this office may have related primarily to the maintenance of the building used for meeting, or the physical properties of the synagogue community.
 8. *chazzan* (חזן) – a prominent office in the Palestinian synagogue, though he was clearly subordinate to the authority of other synagogue officials. The role of the *chazzan* is not certain, but it may have involved teaching, leading in the prayers (liturgy), being part of a *bet din*, and seeing that the court’s rulings were carried out, including discipline of those found guilty of transgressions. It appears that the role of the *chazzan* evolved through the centuries, and eventually attained a prominent role in the leadership structure of the later synagogue.
 9. *teachers* – various terms are used for teachers (*grammateus*, *meturgeman*, *preacher*), but it seems most likely that these were “schoolteachers” who were in charge of conducting lessons within the synagogue, particularly directed toward the children. They are not the same as the Sages who were independent of the Synagogue (i.e., not financially supported by the synagogue community *per se*), and who were looked to for the general teaching of the Torah and accepted *halachah*. These teachers were supported by the payment of taxes by the whole community.
- D. Apostolic Scriptures most likely subsume the various functions described in Synagogue titles under the two headings of Overseers and Deacons.

II. Some General Characteristics of Leadership for Torah Communities

- A. Plurality – community leadership should be plural, not singular, meaning wide authority should not be vested in just one leader
 1. the model of the early congregations of The Way: Acts 14:23; Acts 20:17; Phil 1:1. There is not one example of any congregation/community that had only one leader/pastor/teacher.
 2. the value of multiple leaders:
 - a. a wider base of authority: the voice of two or three witnesses confirms a matter
 - b. a broader base for stability: the leadership of the community is not dependent upon a lone

- individual.
- c. a better distribution of the work load: leaders often “burn out” because they are attempting to carry a load of responsibility that God intended to rest upon the shoulders of more than one.
- d. a better use of gifting: no one individual is spiritually gifted to meet the leadership needs of a growing community.
- e. a better mechanism for training leaders for the next generation: those who desire leadership and show potential for leadership may begin to work within the leadership team and gain practical training without having to bear primary responsibilities.
- 3. Overseers (Ro'im) and Deacons (Shammashim) should work together as a team of leaders, each helping the others to gain the widest possible perspective on the needs of the community
- B. Indigenous
 - 1. Leaders should be chosen from within the community, not as strangers coming from the outside.
 - a. the metaphor of a hireling (John 10:12–14): he does not truly have the lives of the sheep as his first priority.
 - b. the idea of leadership as an occupation: when a leader considers his work as an occupation, the true needs of the community are secondary. Someone in an occupation considers his own advancement as a priority. This leads to a “greener grass” syndrome.
 - c. leaders should be known first and foremost for their consistent life of obedience to God, the fruit of a genuine and maturing faith. A person's true character is only seen in the course of life lived out within a community.
 - d. A Shepherd or Shammash must know the sheep he leads and serves. Such knowledge is gained through community involvement, not through education.
 - 2. Leaders should be those who have been with the community in its own formation and self-identity.
 - a. the true goals of the community are owned by the community. Someone who is not part of the community will not appreciate the price that has been paid in the formation and maintenance of the community.
 - b. a willingness to follow leaders comes from appreciating the way in which they have suffered and rejoiced as part of the community. Analogy: soldiers are far more willing to follow a commander who has proven himself with them in battle, rather than one who comes as a professional soldier to tell them how to fight.
- C. Qualified – 1Tim 3; Titus 1:5f
 - 1. These qualification should be generally seen in the lives of those appointed to leadership. No one individual will exhibit all of these qualifications perfectly, but they should be seen as the general character of life.
 - 2. Qualifications for Overseers (Shepherds):
 - a. above reproach: having a life that is free from past events that call his character and motivations into question. This may be specifically germane within a given community.
 - b. husband of one wife: he must be known as a man who is dedicated to his wife, without fear that he is a womanizer, or that he has moral, sexual weaknesses. The issue of a past divorce may disqualify him for the office of Overseer.
 - c. temperate: not given to accesses; not compulsive in decision-making; steady and stable in the basic things of life.
 - d. prudent: does not squander his money, time, or energies; able to make good priorities and stick to them.
 - e. respectable: has a general character that commands the respect of others; is able to handle himself in difficult situations in a manner that does not allow the enemies of the Gospel to cast dispersion upon him and his work.
 - f. hospitable: is known for his openness to others; does not live in secret, but is ready to offer his home as a place where others are welcome.
 - g. able to teach: he has the ability to communicate the truth of God's word effectively and in such a manner that others understand what he is saying, and learn from his words. This also means that he is himself a man who is teachable (Tit 1:5f)
 - h. not a drunkard: he is not a slave of substances; he knows how to control his appetite for things so that he is not enslaved by them.
 - i. not pugnacious: he is not a “fighter” in the sense that he is not given to losing his temper or regularly

engaging in hostilities toward others; he is not a man who is given to anger.

- j. gentle: he knows how to control his temper, and he is able to be gentle even toward those who may be attacking him through insults or differences. He knows how carefully to assist those who are broken and hurting.
 - k. peaceable: he is a man of shalom, and is able to be a peacemaker between those who are fighting with each other.
 - l. free from the love of money: money does not govern his life; he is not entangled in financial disasters that weaken his ability to focus on the needs of those he shepherds. His decisions are not motivated first and foremost by financial matters.
 - m. managing his own household well: his family is in order; his children manifest the spirit of submission to his leadership. If his leadership does not work at home, it won't work in the community either.
 - n. not a new believer: even though new believers in Yeshua may manifest a great deal of zeal for the Lord, they lack the maturity of faith necessary for leadership responsibilities.
 - o. a good reputation with those outside the community: this means that even non-believers, and believers who are not part of the community, respect him as a man of integrity.
3. Qualifications for Deacons (Shammashim):
- a. dignified: people who have taken the important things of life and faith seriously
 - b. not double-tongued: they are not "two-faced;" they can be counted on to speak the truth regardless of the circumstances.
 - c. not a drunkard: not a slave to substances; he knows how to control his appetite for things so that he is not enslaved by them.
 - d. not fond of sordid gain: he does not engage in shady deals; he does not try to "cut corners" to obtain financial advantages; he "plays by the rules."
 - e. holding the mystery of the faith with a clear conscience: must be stable in his confession of faith; not one to be easily persuaded by false doctrine
 - f. not a gossip: this is directed especially toward women who are shammashim; not one who talks a lot, or easily engages in *lashon hara* (evil speech)
 - g. temperate: not given to accesses; not compulsive in decision-making; steady and stable in the basic things of life.
 - h. faithful in all things: able to carry through on responsibilities; able to be trusted
 - i. husband of one wife: he must be known as a man who is dedicated to his wife, without fear that he is a womanizer, or that he has moral, sexual weaknesses. The issue of a past divorce may disqualify him for the office of Deacon.
 - j. good manager of his household: his family is in order; his children manifest the spirit of submission to his leadership. If he is not able to manage his own household, it won't be able to administrate properly the affairs of the community.

D. Educated

- 1. Overseers (Shepherds)
 - a. it is essential that Shepherds gain the necessary skills to work in the biblical texts (Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek). Usually this requires some formal studies, though this is not always the case. Many different educational possibilities exist in our day (correspondence, internet, distance learning, etc.).
 - b. The Torah Community presents even a greater challenge to Shepherds than does the conventional Christian environment. Uncharted waters require the ability to know and apply the Scriptures in every area of community life. Thus, the Scriptures must be constantly studied. Leaders who assume responsibility without having a solid grasp of the Scriptures are asking for real trouble.
 - c. Important areas of study as a foundation for leaders of Torah Communities (not in any particular order of priority):
 - 1. Biblical languages (Hebrew/Aramaic/Greek)
 - 2. Hermeneutics: rules of interpretation
 - 3. History of doctrines: familiarity with the core doctrines of Scripture, and the various ways these have been framed from the time of Yeshua and His Apostles through the centuries of Church History.
 - 4. 2nd Temple Judaism as a background for the ministry of Yeshua and His Apostles
 - 5. Basic Bible knowledge: a general understanding of the flow of Scripture and the overall message

of the Bible

6. Rabbinic literature: a general familiarity with Midrash, Mishnah, and Talmud, and the ability to research these sources when necessary.
7. A general grasp of Church History in order to see the ways in which the Christian Church moved away from the Torah, and in order to avoid the mistakes which this history reveals.

III. Methodologies for Establishing Leaders

- A. Prayer: spend time praying as a community that God will establish the leaders of His choosing in the community.
- B. establish a temporary “administrative committee” to oversee the procedures for appointing leaders. Once leaders are appointed, this administrative committee will cease to exist.
 1. the community should choose members for this administrative committee; 3–5 members
 2. members of the administrative committee should be chosen from core community members
 3. establish a working list of committed community members: these will be the ones who will vote to appoint men as Overseers
 - a) members should be old enough to make mature decisions
 - b) members should have proven themselves to be committed to the community and its goals, and that they are committed believers in Yeshua
- C. Ascertain current *de facto* leaders
 1. in every group there are those who naturally assume leadership roles.
 2. are any of those who are functioning as leaders inclined to desire the office of Overseer?
 - a. if so, they should make their desire known to the administrative committee
 - b. once the administrative committee is convinced that those who have expressed their desire for the office of Overseer do qualify, they should make this known to the community at large. If they do not qualify, the committee should express this to the individuals, and encourage them to continue to grow in the areas where they may be lacking.
 - c. once candidates have been announced to the congregation, set a period of time to allow further reflection and evaluation: does the individual evidence the character qualities necessary for the office he desires? His willingness to listen to the community in terms of his readiness and qualifications is, in itself, an indication of his character.
 - d. instruct community members to go directly to the candidate if there are moral or ethical matters that they feel might disqualify them. If these matters cannot be resolved one-on-one, they should be made known to the administrative committee. Once again, the willingness of a candidate to receive questions regarding his life and actions will be further substantiation of his readiness to fulfill the office.
 - e. if there are other issues (not moral or ethical) that some feel disqualify the candidate (e.g., lack of biblical knowledge, inability to effectively teach, etc.), these should be made known to the administrative committee.
 - f. it should be stressed to the community that if any would vote “no” in regard to any of the candidates, this should be made known to the committee. If there are sufficient numbers of people in the community who express an unwillingness to ratify the appointment of a candidate, this should be taken as evidence that he does not qualify at the present time.
 - f. after the allotted period of time, if there are no disqualifying matters, and if the committee is convinced the candidates should be put forward as possible Overseers to the congregation, the names of the candidates should be announced to the congregation with a set date when the congregation will vote to approve them as leaders.
- D. Voting
 1. voting should be by ballot. Ballots should be given to those who are members of the community
 2. the ballots should be tallied by the administrative committee, and the results made known to the community.
 3. there should be a minimum of 85% “yes” votes to confirm the candidate as an overseer. If more than 15% of the community is unwilling to submit to the leadership of the candidate, this would indicate that he is not sufficiently esteemed to fulfill the office. (If the congregation has followed the instructions of the administrative committee, however, those who felt they could not ratify a candidate would have already

made their misgivings known. Thus, if the administrative committee is convinced that the candidates are qualified on the basis of no major negative response from the congregation, the vote should be simply a matter of affirming what has already been established.)

E. Overseers' Duties

1. Establish Deacons for the community
 - a. the administrative committee is disbanded, and the Overseers take charge of administrating and overseeing the affairs of the community.
 - b. the Overseers should immediately begin the same procedure for establishing Deacons.
 - c. until Deacons are established, a person other than the Overseers should be selected by mutual consent of the congregation to handle all money gathered, and to disperse funds. Money should not be gathered or dispersed by Overseers.
 - c. once Deacons are established, they should join the Overseers in a leadership board, and carefully draw up the areas of responsibility for each Deacon.
- 2.. The Overseers should begin to draw up permanent By Laws, with the help and input of the Deacons. These By Laws will be presented to the congregation for ratification.

F. Deacon's Duties

1. specific areas of administration should be delegated to each Deacon as befits the needs of the community
2. All financial matters should be handled by deacons
 - a. gathering money
 - b. dispersing money
 - c. budget planning
 - d. presentation of the budget to the congregation for ratification by vote

G. The Purpose of the Leadership Teams

1. The leadership teams are made up of the Overseers and Deacons
2. Each leadership team is responsible for the areas over which it is in charge:
 - a. each Deacon has delegated authority to make decisions in the area of his or her responsibilities
 - b. the Overseers function together as a team to make decisions related to the overseeing of teaching and guarding the flock.
 - c. other decision that affect the whole congregation should be brought to the congregation for their approval. This is particularly important in matters of money/budget.

H. Adding Overseers or Deacons

1. The congregation should be encouraged to submit the name of an individual whom they think should be added as either an Overseer or Deacon. These should be submitted to the existing Overseers.
2. Names submitted should be followed up by the Overseers
 - a. the Overseers should first make their own evaluation. If the individual is known not to qualify, the matter goes not further
 - b. if the individual appears to qualify, the Overseers should approach him to ascertain his own desires regarding the responsibilities of leadership.
 - c. if the individual desires leadership responsibilities, the procedure outlined above should be followed.

Session Fourteen

Living Torah: Building a Community

I. Recognize that Community is Essential

A. Defining Community

1. a group of people who agree on the essentials of
 - a. core beliefs (doctrine): these would include
 - 1) the authority of Scripture
 - 2) the centrality of Yeshua: His deity, His messiahship, His work as High Priest
 - 3) salvation by faith in Yeshua's work alone: there is no other way to receive forgiveness of sin except through the death, burial, resurrection, ascension, and intercession of Yeshua as our High Priest to God
 - b. core *halachah*: these would include
 - 1) an acceptance of written Torah as the foundation for righteous living
 - 2) a willingness to pursue a biblical approach to *halachah* – this means allowing the written word of God to govern all final decisions
 - 3) a willingness to put traditions (including oral Torah) as secondary to the written word of God
2. a group of people who are willing to disagree and to continue to dialog on issues that are not clear
 - a. recognize the value of dialog and of differences of opinion
 - b. learning that dialog is something essential for pursuing the truth, not merely something to be tolerated.
3. a group of people committed to sharing life with one another
 - a. this means spending significant time together
 - b. this means helping each other reach the common goal of conformity to Yeshua

B. Living Out Torah Requires Community

1. Examples of Torah commandments that are community based:
 - a. Shema: Deut 6:4ff - 2nd pers. singular "you"
 - b. Shema: Deut 11:13ff - 2nd pers. pl. "you"
 - c. Tzitzit: Num 15:37ff - 2nd pers. pl. "you"
2. "One another" passages in Paul: Rom. 12:16; 13:8; 14:19; Gal. 5:13; 6:2; Eph. 4:2; 5:19; 1Th. 4:18; 5:11
 - a. learning to love one another is a significant part of the sanctifying process of the believer
 - b. bearing each other's burdens fulfills the Torah of Messiah
 - c. it is in the life-to-life interaction that each of us is matured in our faith, Eph 4:14–16. This is impossible apart from community.
 - d. What appears at first to be the "down-side" of community is, in fact, one of the important aspects of community, i.e., learning to love each other ("love" in the biblical sense of faithfulness within a covenant setting)

II. Some Practical Aspects for Building Torah Community

- #### A. Understand the primary reason for meeting together, and never lose sight of this goal in the process of decision making.

Primary Goal: to create a community in which God's righteous ways are consistently encouraged so

that they may be lived out by the community and passed on to the next generation

1. the community meetings are primarily for the building up of each other in the ways of God
2. the community meetings are not primarily for evangelism
3. the community meetings are not primarily to attract visitors

B. Test what you do, and what you plan to do (programs) against the Scriptures and the primary goal of community building

1. many traditions received from the Christian Church are often anti-community and should be jettisoned
 - a. “we need to grow in numbers because if God is blessing us, we’ll grow bigger.” [Community is not about numbers; it’s about life-to-life interaction in which the precepts of God (Torah) are encouraged and lived out]
 - b. “in order to grow bigger, we have to make our congregation “visitor friendly” so that everyone who visits us will stay.” [Community is built by those God brings to be part of the community, who have the same goals and standards. The activities of the community should have current community members in mind more than visitors]
 - 1) don’t advertise in the Phone Book, or put out a sign “everyone welcome.” If you’re honestly wanting to build community, everyone is not welcome!
 - 2) Be genuinely friendly and open to those who visit, and do all you can (within community guidelines) to make them feel welcomed. But remember that if they stay or never return, this is in God’s hands.
 - c. “if God is blessing us, our bank account will grow. This means that people with a greater personal income are more important than those who clearly cannot contribute to the “financial health” of the community.” [Community is built by those of genuine faith. Spiritual strength is more important than financial ability]
 - d. “We should make our weekly meetings ‘seeker friendly,’ meaning that we detail our meetings to confront the unbeliever with the gospel.” [As important as evangelism is, the weekly meetings of the community are not primarily for giving the gospel to those who are lost. That should be done by going to the lost outside of the community, not bringing the lost into the community.]
 - e. “When we meet together for worship and study, the atmosphere should be one of quite reverence. This usually requires:”
 1. “having the children in a separate location so that they do not disrupt the meeting”
 2. “the meeting should not be too long, because if it is, visitors will not like it.”
 3. “the meeting should be entirely planned out (hand out “bulletins”) so that it goes along smoothly without any disruptions.”
 4. [In fact, just the opposite is true for building community!]
 - a. Keep the children together with their families. Remember: the basic building blocks of community are the families.
 - b. Spend the whole shabbat together if at all possible. Study is just one aspect of Shabbat. Eating together, talking, playing, sharing life, is also just as important, as well as ending the Sabbath together in preparation for the work week.
 - c. Have a basic structure for the shabbat meeting, but allow plenty of time for interaction, questions, answers, prayer, sharing of ideas, etc. Welcome the unexpected within the construct of a loose structure.
 - f. “The weekly meeting should be primarily a spectator event”
 - 1) “Let the teacher and other leaders do most of the ‘up front’ activities, while the rest watch; let the trained people ‘do the service’ because they do it better.”
 - 2) “Let the teacher do the teaching, while the rest listen.” (monologue vs. dialog)
 - 3) “Set up the meeting room to accommodate this perspective (including the way you set up

the chairs, etc.)

- 4) [For community, just the opposite is important]
 - a) While the designated teachers and leaders should help lead the meeting, they should always have as a goal the participation of the whole community as much as possible. This means allowing questions & answers, interaction, sharing of thoughts during the teaching time. (It may also mean privately confronting and exhorting those who are not thoughtful in the way they interact within the congregational setting.)
 - b) set up the meeting room in such a way that as much as possible, people are looking at each other, not just focused on the front. (Consider the traditional seating arrangement of the synagogue in which the Torah is the center of attention rather than the teacher.)
 - 5) Don't be concerned if children need to get up during the meeting, or if people in general need to move around a bit. Get over the "cathedral" tradition we've received from the Church. Reconstruct the concepts of "worship" and "reverence" within the biblical model of the synagogue.
2. The authority structure of the community should reflect the goal of community building
 - a. the Apostolic model for leadership consists of overseers (shepherds) and deacons (servants).
 - b. the Apostolic model is always one of a plurality of leaders, not leadership by one man ("the pastor")
 - c. the Apostolic model is one of congregational decision-making rather than a "top-down" decision-making model.
 - 1) leadership gains its authority from the congregation recognizing the qualifications of those who are leaders.
 - 2) leaders help direct the congregation according to what they sense is God's will, but the major decisions (those which will affect the whole community) are ratified by the community, not made unilaterally by the leaders
 - d. The primary role of leadership is
 - 1) Overseers (shepherds): to feed the congregation from the word of God, and to guard the congregation from error
 - 2) Deacons (servants): to administrate congregational affairs for the good of the whole community
 - C. Remember that the goal of community is generational
 1. measure the success of the community by the strength of families and the spiritual growth in the children of the community.
 2. put time and energy into helping families pass the message of Torah to the next generation
 3. be willing to recognize that the Torah community you hope to build may not be fully realized until the next generation

III. Summary

- A. Remember Who is the Master (Lord) of the community
- B. Recognize the essential priority of community as the means of creating a place where God's Torah can be lived out by all
- C. Affirm the family as the basic and most essential building block of community
- D. Keep the generational goal of community as a priority in your decisions and programs
- E. Seek to establish biblical leadership
- F. Don't be afraid to take a step backward in order to take two steps forward
- G. Keep the Scriptures as the final rule and guide for all community decisions and functions
- H. Recognize that Torah life has community building as a natural result

Notes

[illegible]

Session Fifteen

Living Torah: The Festivals

The festivals or Appointed Times (*mo'edim*) are God's scheduled celebrations with His people. They not only are reminders of the historical ways in which God has been faithful to His promises, but they project into the future, as they teach about the final victory of our salvation. It is not uncommon to find people who have studied about the Festivals, and have gleaned some helpful encouragement from that study. But the Festivals are not actually given to us in the Scriptures simply to study—they are given for participation. You will learn far more by *actually doing* the Festivals than you will by simply reading about them.

The Torah Festivals number five: Passover (Pesach) and the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Chag HaMatzot), Festival of Weeks (Shavuot), Festival of Trumpets (Yom Teruah/Rosh HaShanah), Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), and the Festival of Booths (Sukkot). As we noted earlier, these are divinely arranged in order to reveal the entire scope of God's redemption work. These five Torah Festivals are grouped into two: the Fall Festivals and the Spring Festivals. The Fall Festivals primarily emphasize the work that God has already accomplished (though they still have much to teach about the yet-to-be-accomplished redemption for which we all await, Rom 8:23), while the Spring Festivals emphasize the final redemption in the return of our Messiah, the ingathering of Israel and the nations, the Millennial Reign of Yeshua, and the world to come.

In the scope of history, two more Festivals were added to the five Torah Festivals, both as celebrations of God's victory over the enemies of His people. These are Purim (Festival of Esther) and Hanukkah (the history of which is found in 1 & 2 Maccabees). These Festivals celebrate God's faithfulness to maintain His people as He has promised.

Since the destruction of the Temple (70 CE), and the dispersion of our people from Jerusalem and the Land, there are many aspects of the Festivals that we can no longer accomplish, since all of the Festivals included participation in the Temple, along with sacrifices. Some have taught, therefore, that attempting to "keep" the Festivals is impossible, and as a result, have discarded them. However, it is reasonable to believe that God would have us do all that we are able to do in terms of observing His Appointed Times. We long for the return of the Temple in the reign of the Messiah, when once again we will be able to participate fully in all aspects of the Festivals, but until that time, we observe all that we are able, and celebrate the goodness of God in giving us these appointed celebrations.

Each of the Torah Festivals include Sabbaths (regardless of the day of the week) as well as "Holy Convocations," meaning that they are times for the whole community to meet together. Thus, the Festivals are a community celebration as well as celebrations within individual families.

The Festivals fall within the Biblical calendar, not the Julian or Gregorian calendars, so it requires that we have a "Jewish calendar" that marks the days on which the Festivals occur. However, in modern Rabbinic Judaism, days have been added to festivals in order to accommodate the diaspora. These are not required by the Torah, and are therefore optional. Always consult the Torah itself to know what days are

scheduled by God Himself for the Festivals (Lev 23 lists all of the Festivals). And don't be taken in by a few groups who think they have the right to adjust the calendar. Yeshua and His disciples followed the majority calendar of their day, and we do well to emulate their example.

Resist the temptation to move any given Festival to a "more convenient" time. Part of the lessons we learn from the Festivals is that we must conform to God's timetable.

Pesach (Passover)

Preparation:

- remove the leaven from your house. Leaven means anything with yeast in it.
 - rabbinic law has extended the meaning to anything that will cause dough to rise, but this is additional *halalchah* not found in the Torah
 - in the diaspora, it may be impossible to remove all the leaven, but do the best you can. After all, the exercise is to help us understand that in the same way we work to remove leaven from our homes, so we should constantly be working to remove the leaven from our lives (1Cor 5:6–8).
 - you will need to start several weeks before Pesach arrives, so plan accordingly
- purchase or bake Matzah, and gather the other items necessary for the Pesach celebration
- invite people who may not have their own Pesach seder (meal) to join you
- have your Bible handy! Study the Gospel portions that relate to Yeshua's final celebration of the Pesach, and be ready to interject these portions into the Seder

When?

- Passover, according to the Torah (Ex 12; Lev 23), is to be celebrated beginning on the evening of the 14th of the first month, which was called Abib (pronounced Aviv) in ancient times, and is called Nisan since the return of the exiles from Babylon.
- begin your Pesach celebration before the sun sets on the 14th of the first month (Nisan)
- Pesach and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are joined together. Therefore, from the evening of the 14th until the sun sets on the 21st, nothing with leaven should be eaten. This exercise in abstaining from eating anything with leaven for seven days is a vivid reminder of how careful we must be about allowing "leaven" into our lives the year around.

How?

- on the evening of the 14th, gather in your homes for the Pesach seder, which includes a full meal
- use a Pesach Hagaddah (the booklet that has the order of the Seder and blessings for the various parts of the evening's celebration). It is nice to have one for each of the guests at your table.
- use a Seder Plate (if one is available) or a large plate on which you can place the various elements for the seder. You may want to use bowls and plates on which to put the various items. Here is what you will need:
 - some parsley or other green, leaf vegetable
 - bowl with salty water
 - charoset (chopped apples with spices and nuts)

- a shank bone (chick bone will work, but make sure it is not cut or broken)
- two kinds of bitter herbs: usually horseradish and endive (or other somewhat bitter vegetable)
- plenty of matzot (flat, unleavened bread)
- wine or grape juice
- two large cloth napkins in which to wrap three pieces of matzot, and one of the broken pieces for the afikomen (the part hidden away until the conclusion of the Seder)
 - special cloth “envelopes” are available for this purpose if you desire, or you can make your own
 - if you make your own, you should make a cloth “bag” with two dividers, and another cloth “bag” without dividers.
- bowl and towel for washing
- plates that have stacks of matzot, covered with a napkin or special matzah cover
- set an extra cup and plate on the table: this is Elijah’s Cup
- on the Seder plate(s), arrange the following items: two kinds of bitter herbs, charoset, parsley, and the shank bone. (Some also include a symbol of the destroyed Temple, such as a charred piece of wood. The inclusion of a burnt egg seems out of place, and was probably added later.)
- someone should assume the role of leader for the Seder
- A general outline of the Seder
 - it is traditional to begin the Seder by lighting candles (this is tradition, and not required by the Torah)
 - First Cup [Cup of Blessing]: the Festival Kiddush includes additional Festival blessings
 - the blessing of “Shehecheyanu” (“Who has sustained us...”)
 - washing hands (this was not the time at which Yeshua washed the feet of His disciples—that comes a bit later)
 - eat the first bitter herb dipped in salt water (reminds us of the bitterness of slavery; the crossing of the Red Sea)
 - telling the Pesach story begins with the Four Questions (see the Hagaddah), done by the children if possible. This emphasizes the need to listen and to understand the meaning of the Seder
 - the telling of the story continues: use the Hagaddah, or read the story from Exodus
 - this is a good opportunity to involve the kids at the table as well
 - recite the 10 Plagues
 - have each person be ready to dip their finger into their cup of wine/juice, and put one drop on their plate for each of the Ten Plagues as they are spoken
 - this reminds us that even though our deliverance from Egypt was a joy, the suffering of the Egyptians diminished the joy somewhat. All human life is valuable, and the loss of life on the part of the Egyptians, though necessary for our deliverance, still diminishes our joy a little.
 - sing Dayeinu (“It is enough for us”), a song that reminds us of how much we have to be thankful for
 - explain the three most important elements of the Pesach Seder:
 - the Pesach lamb: foreshadow of our Messiah
 - the Matzah: symbol of the haste with which we left Egypt, and our submission to God’s plan for taking us out from under the bondage of the Egyptians
 - the Bitter Herbs: symbol of the bitterness of slavery
 - Read Ps 113 (beginning of the Hallel Psalms)
 - Second Cup [Cup of Deliverance] (with the normal blessing)
 - wash hands a second time (this was probably the time when Yeshua washed the feet of His disciples)
 - some have included the actual washing of feet at this point, though this is not traditional in modern-day Judaism
 - The matzah
 - the leader takes the three matzot that have been wrapped in a napkin, or are in the specially made

Matzah cover (with dividers). Take the middle matzah, and break it. Distribute pieces to everyone from half of the broken matzah, then take the other half and wrap it in a separate napkin (or specially made matzah bag). This is the afikoman. During the remainder of the Seder, hide this part when the kids aren't looking. It will be the responsibility of the children, later in the Seder, to find the afikoman.

- once everyone has a piece of matzah, say the blessings (one for the matzah, and the normal blessing for “bread from the earth”), and then everyone eats of the matzah
- Bitter herbs: dip the leafy bitter herb (e.g., endive) into the horseradish and eat it
 - this reminds us of the bitterness of slavery, something to which we never want to return!
 - “Hillel sandwich” – Rabbi Hillel (who died when Yeshua was a young boy) emphasized that the bitter herbs should be eaten *with* the matzah. He therefore taught his disciples to take two pieces of matzah, and put bitter herbs between them. Horseradish between two pieces of matzah works well for this.
 - the dipping of the bitter herbs was probably the point at which Yeshua dipped the matzah into the bitter herbs and handed it to Judas
- Eat the festival meal
- After the meal, have the kids find the Afikomen
 - once it is found, break it and give a piece to everyone
 - this is symbolic of the Pesach Lamb from which everyone ate in the time of the Temple
 - was this the point where Yeshua spoke of the broken matzah as symbolic of His broken body?
- Blessing after the meal (birkat hamazon)
 - this is in fulfillment of Deut 8:10, “When you have eaten and are satisfied, you shall bless the LORD your God for the good land which He has given you.”
- the Third Cup [Cup of Redemption]: fill the glasses, say the blessing, and drink the third cup
 - this was the cup “after they had eaten” (Lk 22:20), symbolic of the shed blood of Messiah
 - since it is the Cup of Redemption, it speaks of the time when the New Covenant will be fulfilled in the full redemption of God’s people Israel
- welcoming Elijah
 - open the door, and have the children go to the door and call for Elijah.
 - since Elijah will precede the coming of Messiah, we look for Elijah, and welcome him to our Seder meal. In this we are reminded to celebrate the Pesach with a view to Yeshua’s return.
- read the remaining Hallel Psalms (115-118)
- the Fourth Cup [Cup of Completion]: fill the glasses, say the blessing, and drink the fourth cup
 - this cup anticipates the coming reign of Messiah, and the establishment of His Kingdom as He rules from Jerusalem
 - Yeshua declares that He will not drink this cup again until He does so in His established Kingdom
- Conclude the Seder: “Next year in Jerusalem!”

The most important aspects of the Seder are relating the themes of deliverance from slavery through the blood of the Lamb, the reality of our salvation through His work, and the anticipation of His return to rule and reign. Let the Seder be a wonderful time of sharing together these eternal truths!

Feast of Unleavened Bread

- for seven days following the Seder (the 15th through 21st of the first month), no leaven is to be eaten.
- the first day (the 15th, which is the day following the Seder), is a Sabbath. It should be observed by rest, and by a gathering together of the community. Use this gathering to sing, praise the Lord, and read Scriptures that talk about the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- the last day (the 21st) is also a Sabbath, and a “holy convocation.” The community should meet together on this day as well. This is a wonderful opportunity to allow the community to share together about what each one has learned from the Pesach Seder, and from the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
- at the end of the seventh day (after sunset), it is customary to “break the fast of leaven” by eating a meal together.

Shavuot**Preparation:**

- the evening following the Seder begins the counting of the omer
 - during the Temple times, people would bring in the first fruits of the harvest and present it to the priests in the Temple
 - we are instructed to count seven complete weeks (groups of seven days) beginning with the 16th of the first month, and to count 49 days, which then marks the 50th day (6th of Sivan) as the Festival of Shavuot
 - in this way, Pesach (deliverance; salvation) is linked to the Festival of Harvest, which emphasizes our mission to take the light of Yeshua to nations
 - families should set a time each day to “count the omer.” Using a calendar to mark off the days is a good way to keep track.
 - since we cannot bring our first fruits to the priests in the Temple, some families make it a point to gather something each time they count the omer (a few coins, for instance) with the intention of giving this to someone in need

How?

- on the evening before the 50th day, after sunset, Shavuot begins
 - the day of Shavuot is a Sabbath, and a “holy convocation” when the community meets together
 - Shavuot commemorates two important historical events:
 - the giving of the Torah on Mt. Sinai
 - the pouring out the Holy Spirit upon Yeshua’s disciples, enabling them to carry the message of the gospel to the nations
 - it is traditional for the community to meet on erev Shavuot, and to eat a meal together. It is a time of rejoicing and praising God for His Torah, and for the giving of His Spirit Who enables us to be His witnesses.
 - it became a tradition among Jewish communities to spend the entire night in the study of Torah
 - if the community desires to do this, pick a topic or portion of Scripture to study
 - bring plenty of “snacks” to eat as you study
 - on the day of Shavuot, meet together as a community
 - this is a wonderful time to emphasize our recommitment to God’s word (His Torah) as the foundation of our life of faith together

- it is also a wonderful time to emphasize our personal commitments as well as the community's commitment to spread the good news of the Gospel
- it is traditional to read the book of Ruth on the afternoon of Shavuot. The theme of this book emphasizes the God's faithfulness to His promise to "bless all the families of the earth" in Abraham. Ruth, who was a Gentile, comes into the people of Israel, and even becomes part of the line of David and the Messiah!

Yom Teruah (Rosh HaShanah)

Preparation:

- It is customary to make challah in round loafs for Yom Teruah. Since Yom Teruah celebrates God as our King, the round loafs are symbolic of a crown
- Since Yom Teruah is the beginning of the year in terms of counting years, it is also customary to make sweet pastries in hopes of a "sweet new year." Apples dipped in honey are also a traditional food at Yom Teruah.
- the common greeting for the Festival is: לְשָׁנָה טוֹבָה, *l'shanah tovah*, "may you have a good year!"
- the blowing of the shofar is the primary symbol of Yom Teruah. Someone (or some persons) should be practicing to blow the shofar during the community gathering.

When?

- Yom Teruah is on the first day of the seventh month (Tishri), so it begins after sunset on the day prior to the first day of Tishri.

How?

- Yom Teruah is a Sabbath, and a holy convocation, so the community meets in the evening prior to the day, has a meal together, and begins the festival with singing, celebration, and hearing the shofar. (It is traditional to blow the shofar with at least 100 blasts, so that everyone has ample opportunity to hear it. Each staccato note is consider one blast).
 - it affords a good time for people to reflect on the previous year, and to give praise to God for His blessings.
 - such sharing of God's goodness in our lives are likened to "sacrifices of praise" in which all are encouraged to partake
- Since the day itself is a Sabbath, it is appropriate for the community to gather for worship, study of God's word, and mutual encouragement.
 - it is traditional on the afternoon of Yom Teruah to conduct a ceremony called *Tashlich* (from the verb "to cast.")
 - this is based upon Micah 7:18–19, "Who is a God like You, who pardons iniquity and passes over the rebellious act of the remnant of His possession? He does not retain His anger forever, Because He delights in unchanging love. 19 He will again have compassion on us; He will tread our iniquities under foot. Yes, You will cast all their sins into the depths of the sea."
 - the ceremony consists of going to a body of water, and casting small stones into the water. This is symbolic of the way that our sins have been removed from us, never again to be found.
- the themes of the day are:

- a proclamation of God as our King
- a recognition that our King, Yeshua, is returning, and thus there is a call to prepare ourselves for His return
 - this offers a time of introspection; of a call to repentance for those things that we need to change in our lives
 - as we hear the sound of the shofar, we know that this is a reminder of the coming King, so while it brings a sense of joy at His soon coming, it also reminds us that we are present ourselves as His faithful disciples when He returns.
 - a contemplation of 1Thess 4:13–18 is very appropriate for this Festival
- As Yom Teruah comes to a close, we enter the more somber “days of awe,” the days between Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur.
 - our celebration of the coming King has given rise to our realization that we are sinners, and that apart from the atoning work of our Messiah, we would not be able to stand in His presence
 - as such, at the end of Yom Teruah, our thoughts turn to the coming Yom Kippur, the day in which we reckon with the fact that we have sinned, and we seek the cleansing atonement of the Lamb of God.
 - the days between Yom Teruah and Yom Kippur are therefore marked by a call to repentance (*teshuvah*). We do personal inventory: what needs to change in our lives? what things do we need to get rid of in our lives? are there relationships that need to be restored? During the Ten Days of Awe, we give ourselves to these important questions, and commit ourselves to seeking forgiveness before God as well as from those against whom we may have sinned.

Yom Kippur

Preparation:

- we prepare for Yom Kippur during the Ten Days of Awe. During this time, we honestly seek to cleanse our hearts by asking God’s forgiveness of sins we may have harbored, and seeking the forgiveness of those against whom we may have sinned.
- Yom Kippur is a complete fast day, from the sunset on the 9th, to sunset on the 10th. It is traditional, then, for families to have a late afternoon meal together in preparation for the fast. This meal is done with joy, knowing that God has accomplished our atonement in Yeshua.
- Yom Kippur is a day (like all of the Festivals) that looks back and forward: we think back over the past year, and remember our failings and weakness. We look forward to the day itself, because on it we are reminded that the atonement given by Yeshua cleanses us of all our sins. In looking back, Yom Kippur is also a day to remember those of our family who have passed away, but whose lives had a great impact upon us.

When?

- Yom Kippur occurs on the 10th of the seventh month (Tishri). Like all Festivals, it begins on the evening of the 9th, after sunset.

How?

- Yom Kippur is a Sabbath and a complete fast.
 - Lev. 23:32 “It is to be a sabbath of complete rest to you, and you shall humble your souls; on the ninth

of the month at evening, from evening until evening you shall keep your sabbath.”

- it is also a “holy convocation,” meaning that the community should meet together
 - this meeting is characterized both by a somber reality that it was our sins that caused Yeshua to die: “by His stripes we are healed” (Is 53:5), as well as a joy in knowing that our sins have been forgiven.
 - is not inappropriate for us, as believers in Yeshua, to give ourselves to introspection. Paul writes: 2Cor. 13:5 Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Yeshua Messiah is in you—unless indeed you fail the test? 6 But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.”
- “humble your souls” means “to afflict one’s soul,” which Isaiah 58:6ff identifies as fasting
 - all adults who are able should commit themselves to fasting on Yom Kippur
 - those who are unable to fast (for medical reasons, or because of physical weakness) should eat something on the day, however. This also applies to young children.
 - pregnant women should not fast on Yom Kippur for fear that it might affect the child they are carrying.
 - those people who require daily medications should take their medications as prescribed
- The community should meet together on the evening before Yom Kippur, and during the day of Yom Kippur
 - themes of the day center on our need to confess our sins, and to forgive those who have sinned against us. Passages of Scripture that reflect upon God’s mercy and forgiveness should be read and studied.
 - it is traditional for members of the congregation to dress in white. This is a visual symbol of the cleansing that comes through the death and resurrection of our Messiah, through Whom our sins have been forgiven (cf. Rev 7:9).
 - it is traditional to read the book of Jonah on Yom Kippur afternoon. The themes of this book emphasize repentance, the calling of all to worship the One true God of Israel, and God’s intentions to gather the nations to His worship as He promised.
 - as the day progresses, the reality of God’s forgiveness, and our standing righteous before Him become more and more pronounced, giving way to wonderful times of praise and thanksgiving.
 - after sunset on Yom Kippur, the community breaks the fast together
 - foods such as soups, and breads are appropriate, because after fasting all day, more substantial foods may be hard to digest. Also, soups and bread are easy to prepare in advance and then simply being warmed for the “break fast meal.”
 - since the end of Yom Kippur brings the settled reality that God has forgiven us of all our sins, the day ends with great rejoicing, and prepares the community for the joyous Festival of Sukkot.
- It is traditional that, following Yom Kippur, each family immediately begins to prepare for Sukkot, which comes just five days later.
 - this may be as simple as deciding where the Sukkah will be constructed, or even gathering a few of the materials needed to construct the Sukkah
 - this links Yom Teruah, Yom Kippur, and Sukkot together: God’s redemption brings about our gathering together with Him, as He dwells in our midst (the theme of Sukkot).

Sukkot

Preparation:

- Sukkot requires that we dwell in temporary “huts” or “dwellings” (a Sukkah). This means that families should gather materials together to construct a Sukkah

- a sukkah is any temporary shelter. It does not need to be elaborate, though the nicer it is, the easier it is to enjoy sitting in it for meals, etc. Some people use tents. The rabbinic standards are that it should have no more than three sides, and the roof should be temporary (usually made of branches laid over the top of three walls) so that one can see the sky through the ceiling.
- it is customary to decorate the Sukkah with fruits and vegetables, since Sukkot celebrates the final harvest.
- the Torah teaches us that we should bring four species of plants into the Sukkah:
 - “product of goodly trees”: the Sages considered this to be the etrog (citron)
 - “branches of palm trees”: these are bound together to form the *lulav*
 - “boughs of leafy trees”: these were defined as branches of the myrtle tree
 - “willows of the brook”: branches from willow trees
- traditionally, three are bound together (palm, myrtle, and willow) to form the *lulav*

When?

- Sukkot is the 15th of the seventh month (Tishri). Thus, all of the Fall Festivals fall in the same month, and are very close together. This reminds us that the coming of Yeshua, the regathering of Israel, and the setting up of His throne in Jerusalem will happen quickly, and together as the consummation of the last days.

How?

- Sukkot is a seven day Festival, with an eighth day attached as an additional Festival (*Shemini Atzeret*). The first day and the eighth day are Sabbaths, and holy convocations.
- Sukkot should be constructed by those who are able, and then others should be invited to participate in sitting in the sukkah, eating meals and rejoicing together.
 - the primary commandments connected with Sukkot are: 1) to dwell in the sukkah, 2) to rejoice in the presence of the Lord, and 3) to bring the four species into the sukkah.
 - the primary themes of the Festival are:
 - that if God dwells in our midst, we can rejoice even in the most common and mundane aspects of life. Even if we dwelt in the most humble of abodes, our hearts would be full of joy and rejoicing because God is willing to dwell with us.
 - the coming of Yeshua to dwell (“tabernacle”) with us (John 1:14). It is very likely that Yeshua was born on or near the Festival of Sukkot. Thus, the Festival itself, which emphasizes the dwelling of God with His people, is the perfect time to celebrate the birth of Messiah, Who is Immanuel!
 - the ingathering of the nations to worship the one True God of Israel. Zechariah 14 foretells the time when all the nations will gather to Jerusalem to celebrate Sukkot. The four species that are brought into the Sukkah represent the different nations. Throughout the Festival, the four species are “waved” in all directions: north, south, east, west, up, and down, to symbolize that God will bring His chosen ones from the four corners of the earth, and gather them together as His dwelling place.
- On the erev Sukkot, the community should meet together, and enjoy a festival meal. The theme is rejoicing in the Lord, so songs of praise, dancing, and, if a sukkah is available, taking turns sitting in the sukkah and talking together about the good things of God.
- the first day of Sukkot is a Sabbath, and affords a time for the community to come together, and read Scripture, give praise to God, and rejoice in His goodness.

- during the remaining evenings of Sukkot, families should spend time in their sukkah, and invite others to join them. Communities can set up schedules for visiting various families, so that everyone has the opportunity to sit in the sukkah, and contemplate the things of life that are most important.
- it is traditional to read the book of Ecclesiastes (Qohelet) during the Festival of Sukkot
 - the theme of this book perfectly fits the Festival, for it teaches that many things in life are a vapor, and that the things that matter the most are our family relationships, and our friends
 - Qohelet teaches us to “grasp the moment” of God’s goodness, and to savor the good things He gives us, while at the same time remembering the life is fleeting, and that striving to build fortunes, or working ourselves to death in order to “get ahead” are actually a vapor. Stopping, sitting in the sukkah, talking together, eating together, even in the humblest of surroundings, reminds us that the eternal things are often the most simple.
 - we then are able to return to our work refreshed with a sense of what is really important.
- *Shemini Atzeret*–the Eighth Day: the Torah contains an interesting dilemma:

Lev. 23:33 Again the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 34 “Speak to the sons of Israel, saying, ‘On the fifteenth of this seventh month is the Feast of Sukkot for seven days to the LORD. 35 ‘On the first day is a holy convocation; you shall do no laborious work of any kind. 36 ‘For seven days you shall present an offering by fire to the LORD. On the eighth day you shall have a holy convocation and present an offering by fire to the LORD; it is an assembly. You shall do no laborious work.

- In this text, the Festival of Sukkot is said to be for “seven days.” The first day is a holy convocation, a Sabbath (rest from normal work). But then the text notes that the “eighth day” is a holy convocation as well, and a Sabbath
 - from this it was derived that the eighth day is a Festival unto itself, but is also connected to the seven day Festival of Sukkot.
 - this eighth day is called *Shemini Atzeret* in Num 29:35. It literally means “the eighth day festival.”
 - the meaning is clear: Sukkot, as the final Festival in the Torah cycle, represents the span of earth’s history, a “cosmic week.” It corresponds to the sabbatical year cycle followed by the Jubilee year. Thus, the eighth day represents the world-to-come. During Sukkot, we are reminded of God’s desire to dwell in our midst. The eighth day commemorates the final goal of our salvation, that is, the eternal dwelling with God in the world to come.
- Since *Shemini Atzeret* is a holy convocation, and a Sabbath, it is appropriate for the community to gather together, to eat a meal together, and to rejoice before the Lord.
 - this gives a wonderful time to emphasize that we will spend eternity with the Lord
 - it affords an opportunity to study Scriptures relating to the end times and what it will be like to “ever be with the Lord.”
- It became the tradition, in the one-year Torah cycle, to finish Deuteronomy on *Shemini Atzeret*, and to begin the reading over again in Genesis on the day following, which has become known as *Simchat Torah* (rejoicing in the Torah). On *Simchat Torah*, the Torah scroll is paraded, and then the last verse of Deuteronomy and the first verse of Genesis is read. This reminds us that we are never done studying Torah, but that when we have finished one cycle, we begin again, which is a great joy.

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