

ABSTRACT

**What did Messiah
Yeshua expect His
Body and Bride to
look like, and how
close have we come
to his expectations?**

by

Rickard L. Sawyer

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The Model for the Messianic Community

*What the First Century Messianic Community Looked Like
and Why We Should Look the Same Today*

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For the Universe to make any sense at all, there must be one—and only one—Truth, or Reality. The ultimate goal of both Science and Religion, and ultimately that of every person, must be to identify that Truth and to embrace it to the uttermost.

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	i
List of Figures.....	iii
Chapter 1. First Things First	1
Chapter 2. Preliminary Concepts	6
Chapter 3. Modern “Messianic Judaism”	10
Chapter 4. Judaism in the Late Second Temple Period	13
Chapter 5. The Appearance of Yeshua	17
Chapter 6. The Giving of Ruach HaKodesh	19
Chapter 7. Shabbat or the Lord’s Day?.....	25
Scriptural Authority for the Seventh-Day Shabbat.....	25
The Modern Jewish Understanding of Shabbat.....	30
Scriptural Authority for Moving Shabbat to the First Day of the Week	32
Quotes from the Catholic Church Regarding the Sabbath to Sunday change ..	34
Chapter 8. Rabbi Sha’ul of Tarsus	37
Chapter 9. The Jerusalem Council	41
Chapter 10. “Christian” or “Messianic?”	51
Chapter 11. The Synagogue from 70 to 325 CE	54
Chapter 12. Where Did the Word “Church” Come From?.....	58
Chapter 13. Summary and Conclusions	63
Glossary	70
Appendices	77
Appendix A. Tisha b’Av and 17 Tammuz	77
<i>The Fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz</i>	77
<i>The Three Weeks and the Nine Days</i>	78
<i>Tisha B’Av (Av 9)</i>	78
Appendix B. Evidences for a Hebrew Source of the B’rit Hadasha	81
<i>The Importance of Discovering the Original Language</i>	81
<i>External Proofs for a Hebrew Original</i>	82
<i>The Testimony from the Church Fathers</i>	82
<i>The Testimony from the Dead Sea Scrolls</i>	83
<i>Internal Proofs for a Hebrew Original</i>	83
<i>Assumptions and Prejudices Leading to the Greek and Aramaic Theories</i>	84
<i>The Church: A History of Unremitting Anti-Semitism</i>	85
Appendix C. Scholars Who Support a Hebrew Origin for the B’rit Hadasha....	88
Appendix D. The Bar-Kochba Revolt (132-135 C.E.).....	90
<i>by Shira Schoenberg</i>	90
Appendix E. Anti-Semitic Decrees of Constantine and His Successors, High Priests of the Babylon Mystery Religion in Rome.....	92
<i>Summary</i>	92
<i>On The Keeping of Easter</i>	94
<i>Jews and the Later Roman Law (315-531 CE)</i>	95

The Model for the Messianic Community

I. Laws of Constantine the Great, October 18, 315: Concerning Jews, Heaven-Worshippers, and Samaritans	96
II. Laws of Constantius, August 13, 339: Concerning Jews, Heaven-Worshippers, and Samaritans	97
A Jew Shall Not Possess a Christian Slave	97
III. A Law of Theodosius 11, January 31, 439: Novella III: Concerning Jews, Samaritans, Heretics, And Pagans	97
IV. A Law Of Justinian, July 28, 531: Concerning Heretics and Manichaeans and Samaritans	98
V. Canons of the Council of Elvira	99
VI. Additional Anti-Semitic Canon Laws	100
Appendix F. A Brief Overview of Replacement Theology	103
Appendix G. Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust	106
Concerning the Jews and their Lies by Martin Luther, 1542 (Excerpts from)	108
Appendix H. Dates for the Births of Yochanan the Immerser and Yeshua HaMashiach	109
The Conception of Yochanan the Immerser (Luke 1:5-25)	110
The Conception of Yeshua (Luke 1:26-55)	111
The Birth of Yochanan [Luke 1:56-80]	112
The Birth of Yeshua (Luke 2)	114
Appendix I. What is Truth?	115
There is a Truth	118
What is Truth?	118
Truth Is "That Which Is"	120
The Truth Is Knowable	121
God Wants Us to Know the Truth	121
General references to truth and knowledge in the Bible	121
"You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free."	122
First John ... "that you may know."	123
Messiah Yeshua Is the Truth	124
The Word of God Is Truth	126
Index	129

List of Figures

- Figure 1. Recently-excavated portion of Temple Mount showing a very wide flight of steps with a large platform at the top.
This may very well have been the site of the coming of Ruach HaKodesh and Kefa's "Pentecost Sermon."20
- Figure 2. Photograph of the Jerusalem Model at the Holy Land Hotel, showing the location of the same or similar structure.
This is an area below Solomon's Porch. The doors at the top of the steps would have opened onto a tunnel that led up to the Temple.20
- Figure 3. Photograph of the Jerusalem Model at the Holy Land Hotel, showing the location of similar structures within the Temple courtyard and in the outer courtyard. (Solomon's Porch is the row of pillars in the background.) The events of Acts 2 could have taken place at any of these locations.21

Chapter 1.

First Things First

Dear Reader,

I realize that the biographical information about the author is supposed to either come at the end of the book or be printed on either the back cover or dust jacket, that the author is expected to refer to him/herself in the third person, and that the author is never supposed to address the reader directly. But if you will bear with me, I would like to do things a bit differently in this little book.

First of all, please don't think of these pages so much as a "book," but rather as a personal letter from my heart to yours. I have fairly recently (at this writing I am over 70 years old, so to me 20 years is "relatively recent") discovered some startling concepts that have quite literally changed my life, my understanding of the Scriptures, and my relationship to my Savior and to His Bride, and I would like to share some of those with you in hopes that you might also participate in that wonderful experience.

I suppose it is only fair that if I expect you to read this letter, you should know a little about me. After all, if you wrote a letter to me, I would certainly want to know at least a little bit about you. But if you prefer to skip over this section, please feel free to do so.

I was raised as the son of a Christian minister, and because my parents were obedient to the Lord's command to teach His words diligently to their son (Deuteronomy 6:4-7), I cannot remember a time before I trusted Israel's Messiah as my Lord and personal Savior, and I made my "public confession of faith" and was baptized (immersed) a few weeks before my seventh birthday.

By the time I was ten years old, I was teaching the "little kids" Sunday school class and was elected to my first congregational leadership position (Junior Deacon) in 1962 at the age of fifteen. After a brief sabbatical, I served continuously in congregational leadership for 46 years until my retirement in 2008 and then led a small home-based Torah-study group from 2008 to 2016. My first pastoral position was from 1965 to 1967 as the youth pastor of the chapel at the U.S. Naval Hospital on Guam. Since then, I have held both pastoral and "lay-leadership" positions in eight congregations in California, West Virginia, and Tennessee.

I received my formal theological training (Master of Arts in Biblical Studies, Master of Theology in systematic theology, Doctor of Theology in cults and comparative religion, and Doctor of Ministry in Bible college administration and curriculum development) at conservative evangelical seminaries in California.

For several years I served one of those schools as Vice President for Academic Affairs, Chairman of the Curriculum Development and Academic committees, Assistant Vice President for Academic Affairs, and Assistant Dean of Directed Individualized Studies. I also served as a theology professor, specializing in systematic theology, comparative religion, and the cults. For better or worse, I was therefore more or less directly responsible for shaping not only the theological thinking of the students in my classrooms but also the overall content of the training every student received at that school for many years thereafter. That means, for better or for worse, I was deeply involved in not only what my own congregations would be taught, but also in what would be taught to all the congregations served by all the pastors produced by that school.

Not long after I left that school to pursue more direct pastoral ministry, I began noticing what I considered to be some rather severe discrepancies between what Ruach HaKodesh¹ was teaching me through my personal study of the Scriptures and what I had learned in my formal theological training and passed on to my student pastors, particularly regarding the history and nature of “Christianity” and its relationship to Biblical Judaism. Though I am certain that it is quite normal and natural for everyone who seriously studies the Scriptures to modify their *peripheral* beliefs as Ruach HaKodesh brings to them a deeper understanding of God’s Word, the discrepancies that I was discovering were so profound that I was left with a deep, burning concern that perhaps I had been—though certainly unintentionally—guilty of the sin that most truly committed Bible teachers perhaps fear above all others—the sin of teaching that which the Bible does not teach.²

It wasn’t as if these “discrepancies” involved anything that could be considered “heresy,” or that they could adversely affect anyone’s salvation. But they did, at least as far as I was *personally* concerned, have a major influence on the way that I viewed

- (a) the Church, Israel, and their relationship to each other;
- (b) the relationship of Messiah to His Bride;
- (c) what *really* happened on the first Pentecost after Messiah’s resurrection;
- (d) Israel’s supposed rejection of their Messiah when He first appeared;
- (e) the forms of worship and fellowship that were practiced by the first-century Believers in Messiah;
- (f) what the Millennial Kingdom is going to look and feel like; and even
- (g) the relationship between the “Old Testament” and the “New Testament.”

A major turning point came late in my life (my late thirties), when my mother, our family historian, discovered my paternal grandmother’s genealogical records. My paternal grandfather had died when I was in my early teens. His father was a Scottish

¹ *Ruach HaKodesh* is the Hebrew term for the Holy Spirit; literally *Spirit, the Holy One*. Hebrew words and other unfamiliar or unusual terms will be translated or explained the first time they are used. For definitions and explanations of unfamiliar words and phrases, please consult the Glossary at the end of this document.

² God has expressed quite clearly His disdain for teachers who teach what He has not spoken. See, for example, Deuteronomy 13:1-5; 18:20-22; 14:14-15; 23:1-40; 27:9-16; 28:16-17; Ezekiel 13: 2-9; 1 Timothy 1:5-11; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; James 3:1; 2 Peter 2:1-4ff, and many others.

cabin boy named Roland Rowe, adopted by an Englishman named Sawyer, and at the time we had virtually no way to discover anything about his ancestors (Ancestry.com, even the Internet, had not yet been thought of). My paternal grandmother had died when my father was in his early teens, and neither my father nor his father knew anything about Grandmother's ancestors. The courthouse in their town had burned to the ground when my father was young, and all the vital records had been lost. Around the time I was starting seminary, my mother discovered a book, *The Descendants of Israel Leavitt*, that contained Grandmother's ancestry, as well as her marriage to my grandfather and the birth of my father.

The most startling revelation for me was that literally hundreds of the people in Grandmother's family tree (including her direct lineage—and thus *my* direct lineage) had thoroughly Jewish names dating as far back as 1300 England.³ Though I certainly couldn't pass the Government of Israel's current test for "who is a Jew"⁴ because my *mother's* ancestry is not clearly Jewish, there is no doubt that the blood of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov⁵ flows in my veins—some of the same previous blood that my Messiah shed for me! Armed with this information, I began trying to look at the Scriptures through my new "Jewish eyes"—to really understand the Scriptures as they would have been understood by their human authors⁶ and by those who originally received them.

The results were truly amazing! The Scriptures opened to me in a way that I had never seen before. I certainly don't pretend to have all the answers yet, and I don't expect to have them this side of the Olam Haba. But what I *do* have as a result of this personal quest is such a fresh, new excitement about my faith and my relationship to my Messiah and His Bride that, at least for me, the experience must be somewhat like what being "born again" as an adult feels like!

I invite you to go along for this amazing ride!

But be warned; as we progress through our journey together, some of the things that you will read here may surprise you as they did me. Some things may upset you, as they did me. Some things may even offend you, as I have been informed they have

³ On July 18, 1290 (Tisha b'Av in the Jewish calendar), Edward I (1272-1307) issued an edict of expulsion, banishing the Jews from England. The Jews were required to leave England by November 1, 1290. They were allowed to take their money and personal property, but they had to turn over all their real estate to the crown. It was much easier for many to "convert" to Christianity than to face the hardship of expulsion. Many Jews actually converted, while many others only pretended to do so. I have no way of knowing which path my ancestors initially chose, only that, based on the sketchy records that exist, they must have been living totally assimilated for at least the past several generations. I do know, however, that many of them were among the very first Puritans originally settling in the New England Colonies. Tisha b'Av, the 9th day of the month of Av on the Hebrew calendar, is the same as the date on which both Temples were destroyed and on which scores of other atrocities have been committed against the Jews. See Appendix A, "Tisha b'Av and 17 Tammuz" for a list of events associated with these two days.

⁴ Under Israel's current Law of Return, a person is considered Jewish only if his or her mother is Jewish and he or she has not "converted" to another religion. This distinctly—and patently erroneous—Rabbinical position ignores the simple biological fact that a person contains the genetic history of *both* one's father and mother, not just that of the mother. Thus a person is *genetically* at least partially Jewish as long as there is a single Jewish ancestor. Additionally, under that law, a person can be considered Jewish even if he or she has completely abandoned the God of Avraham, Yitzhak, and Ya'akov (see following footnote) and has "converted" to Secular Humanism or Atheism, both of which are clearly religions, both having clearly defined tenets of belief.

⁵ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

⁶ By the term "human authors," I mean those men who were directly inspired by Ruach HaKodesh to document, with no trace of error, God's message to humanity.

offended many others, including many members of my own family. Please be assured that it is not my intent to offend anyone, nor is it my intent to accuse or unduly criticize anyone, or to coerce anyone into my way of thinking. I only want to share what I have learned in the hope that this little volume will achieve these three goals:

1. To encourage my Jewish *mishpachah*⁷ to set aside their feelings about “Gentile Christians” and freely embrace their Jewish Messiah while retaining their precious Jewish lifestyle and traditions.
2. To educate (but in absolutely no way to condemn or unduly criticize) my Gentile Christian brothers and sisters about some of the many pagan practices and “traditions of the elders” that have contaminated the “Church,” and to encourage them to embrace the thoroughly Jewish roots of their faith.
3. To in some small way contribute to the healing of the rift between the Church and the Synagogue, that the words of Ephesians 2:14 may be fulfilled, and that Jew and Gentile may truly become one in the Messiah.

Ephesians 2:14

For he himself ... has made us both one and has broken down the *m'chitzah* [the wall in the temple courtyard separating Jews from Gentiles] which divided us. (CJB)

For He Himself ... made both groups into one and broke down the barrier of the dividing wall. (NAS)

Romans 12:4,5

For just as there are many parts that compose one body, but the parts don't all have the same function; so there are many of us, and in union with the Messiah we comprise one body, with each of us belonging to the others. (CJB)

For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. (NAS)

Galatians 3:28, 29

[In Messiah] there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for in union with the Messiah Yeshua,⁸ you are all one. Also, if you belong to the Messiah, you are seed of Avraham and heirs according to the promise. (CJB)

[In Christ] there is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free man, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you belong to Christ, then you are Abraham's descendants, heirs according to promise. (NAS)

⁷ Family or clan. See Glossary.

⁸ *Yeshua* is the Hebrew word for “salvation” and is the Messiah's true name in His native Hebrew language, later corrupted to “Jesus” through faulty translation. *Nobody* who ever knew Him in the flesh *ever* addressed Him as “Jesus.” See the entry in the Glossary.

1 Corinthians 10:32, 33

Do not be an obstacle to anyone—not to Jews, not to Gentiles, and not to God’s Messianic Community. Just as I try to please everyone in everything I do, not looking out for my own interests but for those of the many, so that they may be saved; (CJB)

Give no offense either to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God; just as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but the profit of the many, so that they may be saved. (NAS)

Granted, much of the information presented in this “treatise” is highly speculative and is certainly open to interpretations other (and perhaps better) than my own. Be that as it may, the simple fact still remains that there is nobody alive today who was around to personally observe what the Messianic Community⁹ of the first century actually looked like. And to my mind it would have been a very strange thing indeed for Jewish Believers in a Jewish Messiah, steeped in centuries of Jewish Culture and led by Jewish Rabbis (the Apostles) equipped only with Jewish Scriptures, to have constructed anything remotely resembling today’s predominantly Gentile Church.

⁹ The called-out community of Believers in Messiah; used in this document to refer to the entire Body of Messiah as a whole, as well as to the local congregation. With David Stern, translator of the *Complete Jewish Bible* quoted frequently herein, I prefer this term to the word “church” for reasons that will be discussed in detail later.

Chapter 2.

Preliminary Concepts

As I began to study both the Scriptures and the history of Christianity with my new “Jewish eyes,”¹⁰ I did my best to concentrate solely on what the Scriptures and history *actually* said and to avoid what my seminary professors and former pastors had *told* me they said. Not that I thought that my professors and pastors were necessarily wrong, but only that I wanted to be sure that I was seeing in the Scriptures what their divine Author, and not my human teachers, intended for me to see.

As a theological scientist¹¹ I had been trained to approach systematic theology as the *science* of carefully examining what the Scriptures say and summarizing their teachings into concise statements of “doctrine” that can then be neatly placed into the various categories established by previous theological scientists. As with all the sciences, theology has its own set of “rules” and pre-defined ideas that have been established, and that provide the boundaries within which the theological scientist is expected to practice that science. As evolution is to the biologist and the so-called (but non-existent in actuality) Geologic Column is to the paleontologist, the theological scientist is trained to accept certain assumptions without much thought. These assumptions have been accepted for so long that they simply are no longer questioned by those in the field, and the very act of questioning them would be tantamount to professional suicide.

Of course, charismatic theological scientists have a different set of “rules” than non-charismatics, liberal theological scientists have a different set of “rules” than conservatives, Protestant theological scientists have a different set of “rules” than Catholics, and the list goes on. My formal training could best be described as “non-charismatic, conservative, evangelical, and dispensational,” and so the “rules” of my theology naturally reflected that orientation.

As I began to take this new (for me) approach to the Scriptures, I soon discovered what I have come to believe had previously been a major barrier to my understanding of what the Messianic Community actually looked like between the time of Messiah’s resurrection and the establishment of “Christianity” as the official religion of the Roman Empire by Emperor Constantine (ca. 325 CE).¹² I discovered that my previous understanding of the early “Church” and its history had affected my earlier interpretation of the Apostolic Scriptures and how Yeshua intended His Body of Believers to

¹⁰ If you skipped the first chapter, you won’t understand what this means.

¹¹ I prefer the term “theological scientist” to “theologian” for the reasons explained in this paragraph.

¹² Common Era. I prefer to use CE instead of AD (*Anno Domini*, or Year of the Lord) and BCE (Before the Common Era) instead of BC (Before Christ) for reasons that will become apparent as you read on.

live and function. I discovered that I had completely misunderstood which sociological “model” Yeshua and His Shliachim originally used to establish the Messianic Community¹³, particularly Rav Sha’ul,¹⁴ who, more than any other early missionary, was responsible for bringing the *Goyim*¹⁵ into the Messianic Community.

From the formal theological training I had, I believe I developed an understanding of the Scriptures, particularly the “New Testament” Scriptures, that was significantly different from the way they would have most likely been understood by their original recipients.

This point was ever so starkly brought to my attention several years ago through a piece of Sunday school literature which came across my desk. It was written for grade school children and produced by a leading denominational publishing house. The part which caught my eye was a full-page drawing of Jesus. He was depicted as a boy and shown going up steps leading into a building. Underneath the drawing was this caption: ‘Jesus was a good Christian boy who went to church every Sunday.’ I scarcely could believe my eyes! Here were three glaring errors in one sentence: Jesus was a Christian, not a Jew; he attended church, not synagogue; and he went on Sunday, not the Sabbath. On seeing this, I thought to myself, if this is what is being taught in certain church schools among the young, no wonder a problem persists today among many Christian adults. These Christians fail to grasp the Jewishness of Jesus and the Jewish background to the New Testament writings.¹⁶

This little book is not intended to be anything even remotely approaching a thorough or exhaustive treatment of the subject. It is, however, intended to provide enough information to allow you, the reader, to begin the long and slow process of rethinking some previous conceptions of what the early Body of Messiah might have actually looked like and, perhaps, even of rethinking what the Messiah expects His Body and Bride to look like today.

The following are but a few of the ideas that I have had to wrestle with, and which we will be discussing as you read on:

1. Yeshua, His original *Talmidim*¹⁷, and His Shliachim were all born as Jews, lived their entire lives as Jews, and died as Torah-observant Jews. What other lifestyle could any of them ever even consider?

¹³ *Shliachim* is the Hebrew word for emissaries or ambassadors, or those who are “sent forth” as representatives. The ambassadors from Israel to other countries are called *shliachim* in Hebrew. The Greek translation of *shliachim* used in the Apostolic Scriptures is ἀπόστολος (*apostolos*), from which we get the word “apostles.”

¹⁴ *Rav Sha’ul* is the original Hebrew name and title of Rabbi Saul of Tarsus, also known as the Apostle Paul. *Rav* is a shortened form of the Hebrew word *Rabbi*, or teacher. More in Chapter 8.

¹⁵ *Goyim* is the Hebrew word for *nations* and usually refers to Gentiles, though it is sometimes also used in reference to the nation of Israel.

¹⁶ Marvin R. Wilson in the Foreword to *Jesus the Jewish Theologian* by Brad H. Young. Peabody MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, p. xvii. I have personally seen versions of this same illustration in the literature of several different denominations.

¹⁷ *Talmidim* is the Hebrew word for disciples. The Scriptures make a distinction between Messiah’s *Talmidim* (Disciples) and *Shliachim* (Apostles). The *Talmidim* would include all those who have followed the Messiah from the first century to the present; the term *Shliachim* refers specifically to those eye-witnesses to the Resurrection who were directly commissioned and sent by Messiah to be the ambassadors from His Kingdom to the first-century world. I believe those who refer to themselves as Apostles today do so out of arrogance, ignorance, or both, unless they have had a face-to-face encounter with the resurrected Messiah.

2. The only “Scriptures” that any of them knew were the *Tanakh*¹⁸, or Hebrew Bible—that which Gentile Christians refer to as the “Old Testament.” As a friend of mine once pointed out, “The Apostle Paul never preached a single sermon from the New Testament.” The Apostolic Scriptures, or so-called “New Testament,” did not exist in their present form until they were all long dead and buried.
3. The only form of worship that any of them knew was that of the Temple and Synagogues. Why would they ever choose to abandon that form of worship?
4. Since Israel was the only people on earth to have received direct revelation from the one true God, the only place to learn about Him was in Israel’s Temple/Synagogue environment.
5. From the time of the Exodus out of Egypt through the end of the Second Temple Period, and even until today, non-Jews have always been welcome to participate in Jewish religious life, as long as certain acceptable forms of behavior are observed.¹⁹
6. All the writers of the *entire* Bible, including both the Tanakh *and* the Apostolic Scriptures, were Jews. The Bible was written by Jews, to Jews, and for Jews, about the Jewish Patriarchs Avraham (Abraham), Yitzchak (Isaac), and Ya'akov (Jacob), their ancestors, and their descendants, culminating in Avraham’s greatest Son Yeshua. Dr. Luke, writer of the Gospel account that bears his name and the book of Acts, is often assumed to have been a Gentile, but that is simply not possible. He was a Jew, either natural-born or a proselyte; if he were a Gentile, he would have had absolutely no access to the Jewish courtyard in the Temple. His frequent presence there with Rav Sha’ul is clear from his writings.
7. Yeshua taught that the entire Tanakh speaks of Him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; cp. John 1:45). Thus the Apostolic Scriptures, those letters which His Shliachim wrote about His life and ministry and to explain His teachings that they were commissioned to pass on—and which we have received as the Apostolic Scriptures—can best be considered as God-inspired *midrashim* (commentaries) on the Tanakh, which enable Believers to properly understand both the Tanakh and Yeshua’s teaching as interpreted by Ruach HaKodesh through the Shliachim.
8. Since Hebrew was the common language of *Eretz Yisra'el*²⁰ in the late Second Temple Period²¹, and “Koine Greek” was assumed to be the *lingua franca* of all Goyim in the then-known world, and since the Gospel was to be delivered “to the

¹⁸ *Tanakh* is an acronym (TNK) for the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible. Please see the Glossary for more information.

¹⁹ For more information about non-Jewish people in Judaism, see Tracy R. Rich on the Internet, “Synagogues, Shuls and Temples,” www.jewfaq.org/shul.htm#Gentiles.

²⁰ The Land of Israel

²¹ “One way that the Jewish people resisted the pagan influence of Greece was by maintaining loyalty to the law of God and by speaking their native language. In the letter of Aristeeas, for example, we discover a reference to the language of the people. The language of the Torah, Hebrew, is said to be the language of the people, though some have confused this with Aramaic. While it would not be correct to say that Hebrew was the only language understood and spoken by the Jewish people during the time of Jesus, there is abundant evidence that indeed the people’s holy books, prayers, studies in the classroom, parables, and quite naturally, then, their everyday speech, was conducted in the language of the Bible—Hebrew.” (Young, Brad. *Jesus the Jewish Theologian*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999, p. 263.) For more information on the Hebrew source for the Apostolic Scriptures, please see Appendix B and C.

Jew first, and also to the Greek," the case has been made by some very reputable scholars that the Apostolic letters of the B'rit Hadasha were very probably originally written in Hebrew (the native tongue of all the writers except *perhaps* Dr. Luke) for transmission to the Jewish Messianic Believers, both in Eretz Yisra'el and in the Diaspora, and were immediately translated into Greek for transmission to the Non-Jewish Messianic Believers. At the very least, the early Church fathers held that Mattityahu wrote the original source document for the Synoptic Gospels in Hebrew.²² See (Appendix B and C)

With these ideas in mind, let us now look at the history of the Body of Messiah from its earliest beginnings and see if we can discover for ourselves just what Yeshua and the Shliachim may have actually expected the Messianic Community to look like.

²² Matthew's Hebrew name.

Chapter 3.

Modern “Messianic Judaism”

David Chernoff, one of the most prominent leaders of modern Messianic Judaism, describes the movement as:

... a movement of Jewish people from all walks of life, who believe that Yeshua (Jesus in Hebrew) is the promised Jewish Messiah and Savior for Israel and the world. Messianic Jews have not stopped being Jewish. On the contrary, we have continued to remain strongly Jewish in our identity, lifestyle, and belief that Yeshua is the Jewish Messiah and the fulfillment of true Biblical Judaism.²³

Although David Chernoff’s father, Martin, a pioneer in the modern movement, believed that he had received the designation “Messianic Judaism” from the Lord,²⁴ David Rausch²⁵ points out that the term “Messianic Judaism” was in fact used in the Evangelical magazine *Our Hope*, edited by Arno C. Gaebelein, as early as 1895.²⁶ Additionally,

While the desire to preserve a Jewish identity was clearly present in the formation of the HCAA [Hebrew Christian Alliance of America], there were one or two pioneers with a vision for a corporate Jewish expression of faith in Yeshua in worship and lifestyle that would be the reviviscence of the pattern of the Jewish Church of the first century. Mark Levy proposed such a vision to the HCAA in 1917, but it was decisively rejected. The terminology of “Messianic Judaism” and “Messianic Jews” was in fact used at this time, both by Levy and by John Zacker, and it was “Messianic Judaism” that was explicitly disowned. [Please refer to this entire excellent article on the Internet.]²⁷

Dating back to the 19th century, Jews who believed that Yeshua (“Jesus”) is the Messiah worshipped under the accepted designation of “Hebrew Christian.” The Hebrew Christian Alliance of America, formed in 1915, was renamed the Messianic Jewish Alliance of America in 1975. According to the publication *Reform Judaism*, about 10,000 Jews belonged to Hebrew Christian groups, including Messianic Judaism, in 1978, but by the mid-1990s, the numbers swelled to nearly 200,000.

The term “Hebrew Christian” was disturbing to many because it suggested, to both “traditional” Jews and to Gentile Christians, that the so-called “Hebrew Christians” were ethnic Jews who had converted to the Christian religion. For the most part, however, those Jews who had received Yeshua as their Messiah viewed themselves as just that—Jews who had not “converted” to anything, but rather as Jews who had

²³ Chernoff, David. “What is Messianic Judaism” in *Messianic Judaism: Questions and Answers*, Havertown, PA, MMI Publishing (1990).

²⁴ Chernoff, Yohanna. *Born a Jew, Die a Jew*. Hagerstown, MD: McDougal Publishing, 1996.

²⁵ Rausch, David A. *Messianic Judaism: Its History, Theology and Polity*. New York and Toronto, The Edwin Mellen Press, 1982, pp. 35-38.

²⁶ “The Messianic Jewish Congregational Movement.” *The Christian Century* 99/28 Sept. 15-22, 1982, p. 926.

²⁷ Hocken, Peter. *The Rise of “Messianic Judaism”* Dallas, TX: Baruch HaShem Synagogue, 2003, www.baruchhashem.com/resources/riseofmj.html.

received Yeshua HaMashiach²⁸ as their Jewish Messiah and Savior, and who wished to retain their Jewish identity.

Part of the identity is in the terminology. Messianic Jews use original Hebrew terms in their faith. God the Father is *Abba*. Jesus Christ is *Yeshua HaMashiach*, and the Holy Spirit is *Ruach HaKodesh*. There are hundreds of other different terms, including *B’rit Hadasha* for New Testament and *Mikvah* for baptism, that help form a body of belief unlike both Christianity and conventional Judaism. ...

The struggle with identity is more than immaturity, though, as Kinzer wrote in the Winter 2000 issue of *Kesher, A Journal of Messianic Judaism*. “It reflects the complex, challenging, and disturbing questions raised by our very existence for two communities who, through almost two millennia, have defined themselves in opposition to one another. The precise nature of our relationship to these two communities and their histories and traditions defies simple formulas.”

Beth Messiah’s Rosenfarb [Rabbi Joseph Rosenfarb of Beth Messiah in Norfolk, VA] explains that his faith is a Judaism, not a “Hebraicized Christianity.” “It’s a Jewish movement, with Yeshua (Jesus) as the jewel,” he added.

Overcoming opposition from both sides is an uphill battle. “The Christian Church has the attitude that ‘you’re our poor lost brother,’” Rosenfarb said. But traditional Judaism sees Messianic Jews as a threat, “a Christian community, dragging Jews away from the Jewish community with a long-term goal of making Christians out of them.”²⁹

For the purposes of our discussion, we must understand that in its most inclusive and literal usage, the term “Messianic Jew” does not necessarily *always* indicate a Jewish person who believes that Yeshua is Israel’s Messiah. In the purest sense of the word, nearly all Jewish people—at least all who accept Rambam’s³⁰ Thirteen Principles of Faith,³¹ which are considered the minimum faith requirements for Judaism—could be considered “Messianic,” at least in that they anticipate Israel’s Messiah.

I believe with perfect faith in the coming of the *Moshiach*, and though he may tarry, still I await him every day” (Principle 12 of Rambam’s 13 Principles of Faith).

...

Belief in the eventual coming of the *Moshiach* is a basic and fundamental part of traditional Judaism. It is part of Rambam’s 13 Principles of Faith, the minimum requirements of Jewish belief. In the *Shemoneh Esrei* prayer, recited three times daily, we pray for all of the elements of the coming of the *Moshiach*: ingathering of the exiles; restoration of the religious courts of justice; an end of wickedness, sin and heresy; reward to the righteous; rebuilding of Jerusalem; restoration of the line of King David; and restoration of Temple service. ...

²⁸ *Mashiach* (or *Moshiach*) is the Hebrew word from which we get Messiah, and means “anointed.” There were three classes of people in Hebrew society who were anointed to their offices: prophets, priests, and kings. With the Hebrew definite article *ha*, *HaMashiach* is “The Messiah,” or literally “The Anointed One,” because He holds all three offices simultaneously. The Greek equivalent for “The Anointed One” is *Χριστός* (*Christos*), from which comes the word “Christ.”

²⁹ Clark, Michael. “Messianic Judaism: Living In Between” Glenferrie, South VIC, Australia: Messianic Jewish Alliance of Australia, 2003. On the Internet at www.mjaa.org.au/pages/articles/Living_in_between.htm.

³⁰ Maimonides’s full name was Moses ben Maimon; in Hebrew he is known by the acronym of Rabbi Moses ben Maimon, Rambam

³¹ See the entry “Principles of Faith” in the Glossary.

[T]raditional Judaism maintains that the messianic idea has always been a part of Judaism. The *Moshiach* is not mentioned explicitly in the Torah, because the Torah was written in terms that all people could understand, and the abstract concept of a distant, spiritual, future reward was beyond the comprehension of some people. However, the Torah contains several references to ‘the End of Days’ (*acharit ha-yamim*), which is the time of the *Moshiach*; thus, the concept of *moshiach* was known in the most ancient times.³²

That said, let us now move on to what Judaism may have looked like toward the end of the Late Second Temple Period (200 BCE - 70 CE).

³² Rich, “Moshiach: The Messiah,” www.jewfaq.org/moshiach.htm.

Chapter 4.

Judaism in the Late Second Temple Period

Most Christians are used to thinking about the Church in terms of denominations: Baptists, Methodists, Lutherans, Presbyterians, Catholics, Episcopalians, Independents, etc., meeting together in little groups (congregations) of people with similar styles of worship and doctrinal understanding. But only on the very rarest of occasions would these diverse-thinking groups of people all meet in the same place at the same time for communal worship, a Billy Graham crusade, or a Bill Gaither concert, for example.

This was not the case with the synagogues of the Late Second Temple Period and certainly not during the first half of the first century of the Common Era. At that time there were essentially three major divisions of Judaism, with at least five major additional overlapping subgroups.

Prior to the Maccabean revolt³³ (ca. 185-160 BCE), Judaism was rather well united. However, under both Greek and Roman rule, many Jews tended to adopt the Greek, or Hellenized, lifestyle. A more traditionalist group known as the Chasideans (not to be confused with modern Chasidic Judaism) opposed these Hellenistic Jews. As the Seleucid Greeks began to oppress the Jewish people, they united and revolted against the Greeks. During the 25-year Maccabean war, Judaism remained relatively united, but after the war the Jewish people divided into three main groups: the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Essenes. Each of these major groups contained many variations, or sub-groups, much like the sub-groups within American political parties. For example, within both the Republican and Democratic parties there are those who consider themselves as conservative, moderate, and liberal. For the sake of our discussion we will only touch upon the major divisions of Judaism that existed at that time.

The *P'rushim* (Pharisees)] were the theological conservatives of their time, holding to a literal interpretation of the Scriptures. They believed, as do most modern Jews,

³³ Resentment among the Jews to Greek rule in Judea grew steadily, culminating in 167 BCE with the outbreak of a revolt against the Greeks in response to the sacrifice of a pig on the Temple altar by Antiochus Epiphanes. Judah Maccabee defeated Antiochus' army and liberated Jerusalem in 165 BCE. He purified the Temple and reinstituted the sacrifices. On the 25th of Kislev the Jews inaugurated the Temple and offered up the first sacrifice to the Almighty on the new altar. The inauguration festival for the Temple lasted eight days, and is commemorated as the Festival of Lights, or Chanukah. For more information, refer to the apocryphal Books of the Maccabees plus Josephus' *Wars of the Jews*.

that God gave *Moshe* (Moses) two Torahs, a written Torah and an oral Torah,³⁴ both of which they considered authoritative but open to interpretation by specially trained teachers, called Rabbis. Most Pharisees would have considered themselves “Scribes,” or experts in Torah, though not all Scribes were Pharisees.

The *Tzedukim* [Sadducees] grew out of the Hellenized aristocratic elements of Judaism. While they probably considered themselves theological conservatives who held to a strict interpretation of the written Torah, their theology more closely resembled modern *liberal* “Christianity.” They rejected all things supernatural, particularly rejecting miracles, spirit beings,³⁵ and the resurrection of the dead. They embraced the Hellenistic lifestyle of the Romans and probably viewed themselves as “good citizens” of the Roman Empire. Unfortunately, the Sadducees were also the political appointees to the Temple priesthood and held a majority of the seats on the Sanhedrin (Israel’s equivalent of America’s Supreme Court). By the time of Yeshua, there were likely very few of the *kohenim* [priests] who were scripturally qualified to serve in the Temple.

The Essenes felt that both the Pharisees and the Sadducees were far too liberal and that the Temple priesthood was totally corrupt, so they gathered in monastic communities and developed their own sacrificial system, independent of the Temple’s. Perhaps the best-known Essene community was the one at Qumran, which (according to most scholars) left us the Dead Sea Scrolls.

After Israel came under the control of the Roman Empire, a group of political activists known as Zealots arose, who both advocated and attempted to bring about the overthrow of Rome. A particularly violent subgroup of the Zealots was a band of assassins known as the *Sicarii* (also spelled *Sacarii*), or *assassins*, after the Latin word for the short icepick-like daggers with which they dispatched (usually via a quick thrust to the base of the brain) anyone they felt to be a Roman sympathizer. Among Yeshua’s talmidim were at least two members of the party of the Zealots: Simeon Zealotes (Simon the Zealot) and Yehudah Sicarius (or Judah the Assassin), usually translated into English as “Judas Iscariot.”³⁶ Bar Abba (Barabbas, or Son of a Father),

³⁴ We can be sure that the LORD did not give Moshe an additional Oral Torah that he failed to write down, because the Scriptures say that Moshe wrote down all that the LORD commanded, and that the LORD commanded that nothing else be added.

“Moshe came and told the people all the words of ADONAI, and all the ordinances; and all the people answered with one voice, and said, ‘All the words which ADONAI has spoken will we do.’ *Moshe wrote all the words of ADONAI*, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the mountain, and twelve pillars for the twelve tribes of Yisra’el.” (Exod. 24:3-5)

“You shall not add to the word which I command you, neither shall you diminish from it, that you may keep the mitzvot [commandments] of ADONAI your God which I command you.” (Deuteronomy 4:2)

“Moshe *wrote this law* [Torah] and delivered it to the Kohanim [Priests] the sons of Levi, who bore the ark of the covenant of ADONAI, and to all the Zakenim [Elders] of Yisra’el. Moshe commanded them, saying, ‘At the end of [every] seven years, in the set time of the year of release, in the feast of booths, when all Yisra’el is come to appear before ADONAI your God in the place which he shall choose, you shall read this law [Torah] before all Yisra’el in their hearing. Assemble the people, the men and the women and the little ones, and your sojourner who is within your gates, that they may hear, and that they may learn, and fear ADONAI I your God, and observe to do all the words of this law [Torah]; and that their children, who have not known, may hear, and learn to fear ADONAI your God, as long as you live in the land where you go over the Yarden [Jordan] to possess it.’” (Deuteronomy 31:9-13)

It would not be possible for the Kohanim and Zakenim of Yisra’el to *read all the words* of the Torah unless *all the words* of the Torah were *written down* to be read.

³⁵ I find it quite incomprehensible how anyone who rejects the concept of spirit beings can at the same time claim to serve a God who is revealed as a Being of pure spirit.

³⁶ “Iscariot” was not his last name as many suppose, but rather a description of both his political affiliation and his character. How appropriate a title for the one who was to betray Yeshua to be murdered.

who was released by Governor Pilate in exchange for Yeshua's execution, was a notorious Sicarius (Matthew 27:11-25).

The Pharisaic tradition was the only one to survive the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE by more than a very few years, and is even now not very far removed from modern Judaism. The Sadducees quickly dissolved after the destruction of the Temple because without the priesthood and temple service they no longer had a reason to exist. The Essenes were quickly wiped out by Roman armies because their monastic communities made easy targets. And the Zealots were quickly rounded up and executed for treason against Rome.

However, during the period of time between the initial conquest of Israel by the Romans and the destruction of Jerusalem, the Pharisees, Sadducees, and Zealots all met together for study, prayer, and worship in the Temple and in the same synagogues. It was into this milieu that Yeshua and His talmidim were born, studied Torah, walked *halakah*,³⁷ taught the Gospel message, and eventually died—as fully Torah-observant Jews.

There was also a fourth identifiable group in the synagogue, the former-Gentile proselytes,³⁸ or *ger*. The famous Jewish historian Josephus describes the *ger*, or convert, as one who adopts the Jewish customs, following the laws of the Jews and worshiping God as they do—or one who has become a Jew (*Antiquities of the Jews*, xx. 2, §§ 1, 4; cp. xviii. 3, 5.)

Ezra's policy, founded on the belief that the new commonwealth should be of the holy seed, naturally led to the exclusion of those of foreign origin. Still, the non-Israelite could gain admittance through circumcision (see Ex. xii).³⁹

These were people who were not Jewish-born, but who, like King David's grandmother Ruth, left their pagan ways behind them to fully embrace the God, the People, the Land, and the Torah of Israel.

According to tradition, every Pharisee was expected to win at least one proselyte to Judaism every year. It is my contention that Dr. Luke, who penned the most scholarly of the Gospel accounts and the Book of Acts, if indeed he was not a natural-born Jew, was one of these proselytes, and may very well have been converted to Judaism by Rav Sha'ul himself.

The process of this conversion would have included the foreswearing of all pagan beliefs and practices, the taking of a Jewish name [*shem kodesh*], self-immersion in a *mikvah* [a special pool of "living water"], circumcision for men, and the offering of a sacrifice in the Temple. Those who had gone through this conversion process were considered as Jewish as those who were born as Jews. If this were not true, then their children would not be considered Jewish, nor would their grandchildren. If Ruth did not become a Jew fully through her "conversion process," whatever form it may have taken, then her grandson, King David, could not have been considered fully a Jew either!

³⁷ "The walk," i.e. proper observance of the requirements of Torah.

³⁸ "Proselytes," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, www.jewishencyclopedia.com.

³⁹ "Gentile," *ibid*.

A fifth group of people was also part of the synagogue, called variously Sojourners, Strangers, Semi-Converts, or simply God-Fearers.⁴⁰ The God-Fearers were *Goyim* who demonstrated great love for the God, the Land, the People, and the Torah of Israel, but stopped short of formal conversion and circumcision.

But of the stranger it was expected that he would forego the worship of idols (Leviticus xx. 2; Ezekiel xiv. 7) and the practise [sic.] of sorcery, incest, or other abominations (Leviticus xviii. 26), and that he would refrain from eating blood (Leviticus xvii. 10), from working on Sabbath (Ex. xx. 10, xxiii. 12), from eating leavened bread on Pesach (Ex. xii. 19), and from violating Yom ha-Kippurim [Yom Kippur] (Leviticus xvi. 29).⁴¹ [Compare Acts 15:28-29]

Having agreed to observe the conditions described above, the God-Fearer was free to participate as fully as he (or she)⁴² desired in the religious observances of his synagogue community, but was not under obligation to observe the entire *oral* Torah, nor was he obligated to undergo the rite of circumcision. For all practical purposes, he lived as a Jew among Jews but was not expected to “bear the full burden of Torah.” Cornelius of Caesarea (Acts 10:1) was such a man, as perhaps was the Roman centurion (Luke 7:5) who built the synagogue which *Kefa*’s [Peter’s] family attended in Capernaum. Other God-Fearers are mentioned in Acts 13:43, Acts 17:4, and Acts 17:17. It is my firm conviction that (except for the issue of having embraced the Messiah, obviously) the God-Fearer would have been virtually indistinguishable from most of the non-Jewish members of any modern Messianic Jewish congregation.

⁴⁰ See John 9:31; Acts 10:22; Acts 13:43; Acts 17:4; and Acts 17:17.

⁴¹ “Gentile,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, www.jewishencyclopedia.com.

⁴² Whenever speaking of people in general I prefer to use masculine pronouns “he,” “him,” and “his” to indicate both men and women. Although not generally considered “politically correct” by our “enlightened society” I find that this use is much less cumbersome than the use of the inclusive “he or she,” “he/she,” “his/hers,” “him/her” (etc.) or the grammatically incorrect “they.” Unfortunately, the only gender-neutral pronoun in English is the word “it” and I just cannot bring myself to refer to a person as “it.”

Chapter 5.

The Appearance of Yeshua

Into this mix of “people-types” that were in the synagogue came a young Jewish Rabbi/Theologian named Yeshua ben Yosef (literally, “Salvation, the son of Yosef” [usually transliterated as “Joseph”]) from Nazareth in the Galilee, teaching the people that the Kingdom of God had come among them in fulfillment of the writings of the Prophets. In fact, He went so far as to claim to be the Messiah the Jewish people had awaited for centuries, and frequently referred to Himself using the title “ben Adam” (“Son of Man” or literally “Son of Adam”; “bar ‘enash” in Aramaic, Daniel 7:13-14) that some of the Prophets had used to describe the Messiah. Many, throughout the Galilee particularly, heard Him teach; some believed Him, many did not, and many followed Him around the countryside more out of curiosity than anything else.

Out of the hundreds of people who followed Him, Yeshua selected twelve men to be his core group of *talmidim* [students, disciples], and for about three years they traveled throughout Israel from synagogue to synagogue, teaching Torah and emphasizing that the Kingdom promised in the Torah, the Writings, and the Prophets (the three sections of the Tanakh, or Hebrew Scriptures) had finally come to Israel. When He wasn’t teaching in the synagogue, Yeshua loved to teach in the Temple, which was filled with living illustrations that He used to explain the Scriptures to His talmidim.

What we must eventually come to fully understand is that *neither Yeshua nor any of His talmidim after Him taught anything other than the Hebrew Scriptures and how to live them out in daily life!* They did *not* start a new religion; they did *not* start even a new form of Judaism. They lived and breathed, walked and talked, wrote and taught, all within the confines of Judaism, the Temple, and the Synagogue. The only thing “new” that they taught was that the long-awaited Messiah had come and had brought the Kingdom of God to dwell among the Jewish people. Not one of them ever became a “Christian” or taught anything contrary to Torah, and every one of them died fully Torah-observant Jews.

After His execution and resurrection, Yeshua appeared to a core group of His talmidim and instructed them to complete His work of taking the message of the Kingdom of God, first to Jerusalem, then to all of Judea [to the Jew first], then to Samaria, and finally to the rest of the world [and then also to the Gentile] (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 1:7-8). The simple core of that message was the nine-word phrase, “Repent [turn away from sin and turn back to God and His Torah], for the Kingdom of God is at hand.”

The Model for the Messianic Community

After receiving this commission, these *talmidim* were called His *Shlichim*, Ambassadors, or Emissaries.⁴³

⁴³ *Shlichim* is the plural form of the Hebrew word *Shliach*, which means an emissary; to send or one who is sent; one sent forth with the full power and authority of the sender; the Greek equivalent is *apostolos* (*apostolos*), from which we derive the English word Apostle. The Ambassadors that Israel sends to foreign governments today are called *Shlichim* in Hebrew.

Chapter 6.

The Giving of Ruach HaKodesh

Now we come to a most important—and most frequently misunderstood—event. It was the Feast of Shavu'ot (Weeks), on the fiftieth day after Yeshua's resurrection from the dead. His core group of talmidim had gone up to the Temple for worship. Let's pick up the narrative as it appears in the *Complete Jewish Bible*:

The festival of Shavu'ot [50 Days, or *Pentecost* in Greek] arrived, and the believers all gathered together in one place. Suddenly there came a sound from the sky like the roar of a violent wind, and it filled the whole House where they were sitting. Then they saw what looked like tongues of fire, which separated and came to rest on each one of them. They were all filled with the Ruach HaKodesh and began to talk in different languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak. (Acts 2:1-4)

Please carefully notice that they were *not* in some “upper room.” Bible teachers who are not familiar with first-century Judaism do not understand that the term “the House” was a very familiar shortened form of “the House of Prayer”—the Temple (Isaiah 56:7; Matthew 21:13; Mark 11:17; Luke 19:46). Modern archaeology has uncovered a section of the Temple previously unknown. Leading up from one of the main streets adjacent to the temple is a very wide flight of steps with a large platform at the top. The talmidim were apparently seated either on the steps or on the platform. (See Figures 1, 2, and 3.)

This particular type of structure would have created a teaching environment very similar to that found in most university lecture halls. It was common practice for the rabbis of that time to take their talmidim to the Temple and teach them there, and Rabbi Yeshua certainly practiced this custom. It may well have been to this exact location that the talmidim had come on this first Feast Day following the loss of their Rabbi.

The Model for the Messianic Community



Figure 1. Portion of Temple Mount showing a very wide flight of steps with a large platform at the top. This may very well have been the site of the coming of Ruach HaKodesh and Kefa's "Pentecost Sermon."

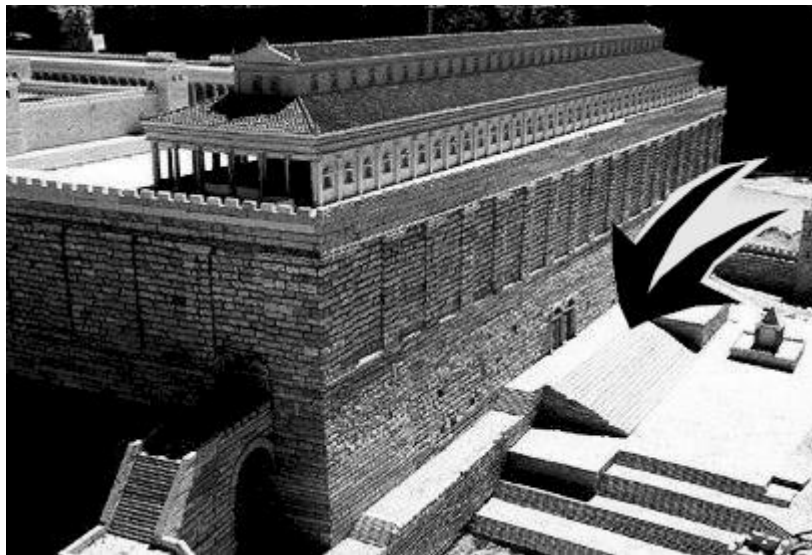


Figure 2. Photograph of the Jerusalem Model at the Holy Land Hotel, showing the location of the same or similar structure. This is an area below Solomon's Porch. The doors at the top of the steps would have opened onto a tunnel that led up to the Temple.

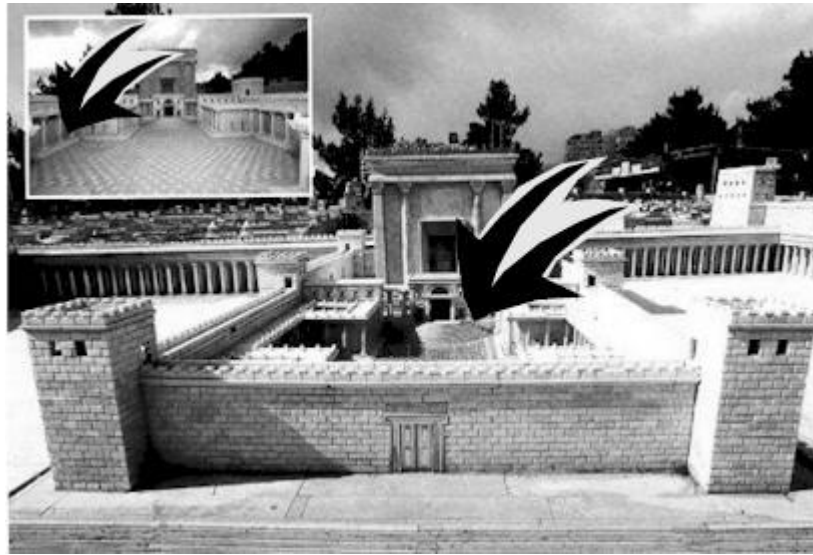


Figure 3. Photograph of the Jerusalem Model at the Holy Land Hotel, showing the location of similar structures within the Temple courtyard and in the outer courtyard. (Solomon's Porch is the row of pillars in the background.) The events of Acts 2 could have taken place at any of these locations.

Now there were staying in Yerushalayim⁴⁴ religious Jews from every nation under heaven. When they heard this sound, a crowd gathered; they were confused, because each one heard the believers speaking in his own language. Totally amazed, they asked, “How is this possible? Aren’t all these people who are speaking from the Galil?⁴⁵ How is it that we hear them speaking in our native languages? We are Parthians, Medes, Elamites; residents of Mesopotamia, Y’hudah,⁴⁶ Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia, Egypt, the parts of Libya near Cyrene; visitors from Rome; Jews by birth and proselytes; Jews from Crete and from Arabia! How is it that we hear them speaking in our own languages about the great things God has done?” (Acts 2:5-11)

At this point we need to carefully notice a few things:

First, these “religious Jews ... from every nation” were all either natural-born Jews or proselytes like Ruth (see above) [no Gentiles]. Kefa addressed them *all* as “you men of Yisra'el” (Acts 2:22).

Second, they were *Jews* from all over the known world.

Third, they were either in the Temple or in the street immediately adjacent to the area where the Talmidim were. Notice that they were where they could hear either the “sound from the sky like the roar of a violent wind” (Acts 2:2) or the sound of the Talmidim speaking. And they heard the Talmidim speaking not gibberish or some “angelic” or “heavenly” language, but numerous *human languages* from all over the world—languages far too diverse for the Talmidim to have possibly learned all of them previously.

⁴⁴ Jerusalem.

⁴⁵ Galilee.

⁴⁶ Judah.

Notice also [**fourth** point, for those who are actually counting] that Kefa [Peter] simply stood to address these “religious Jews ... from every nation.” He did not leave an “upper room”⁴⁷ and go down a flight of steps to the street outside where the crowd had somehow mysteriously gathered to listen through the walls.

Amazed and confused, they all went on asking each other, “What can this mean?” But others made fun of them and said, “They’ve just had too much wine!” Then Kefa stood up with the Eleven and raised his voice to address them: “You Judeans, and all of you staying here in Yerushalayim! Let me tell you what this means! Listen carefully to me! These people aren’t drunk, as you suppose — it’s only nine in the morning. No, this is what was spoken about through the prophet Yo’el⁴⁸: ‘ADONAI says: “In the Last Days, I will pour out from my Spirit upon everyone. Your sons and daughters will prophesy, your young men will see visions, your old men will dream dreams. Even on my slaves, both men and women, will I pour out from my Spirit in those days; and they will prophesy. I will perform miracles in the sky above and signs on the earth below blood, fire and thick smoke. The sun will become dark and the moon blood before the great and fearful Day of ADONAI comes. And then, whoever calls on the name of ADONAI⁴⁹ will be saved.’”’ (Acts 2:12-21)

After explaining Yo’el’s prophecy (Joel 2:28-32) and providing further Scriptural proofs that Yeshua, who died and was miraculously resurrected from the dead, is the long-awaited Messiah, Kefa concluded:

“Therefore, let the whole house of Isra’el know beyond doubt that God has made him both Lord [ADONAI⁵⁰] and Messiah—this Yeshua, whom you [crucified]!” On hearing this, they were stung in their hearts; and they said to Kefa and the other emissaries⁵¹, “Brothers, what should we do?” Kefa answered them, “Turn from sin, return to God, and each of you be immersed on the authority of Yeshua the Messiah into forgiveness of your sins, and you will receive the gift of the Ruach HaKodesh! For the promise is for you, for your children, and for those far away—as many as ADONAI our God may call!” He pressed his case with many other arguments and kept pleading with them, “Save yourselves from this perverse generation!” So those who accepted what he said were immersed, and there were added to the group that day about three thousand

⁴⁷ The traditional site of the so-called “upper room” did not even exist at the time of this event. It is, in fact, a Crusader structure, and was either built or restored not earlier than the time of the Crusades (no earlier than 1096-1099 at the earliest). I have personally witnessed a number of “charismatic” Christians who were visiting the tourist trap promoted as the “Upper Room” fall into a state of “religious ecstasy” and begin babbling incoherent gibberish because they believed they were actually in a place of some deep spiritual significance. How sad.

⁴⁸ Joel.

⁴⁹ The “Church” has taught for centuries that “whoever calls on the name of *Jesus* will be saved.” However, what God *actually* said through the prophet Yo’el was “whoever calls on the name of ADONAI (יהוה), YHWH, the LORD) will be saved” (Joel 2:32). This is not a contradiction if we can just remember that Yeshua *is* ADONAI from all eternity past. This means that the One Who walked in the Garden with Adam and Eve (Gen. 3:8), the One Who appeared to Avraham and Sarah to announce the birth of Yitzchak (Gen. 1:8-14), the One Who made the everlasting Covenants with Avraham (Gen. 15:7-22), Yitzchak (Gen. 26:1-4), and Ya’akov (Gen. 28:13-16), the One Who stood in the blazing furnace with Shadrakh, Meishakh and ‘Aved-N’go (Daniel 3:23-25), the One Who appeared to Moshe in the burning bush (Gen. 3:1-6), and the One Who wrote the Torah in stone with His finger (Exo. 24:12-18; 31:18) was Yeshua in His pre-incarnate form. And the “The Holy One of Israel” Whom “non-Messianic” Jews worship and to Whom they direct their daily prayers is *Yeshua!*

⁵⁰ Yeshua *already had been* ADONAI (יהוה), YHWH, the LORD) from all eternity past. It was the resurrection that *confirmed* (made) Him as the Messiah.

⁵¹ Apostles, *Shliachim*.

people. They continued faithfully in the teaching of the emissaries, in fellowship, in breaking bread and in the prayers. (Acts 2:36-42)

Here we need to carefully note some additional points that have caused confusion among Gentile Believers in Messiah for the past 1,600 years.

Fifth: Kefa's message was addressed *not* to Gentiles, but to "all the house of Isra'el."

Sixth, the three thousand souls who believed that day were added *to the Talmidim*, not added to anything called "the church" (because the "church" didn't exist until the fourth century — Chapter 12), and ...

Seventh, "They continued faithfully in the teaching of the emissaries, in fellowship, in breaking bread, and in the prayers."

There is absolutely no evidence anywhere in either the biblical record or in any secular historical record to support the idea that on that day in history either the original Talmidim (estimated to be about 120 in number) or the three thousand who had just become Talmidim that day suddenly stopped being Jews and were transformed into something called either "the church" or "Christians." Though it has been taught for the past seventeen centuries, that concept is totally unbiblical. They simply became Jews who believed and trusted in Yeshua as the Messiah, and who had been filled with Ruach HaKodesh, nothing more.⁵²

However, they had now become an eighth distinct, identifiable group within Late Second Temple Judaism. Yeshua's Talmidim had now become "Messianics" alongside the Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes (separatists who probably didn't show up at Synagogue very often anyway), Zealots, Sicarii, Proselytes, and God-Fearers.

Sidetrack: If the Hebrew word (remember that the original believers in Messiah spoke Hebrew, or possibly, but unlikely, Aramaic, as their native language) that we have rendered here as *Messianics* were to be translated from Hebrew into Greek, it would be rendered as *Χριστιανος* (*Christianos*, look familiar?) According to Acts 11:26, this word was first used as a "technical (and probably derogatory) term" for the Talmidim at Antioch. But look how that verse is rendered in the *Complete Jewish Bible*: "Also it was in Antioch that the talmidim for the first time were called 'Messianic.'" The word "Christian" is the result of *transliterating*⁵³ the Greek equivalent of the Hebrew term "Messianic," rather than actually *translating* from either the Greek or from the original Hebrew source word! If the Apostolic letters had never been translated into Greek—if the Apostolic Scriptures had been translated *directly* from their original Hebrew into English—all believers in Messiah Yeshua would have been known today as "Messianics," and *the word "Christian" would simply not exist.*

Eighth, note also that "They continued faithfully in the teaching of the Emissaries, in fellowship, in breaking bread, and in the prayers." *Where* did they "continue faithfully in the teaching of the emissaries and fellowship?" In the synagogue and in the

⁵² That is, nothing more humanly speaking. As I understand the Scriptures, they literally became an entirely new species of being that God calls "Saint" (2 Cor. 5:17). But that is a subject for another study.

⁵³ Transliteration is phonetically writing a word in the alphabet of a different language; in this case writing a Greek equivalent of a Hebrew word using the English alphabet.

Temple and in private homes! *Where* did they “continue faithfully ... in breaking bread?” In the Challah bread of the Kiddush ceremony on *Shabbat*⁵⁴ in the synagogue and in private homes, celebrating Havdalah and the Feast Days! [Be patient; a thorough explanation of *Havdalah* is coming very soon!] *Where* did they “continue faithfully ... in *the prayers*?” (“The prayers” is very often used as shorthand for the liturgical prayers that constitute the major portion of every synagogue service.) In the synagogue, in the Temple, and in private homes, celebrating Shabbat, Havdalah, and the Feast Days!

⁵⁴ The Sabbath, the seventh day of the week, which the Lord commanded all who believe Him to keep separated as the appointed day of worship.

Chapter 7.

Shabbat or the Lord's Day?

“But,” I hear someone asking, “what about all the references in the Book of Acts about the Disciples breaking bread on the first day of the week? Doesn't that mean that they moved the Sabbath to Sunday in honor of the resurrection?”

I had been taught my entire life, both in Sunday school as a youngster and in seminary as an adult—and I was guilty of incorrectly teaching it myself for many, many years—that the “New Testament” says the Disciples met on the first day of the week to break bread, indicating that they moved the Sabbath to Sunday and celebrated “the Lord's Supper” in honor of the Resurrection. After carefully reviewing both the Scriptural and extra-biblical historical evidence, I am now absolutely convinced that this idea has no basis in truth. In fact, I now believe the idea first emerged as part of the paganization of Biblical Messianic Judaism by Emperor Constantine and his successors in 325 CE and the years following.

First, we must carefully consider what the Scriptures have to say about the Sabbath, or *Shabbat* in Hebrew; then we will examine Shabbat from the modern Jewish perspective.

Scriptural Authority for the Seventh-Day Shabbat

In the Torah, God established the seventh day of the week as the day He set aside [separated or sanctified] for His children to enjoy a particular fellowship with Him.

Then God said all these words: ... “Remember the day, Shabbat, to set it apart for God. You have six days to labor and do all your work, but *the seventh day* [not the first day] *is a Shabbat for ADONAI your God*. On it, you are not to do any kind of work—not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your livestock, and not the foreigner⁵⁵ staying with you inside the gates to your property. For in six days, ADONAI made heaven and earth, the sea and everything in them; but on the seventh day [not the first day] he rested. This is why ADONAI blessed the day, Shabbat, and separated it for Himself. (Exodus 20:1,8-11)

ADONAI said to Moshe, “Tell the people of Isra'el: ‘The designated times of ADONAI which you are to proclaim as holy convocations are My designated times. Work is to be done on six

⁵⁵ God Himself said that the mitzvot [commandments] concerning Shabbat observance apply not only to the Jew, but also to the Gentile who associates with Israel, and even to all service animals as well. Thus Shabbat observance is equally mandatory for all Gentile Christians, who are associated with Israel—that is “grafted in”—through the Renewed Covenant.

days; but *the seventh day* [not the first day] *is a Shabbat of complete rest, a holy convocation; you are not to do any kind of work; it is a Shabbat for ADONAI*, even in your homes. (Leviticus 23:1-3)

[ADONAI said to Moshe,] “Observe the day of Shabbat, to set it apart as holy, as ADONAI your God ordered you to do. You have six days to labor and do all your work, but the seventh day [not the first day] **is a Shabbat for ADONAI your God**. On it you are not to do any kind of work—not you, your son or your daughter, not your male or female slave, not your ox, your donkey or any of your other livestock, and not the foreigner staying with you inside the gates to your property—so that your male and female servants can rest just as you do. You are to remember that you were a slave in the land of Egypt, and ADONAI your God brought you out from there with a strong hand and an outstretched arm. Therefore, **ADONAI your God has ordered you to keep the day of Shabbat**. (Deuteronomy 5:12-15)

God felt that spending one day a week with Him—the *one specific day that He had specified*—was so important that He imposed the death penalty upon anyone who failed to keep that appointment with Him.

ADONAI said to Moshe, “Tell the people of Isra'el, ‘You are to observe my Shabbats; for this is a sign between me and you through all your generations; so that you will know that I am ADONAI, who sets you apart for me. *Therefore, you are to keep my Shabbat, because it is set apart for you. Everyone who treats it as ordinary must be put to death; for whoever does any work on it is to be cut off from his people*. On six days work will get done; but the seventh day [not the first day] is Shabbat, for complete rest, set apart for ADONAI. **Whoever does any work on the day of Shabbat must be put to death**. The people of Isra'el⁵⁶ are to keep the Shabbat, to observe Shabbat through all their generations as a *perpetual covenant*. It is a sign between me and the people of Isra'el *forever*; for in six days ADONAI made heaven and earth, but on the seventh day he stopped working and rested.” When he had finished speaking with Moshe on Mount Sinai, ADONAI gave him the two tablets of the testimony, tablets of stone inscribed by the finger of God. (Exodus 31:12-18)

Moshe assembled the whole community of the people of Isra'el and said to them, “These are the things which ADONAI has ordered you to do. On six days work is to be done, but the seventh day [not the first day] is to be a holy day for you, a Shabbat of complete rest in honor of ADONAI. *Whoever does any work on it is to be put to death.*” (Exodus 35:1-2)

In case someone should make the claim that Shabbat was part of “Jewish Law” and therefore not applicable to non-Jewish believers—even though God has specifically said that the Shabbat applies to the Gentile who associates with Israel—it is important to note that Shabbat was not established as part of the “Jewish Law” that was given at Sinai.

Thus the heavens and the earth were completed, and all their hosts. By the seventh day God completed His work which He had done, and He rested on the seventh day from all His

⁵⁶ Again, it is important to note that Gentile Christians are only able to appropriate salvation because they have been “grafted into” Israel and are thus, and *only* thus, partakers of the Renewed Covenant, which God made with Israel!

work which He had done. Then God blessed the seventh day and sanctified it, because in it He rested from all His work which God had created and made. (Genesis 2:1-3)

HaShem established and “sanctified” the Sabbath not at Sinai, but on the seventh day of creation, some 2,000 years before the Torah was given at Sinai. The Hebrew word for “sanctified” is קדש (*qadash*), which means “to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, dedicate, be hallowed, be holy, be sanctified, be separate.”

God provided additional clarification through the prophet Isaiah. *All* who join themselves to Adonai, including those who come to Adonai through His Messiah (i.e., Gentile Christians), are expected—nay, are *required*—to observe the seventh-day Sabbath.

Here is what ADONAI says: “Observe justice, do what is right, for my salvation is close to coming, my righteousness to being revealed.” Happy is the person who does this, anyone who grasps it firmly, who keeps Shabbat and does not profane it, and keeps himself from doing any evil. ... And the foreigners [Gentiles] who join themselves to ADONAI to serve him⁵⁷, to love the name of ADONAI, and to be his workers, ***all who keep Shabbat and do not profane it, and hold fast to my covenant, I will bring them to my holy mountain and make them joyful in my house of prayer; their burnt offerings and sacrifices will be accepted on my altar; for my house [the Temple] will be called a house of prayer for all peoples.***” (Isaiah 56: 1-2,7-6)

The only people on earth who are exempted from observing the seventh-day Shabbat are those who have not joined themselves to ADONAI to serve Him. God promises *all*—both Jew and Gentile—who honor His Shabbat a particular delight.

“If you hold back your foot on Shabbat from pursuing your own interests on My holy day; if you call Shabbat a delight, ADONAI’s holy day, worth honoring; then honor it by not doing your usual things or pursuing your interests or speaking about them. If you do, you will find delight in ADONAI—I will make you ride on the heights of the land and feed you with the heritage of your ancestor Ya’akov, for the mouth of ADONAI has spoken.” (Isaiah 58:13-14)

God promises that if Israel will just honor Him by keeping the Shabbat, He will preserve both the kingdom of David and the safety of Jerusalem as Israel’s capitol city. In fact, many Jews believe that if all Israel will observe just one Shabbat, Messiah will immediately come. However, if Israel fails to keep Shabbat, Jerusalem will be destroyed.

Then ADONAI said this to me: “Go, and stand at the People’s Gate, where the kings of Y’hudah⁵⁸ go in and out, and at all the gates of Yerushalayim⁵⁹; and say to them: ‘Kings of Y’hudah, all Y’hudah and all living in Yerushalayim who enter through these gates, hear the word of ADONAI! Here is what ADONAI says: “If you value your lives, don’t carry anything on Shabbat or bring it in through the gates of Yerushalayim; don’t carry anything out of your houses on Shabbat; and don’t do any work. Instead, make Shabbat a holy day. I ordered your ancestors

⁵⁷ Please note carefully that this commandment is *not* a suggestion, and that it is given to *all* those “who join themselves to ADONAI to serve Him, to love the name of ADONAI, and to be His workers.” If you don’t join yourself to ADONAI to serve Him, if you do not love the name of ADONAI, if you choose not to be His worker, only then are you exempt from observing the seventh-day Shabbat that He established.

⁵⁸ Judah.

⁵⁹ Jerusalem.

to do this, but they neither listened nor paid attention; rather, they stiffened their necks, so that they wouldn't have to hear or receive instruction. However, if you will pay careful heed to me," says ADONAI, "and carry nothing through the gates of this city on Shabbat, but instead make Shabbat a day which is holy and not for doing work; then kings and princes occupying the throne of David will enter through the gates of this city, riding in chariots and on horses. They, their princes, the people of Y'hudah and the inhabitants of Yerushalayim will enter; and this city will be inhabited forever. They will come from the cities of Y'hudah, from the places surrounding Yerushalayim, from the land of Binyamin⁶⁰, from the Sh'felah⁶¹, from the hills and from the Negev, bringing burnt offerings, sacrifices, grain offerings, frankincense and thanks-giving sacrifices to the house of ADONAI. But if you will not obey me and make Shabbat a holy day and not carry loads through the gates of Yerushalayim on Shabbat, then I will set its gates on fire; it will burn up the palaces of Yerushalayim and not be quenched." [Jeremiah 17:19-27]

Because Israel failed to observe God's Shabbats, God sent them into the Babylonian captivity.

Those who had escaped the sword he carried off to Bavel⁶², and they became slaves to him and his sons until the reign of the kingdom of Persia. Thus was fulfilled the word of ADONAI spoken by Yirmeyahu⁶³, "until the land has been paid her Shabbats"—for as long as it lay desolate, it kept Shabbat, until seventy years had passed. (2 Chronicles 36:20,21)

It was Yeshua's custom to observe the Shabbat. If we desire to follow Him, we should do as He did.

And He came to Nazareth, where He had been brought up; and *as was His custom*, He entered the synagogue on the Sabbath, and stood up to read. (Luke 4:16, NAS)

Yeshua declared that His day, the true "Lord's Day," is the seventh-day Shabbat.

"For the Son of Man is Lord of Shabbat!" (Matthew 12:8; Luke 6:5)

Yeshua taught that the Shabbat is to be observed continuously throughout the so-called "Church Age" and into the so-called "Tribulation Age."

"So when you see the abomination that causes devastation⁶⁴ spoken about through the prophet Dani'el standing in the Holy Place⁶⁵" (let the reader understand the allusion), "that will be the time for those in Y'hudah⁶⁶ to escape to the hills. If someone is on the roof, he must not go down to gather his belongings from his house; if someone is in the field, he must not turn back to get his coat. What a terrible time it will be for pregnant women and nursing mothers! Pray that you will not have to escape in winter *or on Shabbat*⁶⁷. [Matthew 24:15-19]

⁶⁰ Benjamin.

⁶¹ The Shephelah, a strip near coast north of Carmel.

⁶² Babylon.

⁶³ Jeremiah 25:8-14.

⁶⁴ The Anti-Messiah, or Anti-Christ.

⁶⁵ As we understand the chronology of "future things," the Anti-Messiah will enter the Third Temple in Jerusalem and declare Himself to be god at the exact mid-point of the seven-year Tribulation period.

⁶⁶ Judah.

⁶⁷ Yeshua's comment strongly suggests that the prohibition against exceeding the "Sabbath's-day journey" will still be in effect at that time, which in turn requires that observance of the seventh-day Shabbat will also still be in effect at that time.

The writer of the Letter to the Messianic Jews⁶⁸ says that “Shabbat-keeping” remains for *all* of God's people.

For there is a place where it is said, concerning the seventh day, “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works.” And once more, our present text says, “They will not enter My rest.” Therefore, since it still remains for some to enter it, and those who received the Good News earlier did not enter, He again fixes a certain day, “Today,” saying through David, so long afterwards, in the text already given, “Today, if you hear God's voice, don't harden your hearts.” For if Y'hoshua⁶⁹ had given them rest, God would not have spoken later of another “day.” *So there remains a Shabbat-keeping for God's people.* For the one who has entered God's rest has also rested from his own works, as God did from His. [Hebrews 4:4-10]

Though he had been specifically commissioned by Yeshua to serve Him as the “Emissary to the Gentiles,” it was still Rav Sha'ul's custom to observe Shabbat.

According to his usual practice, Sha'ul went in; and **on three Shabbats** he gave them drashes⁷⁰ from the Tanakh⁷¹, ... [Acts 17:2]

Sha'ul also began carrying on discussions *every Shabbat* in the synagogue, where he tried to convince both Jews and Greeks. [Acts 18:4]

... but the others went on from Perga to Pisidian Antioch, and on Shabbat *they went into the synagogue* and sat down. [Acts 13:14]

The next **Shabbat**, nearly the whole city gathered together to hear the message about the Lord; [Acts 13:44]

Yeshua taught that *everyone* is to keep the whole Torah, including Shabbat:

“Don't think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud⁷² or a stroke⁷³ will pass from the Torah—not until everything that must happen has happened. So *whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot*⁷⁴ *and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* For I tell you that *unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and P'rushim*⁷⁵, *you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!* (Matthew 5:17-20)

It is appropriate here to explain that “keeping the whole Torah” does not mean keeping every *mitzvah* (commandment) in the entire Torah, but only in observing each *mitzvah* that applies to you. A very large number of the *mitzvot* (commandments) apply only to the priests, Levites, and Temple worship, so without a Temple they are of no effect. Many more *mitzvot* apply only within the Land of Israel with a Temple, priesthood, and theocratic government in operation. Some apply only to men, others only to women; some only to employers (masters), others only to employees (servants);

⁶⁸ The Epistle to the Hebrews.

⁶⁹ Joshua.

⁷⁰ Expository sermons.

⁷¹ Hebrew Bible.

⁷² The smallest letter of the Hebrew alphabet.

⁷³ An ornamental decoration on some Hebrew letters.

⁷⁴ *Every* commandment of Torah.

⁷⁵ Pharisees, who diligently observed Shabbat.

some apply only to farmers, some only to herdsmen, some only to merchants. Each of us is responsible for those *mitzvot* that are applicable to us.

So then, to briefly recap the Scriptural authority for *all* believers to observe the seventh-day Shabbat:

- God set aside (sanctified) the seventh day of the week for His children to enjoy particular fellowship with Him.
- God imposed the death penalty on anyone who failed to keep that seventh-day appointment with Him.
- Through the prophet Isaiah, God clarified His intent that *all* who join themselves to Adonai, both Jew and Gentile, are expected to observe the seventh-day Shabbat.
- God promises *all* who honor His Shabbat—both Jew and Gentile—a particular delight.
- God promised that if Israel would simply honor His Shabbat, He would preserve both the kingdom of David and the safety of Jerusalem as Israel's capitol city. However, if they failed to keep Shabbat, Jerusalem would be destroyed.
- Because they failed to observe His Shabbats, God sent Israel into the Babylonian captivity for a period of time equal to the exact number of Shabbats they had ignored.
- It was Yeshua's custom to observe the Shabbat. If we desire to follow Him, we should do as He did.
- Yeshua declared that His day, the true "Lord's Day," is the seventh-day Shabbat.
- Yeshua taught that *everyone* is to keep the whole Torah, including Shabbat.
- Yeshua taught that the Shabbat is to be observed continuously throughout the so-called "Church Age" and into the so-called "Tribulation Age."
- Though Sha'ul was specifically commissioned as "the Apostle to the Gentiles," it was his custom to continue to observe Shabbat.
- The writer of the Epistle to the Messianic Jews [Hebrews] says that "Shabbat-keeping" remains for *all* of God's people.

The Modern Jewish Understanding of Shabbat

Let us now turn our attention to the modern Jewish understanding of Shabbat, which I believe is quite probably the same—or at least essentially the same—understanding that first-century Messianic Jews would have had.

Of all Jewish observances, Shabbat is probably the best known, but often the least understood. People who don't understand Shabbat often think of it as a day of stifling restrictions, or just a day of worship like Sunday is for most Gentile Christians. But

to the observant Jew Shabbat is considered a gift from God and a day of great joy. It is often said, "More than Israel has kept Shabbat, Shabbat has kept Israel."⁷⁶

In post-Biblical Jewish poetry, music, and liturgy Shabbat is often described as a bride or a queen, for whom we eagerly await throughout the entire week. In her "bride" aspect, we view Shabbat through the eyes of a bridegroom standing at the *chuppa* (wedding canopy, equivalent to the altar in a Christian wedding) full of love, joy, and devotion, and eagerly waiting for his bride to appear. In her "queen" aspect we are to view Shabbat as the "avatar"⁷⁷ who reminds us to "remember" those restrictions that God places on our Shabbat activities, and to keep His day holy and separate from the cares and concerns of the rest of the week.

Before the development of the day-names that we use on the modern calendar, Jewish days were counted by their relationship to Shabbat: First, Second, and Third day of the week, followed by Third Day Toward Shabbat, Second Day Toward Shabbat, Erev [the day before] Shabbat and, of course, Shabbat. It was a day that God gave to Israel to be a day of rest on which all the cares of the week could be set aside, and even the poorest could pursue without interruption the highest and most honored of all activities, the study of Torah.

To usher in the Shabbat, two candles are lit — the last flame to be kindled for the entire week — and a blessing is recited no later than eighteen minutes before sunset. Two candles are used as a reminder that there are two parts of God's instruction that we are (a) to "remember" Shabbat, and (b) to "keep it holy." The family then attends a brief evening service and returns home for a festive, leisurely dinner.

Before dinner, the man of the house recites Kiddush, a prayer or blessing over a cup of wine sanctifying Shabbat, and the usual prayer or blessing for eating bread is recited over two loaves of challah, a sweet egg bread shaped in a braid.⁷⁸ There are two loaves to remind us that when we were in the wilderness, God always provided a double portion of manna on the day before Shabbat. After dinner, the lengthy *birkat-ha-mazon* (grace after meals) is recited.

Shabbat morning begins with the synagogue service that usually begins between 9 and 10 a.m. and runs until noon or a little later. After services, the family does Kiddush again, followed by another leisurely, festive meal (Oneg) that lasts until about 2 p.m. In many Messianic Jewish congregations, Kiddush and Oneg are shared by the entire congregation, quite similar to the traditional "pot luck" or "covered dish dinner" that is popular in so many Christian congregations.

The afternoon is generally spent in Torah study, accompanied by lively discussion ["wherever there are two Jews, there are three opinions"]. Tradition requires that at least three meals be eaten on Shabbat, and the third is usually a light meal in the late afternoon.

⁷⁶ For a much more detailed study of Shabbat, see George Robinson, *Essential Judaism*, (New York: Pocket Books, 2000, pp. 81-92) and Rich, "Shabbat," www.jewfaq.org/shabbat.htm.

⁷⁷ An avatar is an incarnation in human form, or an embodiment of a concept or philosophy as a person; a personification or anthropomorphism.

⁷⁸ I think it an extremely interesting "coincidence" that in the braided form of the challah loaf that Jews have used for thousands of years of Shabbat observances, there are three individual strands that are interwoven to become a single loaf, just as there are three individual divine Persons within the one single God.

The end of Shabbat, or *motza'ei Shabbat* (Saturday nightfall), is marked by *Havdalah*. Just as we began Shabbat as early as possible (no later than 18 minutes before sunset), so we also make Shabbat linger as long as possible, until three stars are visible, or approximately 40 minutes after sunset, at which time we perform the concluding ritual called *Havdalah* (separation, division).^{79,80}

Three items are used for Havdalah: a glass of wine, a special multi-wicked candle, and some fragrant spices (cloves, cinnamon, or bay leaves are commonly used, and kept in a special decorated holder called a *b'samim* box).

There are four Havdalah blessings recited. The first is the traditional blessing over the wine. The second blessing is recited over the fragrant spices, which represent a compensation for the loss of the special Shabbat spirit; their sweet fragrance lingers with us after the departure of the Shabbat bride.

Since the Rabbis do not permit a flame to be kindled Shabbat, the blessing and lighting of the Havdalah candle truly indicates that Shabbat is over. The fourth and final blessing is the Havdalah blessing itself, which is the blessing over the separation of different things. After the Havdalah blessing, we drink the wine, and extinguish the candle with a few remaining drops of wine.

Thus, on both the ancient and modern Hebrew calendar, the Havdalah ceremony officially marks the end of Shabbat and the beginning of “the first day of the week.”

Scriptural Authority for Moving Shabbat to the First Day of the Week

Where, then, in the Apostolic Scriptures do we find the authority for moving God's Shabbat from the seventh day of the week to the first day of the week?

Nowhere at all! I performed a computer search of both the King James Version (KJV) and the *New American Standard Bible* (NAS), which revealed that there are *only two* possible references to the first-century Messianic Community meeting on “the first day of the week,” and when the Shabbat is properly understood, these two references are most certainly referring to *motza'ei Shabbat* (Saturday sunset) and Havdalah!

On the **first day of the week**, when we were gathered together to break bread, Paul began talking to them, intending to leave the next day, and he prolonged his message until midnight. [Acts 20:7, NAS]

On the **first day of every week** each one of you is to put aside and save, as he may prosper, so that no collections be made when I come. [1 Corinthians 16:2, NAS]

Thus, I believe that David Stern correctly interprets these two events as he renders them in *The Complete Jewish Bible*:

⁷⁹ See also Rich, “Havdalah Home Ritual,” www.jewfaq.org/prayer/havdalah.htm.

⁸⁰ Michael Beer, “Shabbat or the Sabbath,” fp.thebeers.f9.co.uk/shabat.htm

On *Motza'ei-Shabbat*, when we were gathered to break bread, Sha'ul addressed them. Since he was going to leave the next day, he kept talking until midnight.

Every week, on *Motza'ei-Shabbat*, each of you should set some money aside, according to his resources, and save it up; so that when I come I won't have to do fundraising.

Yeshua's Talmidim (Messianic Jews, every one of them) faithfully observed the entire Shabbat, and met together in each other's homes on *Motza'ei-Shabbat* for the Havdalah service, which began "about 40 minutes to an hour after sunset ... at the conclusion of Shabbat," for a fellowship meal after Havdalah, followed by "Bible study" and teaching after dinner. Since on the Hebrew calendar, the day begins and ends at sunset, the Saturday-evening Havdalah service and the meal that follows occur on the first day of the week, but on Saturday evening, *not* on Sunday morning according to the Western calendar!

The Scriptures tell us that the Messianic Jews did not abandon the Temple—and we can therefore assume that they did not abandon the Synagogue, either—and that their numbers continued to grow daily.

Continuing faithfully and with singleness of purpose to meet in the Temple courts daily, and breaking bread in their several homes, they shared their food in joy and simplicity of heart, praising God and having the respect of all the people. And day after day the Lord kept adding to them those who were being saved. (Acts 2:46-47)

Meanwhile, through the emissaries many signs and miracles continued to be done among the people. United in mind and purpose, the believers met in Shlomo's Colonnade;⁸¹ and no one else dared to join them. Nevertheless, the people continued to regard them highly; and throngs of believers were added to the Lord, both men and women. (Acts 5:12-14)

"But," someone may well ask (as I used to do), "what about all the biblical references to 'the Lord's Day?'" I performed an additional computer search of both the KJV and the NAS, and was very surprised to find that the phrase "Lord's day" appears *only once* in all of Scripture!

In Revelation 1:10 (NAS), Yochanan [John] says (in most English translations) that he was "in the Spirit on the Lord's Day" (κυριακή ἡμέρα, *kuriakee hemera*). Although I have almost always heard this verse interpreted as "John was in worship on Sunday when he received this vision," this is the *only* place in all of Scripture that this Greek term is translated as "the Lord's day," and there is absolutely *no indication whatever* that Yochanan was referring to the first day of the week.

Thus we again turn to David Stern's more accurate rendering in *The Complete Jewish Bible* for clarification:

I, Yochanan, am a brother of yours and a fellow-sharer in the suffering, kingship and perseverance that come from being united with Yeshua. I had been exiled to the island called Patmos for having proclaimed the message of God and borne witness to Yeshua. I came to be, in the Spirit, *on the Day of the Lord*; and I heard behind me a loud voice, like a trumpet, ...

⁸¹ Also called Solomon's Porch. See Figures 2 and 3.

In fact, the entire Book of Revelation is about events that occur during “the Day of the Lord,” which is how the term *kuriakee hemera* is translated *every other time* it appears in the Apostolic Scriptures, and it *never* refers to Sunday, but *always* refers to the period of time in which Yeshua returns in glory to judge and to reign. Thus we can see that Yochanan (John) was in the Spirit and received his vision of “the Day of the Lord.”

As if to clearly settle the issue once and for all, Yeshua Himself tells us which day of the week is His day: “The Son of Man (Messiah Yeshua) is Lord of the ***Shabbat!***” (Matthew 12:8, Mark 2:28, Luke 6:5)

So how and why did the Gentile Christian Church abandon God’s sacred Shabbat? The only reason that the Church meets on the “Sun’s day” instead of on the Biblical Sabbath (Saturday) is that the Roman Emperor Constantine (the first apostate Catholic “Pope”) in the early fourth century (ca. 325 CE) decreed that “Christians” were required to worship on the day set aside for worship of the Roman sun God and only a handful have ever dared stand against that decree.

Quotes from the Catholic Church Regarding the Sabbath to Sunday change

If you worship on Sunday instead of God’s Sabbath, the only reason you do so is because you have placed the authority of the Roman Pope above the authority of the Word of God. Below are a few quotes from the Roman Catholic Church that further reveal why most Churches now keep Sunday as the “Christian Sabbath.” The Catholic Church may be wrong on many things, but everything about these quotes below is true. When they say they are responsible for the change of the Sabbath to Sunday, they are not delusional, and they speak truth.

It was Satan’s plan to have the “Church” change the Sabbath to Sunday. Why did Satan do this? The Torah says that keeping the Fourth Commandment regarding Shabbat is a *sign* as to whom we worship and give our allegiance

ADONAI said to Moshe, “Tell the people of Isra’el, ‘You are to observe My Shabbats; for **this is a sign between Me and you through all your generations**; so that you will know that I am ADONAI, Who sets you apart for Me. Therefore, you are to keep My Shabbat, because it is set apart for you. ... (Exodus 31:12-14).

If we obey God and keep *His* Sabbath holy, we give our allegiance to God. If we obey the commandment of the Catholic Church and keep *their* day Holy, then to whom do we give our allegiance? The Catholic Church answers this question below with two of its quotes.

But looking even deeper, who gave the "Church" the power to change God's true day of worship, and why? This picture is just one of many that reveal the extent of Sun worship in the Catholic Church.



Does the Bible Support the Change to Sunday?

"For example, nowhere in the Bible do we find that Christ or the Apostles ordered that the Sabbath be changed from Saturday to Sunday. We have the commandment of God given to Moses to keep holy the Sabbath day, that is the 7th day of the week, Saturday. Today most Christians keep Sunday because it has been revealed to us by the [Roman Catholic] Church outside the Bible." — "To Tell You the Truth," *Catholic Virginian*, October 3, 1947, p. 9

"Is not every Christian obliged to sanctify Sunday and to abstain on that day from unnecessary servile work? Is not the observance of this law among the most prominent of our sacred duties? But you may read the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and you will not find a single line authorizing the sanctification of Sunday. The Scriptures enforce the religious observance of Saturday, a day which we never sanctify." — James Cardinal Gibbons, *The Faith of Our Fathers* (1917 edition), pp. 72-73 (16th Edition, p 111; 88th Edition, p. 89)

Who Made Sunday Holy?

"Question - Which is the Sabbath day?

"Answer - Saturday is the Sabbath day.

"Question - Why do we observe Sunday instead of Saturday?

"Answer - We observe Sunday instead of Saturday because the Catholic Church, in the Council of Laodicea (A.D. 364), transferred the solemnity from Saturday to Sunday." — Peter Geiermann, C.S.S.R., *The Convert's Catechism of Catholic Doctrine*, p. 50, 3rd edition, 1957.

"Perhaps the boldest thing, the most revolutionary change the [Roman Catholic] Church ever did, happened in the first century. The holy day, the Sabbath, was changed from Saturday to Sunday. **'The day of the Lord' was chosen, not from any direction noted in the Scriptures, but from the [Catholic] Church's sense of its own power** ... People who think that the Scriptures should be the sole authority should logically become 7th Day Adventists and keep Saturday holy." — *St. Catherine Church Sentinel*, Algonac, Michigan, May 21, 1995 [emphasis added]

Whose Day of Worship is Sunday?

"They [the Protestants] deem it their duty to keep the Sunday holy. Why? Because the Catholic Church tells them to do so. They have no other reason ... The observance of Sunday thus comes to be an ecclesiastical law entirely distinct from the divine law of Sabbath observance ... **The author of the Sunday law ... is the Catholic Church.**" — *Ecclesiastical Review*, February 1914 [emphasis added]

"It is well to remind the Presbyterians, Baptists, Methodists, and all other Christians, that **the Bible does not support them anywhere in their observance of Sunday** [emphasis added]. Sunday is an institution of the Roman Catholic Church, and those who observe the day observe a commandment of the Catholic

Church.” — Priest Brady, in an address reported in *The News*, Elizabeth, New Jersey, March 18, 1903 [emphasis added]

Who Do We Reverence by Keeping Sunday Holy?

“I have repeatedly offered \$1,000 to anyone who can prove to me from the Bible alone that I am bound to keep Sunday holy. There is no such law in the Bible. It is a law of the holy Catholic Church alone. The Bible says, ‘Remember the Sabbath day to keep it holy.’ The Catholic Church says: ‘No. By my divine power I abolish the Sabbath day and command you to keep holy the first day of the week.’ And lo! ***The entire civilized world bows down in a reverent obedience to the command of the holy Catholic Church.***” — Father T. Enright, C.S.S.R. of the Redemptoral College, Kansas City, in a lecture at Hartford, Kansas, February 18, 1884, printed in *History of the Sabbath*, p. 802, and in *The Industrial American*, Harlan, Iowa, December 19, 1889. [emphasis added]

“It was the Catholic church which ... has transferred this rest to Sunday in remembrance of the resurrection of our Lord. Therefore, ***the observance of Sunday by the Protestants is an homage they pay, in spite of themselves, to the authority of the (Catholic) Church.***” — Monsignor Louis Gaston A. de Segur, *Plain Talk About the Protestantism of Today*, p. 213 [emphasis added]

Chapter 8.

Rabbi Sha'ul of Tarsus

A few months after the coming of Ruach HaKodesh, a young Rabbi named Sha'ul [a.k.a. Paul] enters the picture. The Scripture record tells us that he was a Pharisee who trained “at the feet” of Gamli'el, President and Nasi (Prince) of the Sanhedrin (Israel's Supreme Court), who was without a doubt one of the greatest Rabbis of all time.⁸² Born in Tarsus into a family that was wealthy and influential enough to be Roman citizens, Sha'ul was either brought or sent to Jerusalem at a very early age to be trained, and perhaps even raised, by Gamli'el, probably at great expense to his family. The fact that the Sanhedrin so readily gave him a “warrant” to eradicate this new Messianic sect suggests strongly, at least to me, that Sha'ul was certainly well-known to the members of the Sanhedrin, as Gamli'el's star talmid (pupil or disciple) most certainly would have been, and even that he was himself probably a member of the Sanhedrin. In fact, I should think that he was extremely likely to have been considered as Gamli'el's successor.

Many have claimed that Rav Sha'ul changed his name to Paul when he “converted to Christianity.” I reject that position outright. First, Rav Sha'ul never “converted” to any religion other than Judaism—neither Christianity nor any other. “Christianity” did not come into existence until well over 250 years after the death of the great rabbi.

He was born, lived his entire life, and died as a Torah-observant Jew. Near the end of his life, he made the claim “Brethren, I am a Pharisee, a son of Pharisees” (Acts 23:6), not “I *was* a Pharisee.” As far as the name “Paul” is concerned, Rav Sha'ul was born in the Diaspora, in the Roman city of Tarsus. Nearly all Jews in the Diaspora have two names — their “secular” name in the dialect used in their country of residence and the Hebrew name given to them at their dedication. So, he was always Paul in the Diaspora and Sha'ul in Israel.

His comment in his first letter to his *talmid* (student, disciple) Timothy that he considered himself “the foremost sinner of all” (1 Timothy 1:15) suggests something in his life that he saw as a terrible crime against God. This may possibly have been his persecution of the Messianic Community (1 Corinthians 15:9), or it may possibly be because he was one of the members of the Sanhedrin who voted for Yeshua to be executed. If he were, in fact, actually a member of the Sanhedrin, his zeal before God to keep his religion pure may well have placed him among those who conducted the patently illegal late-night sessions at which Yeshua was illegally condemned to be

⁸² “Son of Simon and grandson of Hillel: according to a tannaitic tradition (Shab.15a), he was their successor as nasi (prince) and first president of the Great Sanhedrin of Jerusalem.” Article “Gamaliel I,” *JewishEncyclopedia.com*. More in Chapter 8.

executed. The fact that he apparently officiated at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 6:8-7:60) lends additional support to the idea that he held at least some official position on the Sanhedrin.

Another interesting aside: If you read the Apostolic Scriptures carefully and look for it, you will find that the Sanhedrin's primary objection to the message of the Gospel was that it was based entirely on the resurrection of a dead rabbi. Since the majority of the Sanhedrin were Sadducees [*Tzedukim*] who rejected the concept of resurrection of the dead, if the Gospel were true, it would mean that their entire belief system was false! That simply could never be permitted. See Matthew 22:23, Matthew 27:53, Mark 12:18, Luke 20:27, John 5:29, Acts 4:1-4, Acts 4:33, Acts 17:18, Acts 23:6, Acts 24:21, Acts 26:23, and many more.

Because of Sha'ul's persecution, many of the Messianic Jews fled Jerusalem, carrying the Gospel with them out into the Diaspora, where they would continue meeting in the synagogues of every city into which they fled (Acts 8). Shortly after he officiated at Stephen's execution, Sha'ul received his warrant of persecution from the Sanhedrin, and left for Damascus to continue his persecution there. It was on his way to Damascus that the resurrected Yeshua appeared to him and called him to be the Emissary "to bear My [Yeshua's] name before the nations and kings, and the children of Yisra'el." (Acts 9)

After recovering from this supernatural encounter with Yeshua, Sha'ul went to Arabia for a while, then returned to Damascus and began proclaiming the Messiah in the synagogues. After he had been preaching in Damascus for about three years, many of those who rejected his message plotted to kill him, and when the Talmidim in Damascus heard about it, they took him to Jerusalem, where he stayed with Kefa for 15 days and met Ya'akov, Yeshua's half-brother.⁸³ Kefa and Ya'akov then sent him away to Tarsus, where he stayed for 14 years (see Galatians 1:15-2:1, Acts 9:19-22; Acts 9:23-31).

For the 14 years Sha'ul was in Tarsus, Kefa traveled throughout Judea, the Galilee, and Samaria. While Kefa was in Joppa, on the coast of Samaria, God sent an angel in a vision to a God-fearer named Cornelius, a Roman Centurion living in Caesarea just north of Joppa, and told him to send for Kefa. At the same time, God sent a vision to Kefa, telling him that God would accept Goyim into the Messianic Community (Acts 10). And so it was apparently Kefa, not Sha'ul, who was called by God to actually be the first Emissary to the Goyim (confirm at Acts 15:7), though Kefa's *primary* ministry was to the Jews and that of Sha'ul was to the Gentiles.

While most of the Messianic Believers who had fled the persecution following Stephen's execution delivered the Gospel only to Jews, there were a few who, following Kefa's example, also presented the Gospel to Goyim who were not already God-

⁸³ Ya'akov was Yeshua's half-brother and Rabbi/Pastor of the Messianic Community in Jerusalem. Apparently in an effort to flatter the king who was paying for the project (so he could see his name in the Bible), the translators of the King James Version arbitrarily changed the Hebrew name *Ya'akov* to "James" when referring to Ya'akov the brother of Yeshua or to Ya'akov the brother of Yochanan (John). In all other instances, the name is more appropriately rendered as "Jacob." This gross misrepresentation for such obvious political motives is but one of the many reasons that I personally consider the King James Version less than trustworthy.

Fearers. It was apparently at Antioch that the first significant group of Goyim entered the Messianic Community (Acts 11:19-26).

Josephus tells us that the Jews at Antioch were well-known for their proselytizing activities:

For as the Jewish nation is widely dispersed over all the habitable earth among its inhabitants, so it is very much intermingled with Syria by reason of its neighborhood, and had the greatest multitudes in Antioch by reason of the largeness of the city, wherein the kings, after Antiochus, had afforded them a habitation with the most undisturbed tranquility; for though Antiochus, who was called Epiphanes, laid Jerusalem waste, and spoiled the temple, yet did those that succeeded him in the kingdom restore all the donations that were made of brass to the Jews of Antioch, and dedicated them to their synagogue; and granted them the enjoyment of equal privileges of citizens with the Greeks themselves; and as the succeeding kings treated them after the same manner, they both multiplied to a great number, and adorned their temple [their synagogue], gloriously by fine ornaments, and with great magnificence, in the use of what had been given them. *They also made proselytes of a great many of the Greeks perpetually, and thereby, after a sort, brought them to be a portion of their own body.*⁸⁴ (Emphasis added.)

The biblical account continues (Acts 12) that King Herod also began a persecution of the Messianic Believers, and had Ya`akov ben Zavdai⁸⁵ (the brother of Yochanan) executed and Kefa imprisoned. An angel released Kefa from prison, and he went from Jerusalem to Caesarea. Then, sometime after Herod died, Sha'ul returned with Bar Nabba⁸⁶ to Jerusalem.

Sha'ul tells us that this visit to Jerusalem came some 14 years after his first visit to Kefa, which was about three years after he returned from Arabia, where he had gone right after his encounter with the resurrected Yeshua. Although we don't know how long he was in Arabia, we can estimate this visit as about 17 or 18 years after his Damascus Road experience. (This establishes the approximate time frame for the Jerusalem Council, next chapter.)

Acts 13 describes how Ruach HaKodesh instructed the leaders of the Messianic Synagogue at Antioch to "Set aside for me Bar Nabba and Sha'ul for the work to which I have called them," and that it was from there that they set out on their first missionary journey.

From Antioch they went to the synagogues at Salamis, Paphos, Perga in Pamphylia, and Antioch of Pisidia. In Antioch of Pisidia, they presented the Gospel in the synagogue, and many synagogue members, both Jews and non-Jewish God-fearers, asked them to return the following Shabbat and tell them more. On the following Shabbat, nearly the entire city came to the synagogue to hear them, but the synagogue leaders became jealous because the crowds were so great, and they began contradicting them and blaspheming.

⁸⁴ Flavius Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, VII, 4, § 3.

⁸⁵ Rendered as "Zebedee" in most English translations (see Matthew 4:21).

⁸⁶ Literally, Son of Encouragement. Rendered "Barnabas" in most English translations.

Bar Nabba and Sha'ul told those in the synagogue who rejected their message that it would be then offered to the Goyim in their city, and "They honored the message about the Lord, and as many as had been appointed to eternal life came to trust"—including Jews, non-Jewish God-Fearers, and apparently some pagan Goyim (Acts 13:48). But those who were more concerned with their position of influence than with their position with God finally drove the Shliachim out of town.

Now, I feel compelled at this juncture to point out that the Gospel was *absolutely not* "rejected by the Jews and received by the Gentiles" as is commonly taught (and as I myself taught for many years). As I will explain later, a large percentage of Jerusalem's population had come to faith in Messiah long before the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE.

The truth is, rather, that the Gospel was rejected by those, both Jews and non-Jews, whose confidence was in "Tradition," and was *received* by those, both Jews and non-Jews, whose confidence was in "Truth."

Acts 14 describes a very similar experience in Iconium where believing Jews [Yehudim] and believing non-Jews [Goyim] received the Gospel, and the "disobedient Goyim and Yehudim" rejected the Gospel and ran the Shliachim out of town.

From there they then went to Lystra (where some of the disobedient "Yehudim from Antioch and Iconium" persuaded the people to stone Sha'ul) and Derbe, then returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, where they appointed Messianic Zakenim⁸⁷ in each of the *synagogues*, and then to Pisidia, Pamphylia, Perga, Attalia, and then back to "Antioch, the place where they had been handed over to the care of God for the work which they had now completed."

It is terribly important to note that they didn't "plant" a First Baptist Church of Lystra, a St. Paul United Methodist Church of Iconium, a Fellowship Community Church of Attalia, or even a First Christian Church of Antioch. They simply went to the *synagogues* in each town and presented the Gospel, and for those who accepted the message of Messiah, they appointed Messianic Jewish leaders to shepherd them.

It is now approximately 17 to 20 years after the resurrection of Yeshua, and at this time the Scriptures tell us that just now God "had opened the door of faith to the Goyim." Now, for the first time, non-Jews who had not previously been part of the local synagogue were coming to faith in Messiah (Acts 14:27).

⁸⁷ Elders

Chapter 9. The Jerusalem Council

This brings us now to the frequently misunderstood fifteenth chapter of Acts and the Jerusalem Council. Sha'ul and Bar Nabba were still in Antioch when “some men came down from Y'hudah⁸⁸ to Antioch and began teaching the brothers, ‘You can’t be saved unless you undergo *b’rit-milah*⁸⁹ in the manner prescribed by Moshe.⁹⁰” Dr. Luke doesn’t tell us for certain who these “some men” were, and he does not specifically identify them as either natural-born Jews or proselytes. However, according to the “Church father” and historian Epiphanius,⁹¹ one of these men was a heretic named Cerinthus⁹² who was a circumcised Egyptian, and who apparently felt that since he had been required to be circumcised to be accepted into the synagogue, then everyone else should also have to be circumcised.

Unable to resolve the conflict without becoming dictatorial and running the risk of dividing the fledgling Messianic movement over the issue, it was wisely determined by the Community leaders that Sha'ul and Bar Nabba would take the issue to the Shliachim and Zakenim⁹³ in Jerusalem. Three of the most influential Zakenim who were in Jerusalem at the time were Yeshua’s half-brother Ya`akov⁹⁴ (who is considered by most to have been the pastor of the Messianic Community in Jerusalem), Kefa,⁹⁵ and Yochanan.⁹⁶

⁸⁸ Judea.

⁸⁹ Circumcision.

⁹⁰ Moses.

⁹¹ *Contra Haeres.* 1. 1. Haeres. 28.

⁹² Cerinthus taught that Yeshua was only a man, and that at His immersion the Messiah (called the Christ-consciousness by modern New-Age cults) entered Him, and taught Him things about the “unknown God” that even the angels don’t know. During His execution the Messiah left Yeshua and returned to heaven. Yeshua, just a man, died and was buried, and will be resurrected from the dead at the last day. Cerinthus became the leader of a Gnostic cult in Ephesus, and was the “arch-heretic” against whom the Shliach Yochanan (the Apostle John the Beloved) fought so strongly. It may well have been Cerinthus against whose teachings Yochanan’s first epistle was written (see 1 John 2:22-26).

“The fullest description which we have of Cerinthus and his followers is that of Epiphanius (*Hær.* XXVIII.), who records a great many traditions as to his life (e.g. that he was one of the false apostles who opposed Paul, and one of the circumcision who rebuked Peter for eating with Cornelius, &c.), and also many details as to his system, some of which are quite contradictory. It is clear, however, that he was Jewish in his training and sympathies, while at the same time possessed of Gnostic tendencies. He represents a position of transition from Judaistic Ebionism to Gnosticism, and may be regarded as the earliest Judaizing Gnostic.” (Eusebius, *Church History*, Book III, Chapter XXVII, Footnote 272) [https://www.true-orthodoxy.info/hist_eusebius_03.shtml, accessed August 14, 2019]

⁹³ Apostles and Elders.

⁹⁴ Yeshua’s half-brother. See the earlier note on his name.

⁹⁵ Peter.

⁹⁶ John the Beloved.

After considerable deliberation and prayer, Ya`akov rose to announce the decision of the meeting that has come to be known as the Jerusalem Council:

“My opinion is that we should not put obstacles in the way of the Goyim who are turning to God. Instead, we should write them a letter telling them to abstain from things polluted by idols, from fornication, from what is strangled and from blood.” (Acts 15:19-20)

Please note very carefully that these conditions are almost exactly the same as the conditions that we have listed previously, which had *always* been expected of the God-Fearers:

“But of the stranger it was expected that he would forego the worship of idols (Lev. xx. 2; Ezek. xiv. 7) and the practise [sic.] of sorcery, incest, or other abominations [which include fornication] (Lev. xviii. 26), and that he would refrain from eating blood (Lev. xvii. 10), from working on Sabbath (Ex. xx. 10, xxiii. 12), from eating leavened bread on Pesach (Ex. xii. 19), and from violating Yom ha-Kippurim [Yom Kippur] (Lev. xvi. 29).”⁹⁷ [Compare Acts 15:28-29]

In short, Ya`akov declared on behalf of the Council that the Goyim would be accepted into fellowship *in exactly the same way that Goyim had **always** been accepted into fellowship*—simply by acting in a manner that the Jewish people considered the “minimum requirements” for any civilized person.

Then Ya`akov added a comment that, in my opinion, has almost always been misinterpreted by Bible commentators who fail to recognize the historical fact that early Messianic Judaism was part and parcel of the synagogue:

“For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat.” (Acts 15:21)

For example, John Gill begins his exposition of this verse with what I believe is correct historical information:

“That is, for many years past, even from the times of Ezra, the law of Moses has been publicly expounded by them, whom the Jews call Derashim, preachers, or expounders, in every city where there was a synagogue; and every city belonging to the Jews, were obliged to build a synagogue, yea, they were obliged to do it where there were but ten Israelites: this is given by James⁹⁸ as a reason why the Gentiles should be wrote unto concerning the above things; ...”⁹⁹

But in the middle of his reasoning as to *why* the Gentile Believers should be made aware of the Council’s decision, and why the Gentile Believers should be given only these conditions for fellowship, he suddenly takes what I believe may be a significantly wrong turn when he begins to try to explain *why* the Council has arrived at this determination. Can it be that he, like so many others, fails to accurately comprehend the “Jewishness” of the first-century “church?”

“... because that they hearing the law read and expounded every week, would be ready to conclude that they were obliged to submit unto it, as to circumcision,

⁹⁷ “Gentile,” *Jewish Encyclopedia*, www.jewishencyclopedia.com, *op. cit.*

⁹⁸ Ya`akov.

⁹⁹ *The New John Gill’s Exposition of the Entire Bible*.

<http://www.biblestudytools.com/commentaries/gills-exposition-of-the-bible/acts-15-21.html>

and other things; unless they were told that they were free from it; only in order to maintain peace with their brethren the Jews, it would be necessary for them to abstain from the above things: and it may also carry in it a reason, why the Jews need not be wrote unto, and why they had no reason to complain for thus writing to the Gentiles; since they had the law read and explained to them every week, and there would be no attempt to make any alteration in that form of service: ...”¹⁰⁰

Gill, as do many others, assumes—I believe erroneously—that the Council’s concern was that when the Messianic Goyim heard the Torah taught in the synagogues, they might “conclude that they were obliged to submit unto it.”

And why should they *not* submit to God’s divine instruction? As we saw earlier, Yeshua taught:

“... whoever disobeys the least of these *mitzvot*¹⁰¹ and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew 5:19)

According to Yeshua’s teaching:

- *whoever* [Jew or Gentile] obeys the least of these mitzvot will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven; and
- *whoever* [Jew or Gentile] teaches others to obey the least of these mitzvot will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven; **but**
- *whoever* [Jew or Gentile] disobeys the least of these mitzvot will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven;
- *whoever* [Jew or Gentile] teaches others to disobey the least of these mitzvot will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven.

Why would the members of the Council wish to cause the new Messianic Goyim to be called “the least in the Kingdom of Heaven” by failing to teach them to obey *all* the mitzvot? Why would the members of the Council wish to be called “the least in the Kingdom of Heaven” by teaching the new Messianic Goyim to disobey these mitzvot? Simple logic alone dictates that the members of the Council would certainly not wish to go against Yeshua’s teaching. They certainly *would* wish to be called “great in the Kingdom of Heaven,” and they certainly *would* wish for the new Messianic Goyim to also be called “great in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

Scripture provides no reason to exempt new Gentile Believers from obedience to God’s loving instruction, nor any Scriptural precedent for the idea that after coming to faith in the Messiah there is no need to seek righteousness and obedience.

The understanding of most Gentile Christian theologians is that Gentile Believers should be held to a different standard of righteousness than that required of Jewish Believers. And traditional Judaism agrees, having long held that, while the Torah is the standard of righteousness for Jews, the standard of righteousness for non-Jews is the so-called Noahide Law. Amazingly, many of the Jewish leaders within the

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Instructions or commandments contained in the Torah.

Messianic Jewish movement agree, and some go as far as to actually discourage their Gentile members from trying to live Torah-pursuant lives. According to the words of Yeshua Himself, these teachers will be called “least in the Kingdom of Heaven.”

According to traditional Judaism, God gave Noah and his family seven commandments to observe when he saved them from the flood. These commandments, referred to as the Noahic or Noahide commandments, are *inferred* from Genesis Ch. 9, and are as follows:

- 1) to establish courts of justice;
- 2) not to commit blasphemy;
- 3) not to commit idolatry;
- 4) not to commit incest and adultery;
- 5) not to commit bloodshed;
- 6) not to commit robbery; and
- 7) not to eat flesh cut from a living animal.

These commandments are simple and straightforward, and most of the world recognizes them as sound moral principles. Any non-Jew who follows these laws has a place in the world to come [according to traditional Judaism].

The Noahic commandments are binding on all people, because all people are descended from Noah and his family. The 613 mitzvot of the Torah, on the other hand, are only binding on the descendants of those who accepted the commandments at Sinai and upon those who take on the yoke of the commandments voluntarily.”¹⁰²

However, as the following comparison clearly demonstrates, the letter from the Jerusalem Council to the Gentile Believers *did not* cite the Noahide Law as the standard of righteousness or rule of conduct they were to follow.

¹⁰² Tracey R. Rich. “The Seven Laws of Noah.” www.jewfaq.org/gentiles.htm #Noah

The Noahide Law	The Council's Determination
establish courts of justice	
do not commit blasphemy	
do not commit idolatry	abstain from things polluted by idols
do not commit incest or adultery	abstain from fornication
do not commit bloodshed	
do not commit robbery	
do not to eat flesh cut from a living animal	
	abstain from what is strangled
	abstain from blood

Of the entire Noahide Law, the only two requirements specifically placed upon the Gentile Believers by the Jerusalem Council were to abstain from idols and from sexual immorality. The Noahide Law says nothing of abstaining from what is strangled and from blood, yet these conditions were imposed upon the Gentile Believers. Therefore, it is simply not reasonable to assume that the Council was simply telling the Gentile Believers to abide by the Noahide Law, as is generally supposed.

The Council's determination much more closely corresponds to the conditions that had *always* been required of the God-fearer:

Conditions for God-fearers¹⁰³	The Council's Determination
forgo the worship of idols	abstain from things polluted by idols
forgo the practice of sorcery, incest, or other abominations	abstain from fornication
refrain from eating blood	abstain from what is strangled and from blood
refrain from working on the Sabbath	these would have been clearly understood by anyone who was actively participating in the activities of the synagogue
refrain from eating leavened bread on Pesach	
refrain from violating Yom Kippur	

The next step in this careful evaluation asks whether the traditional Jewish position on the Noahide Laws is correct. According to Jewish tradition, the Noahide Laws are binding on all humankind, both Jews and Gentiles, but the Torah is "only binding on the descendants of those who accepted the commandments at Sinai and upon those who take on the yoke of the commandments voluntarily."

If Gentiles are now permitted to participate in the *blessings* of the Covenant, are they exempt from taking on its *obligations*? If obedience to Torah is such a beautiful thing as the Jews claim, why should Gentile God-Fearers be denied the right to also enjoy the beauty of obedience to Torah?

¹⁰³ "Gentile," *Jewish Encyclopedia*, www.jewishencyclopedia.com, *op. cit.*

When God led Kefa to bring the Gospel to the first Gentile believers, Kefa said (Acts 10:34-35):¹⁰⁴

“I now understand that God does not play favorites, but that whoever fears him and does what is right is acceptable to him, no matter what people he belongs to.” (CJB)

“I most certainly understand now that God is not one to show partiality, but in every nation the man who fears Him and does what is right is welcome to Him.” (NAS)

“Truly I perceive that God doesn’t show favoritism; but in every nation he who fears him and works righteousness is acceptable to him.” (HNV)

“Of a truth, I perceive that God is no respecter of persons, but in every nation he who is fearing Him, and is working righteousness, is acceptable to Him;” (YLT)

“In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him.” (NKJV)

“Truly, I see clearly that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation, the man who has fear of him and does righteousness is pleasing to him.” (BBE)

Regardless of the translation, two things are abundantly clear: (1) God does not play favorites; and (2) God accepts those who fear him and do what is right. From this we may draw two conclusions:

1. God has *only one* standard of righteousness, not two separate standards of righteousness (does not play favorites, does not show partiality, is no respecter of persons); and
2. God accepts on an equal basis those who fear him and live righteously (who live according to God’s one standard of righteousness).

If God has only one standard of righteousness for all people, whether Jew or Gentile, where is that standard of righteousness revealed? In the Torah, of course!

Scripture makes clear that even though God does not play favorites, He does have a special covenant relationship with the physical descendants of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya`akov, whether they are believers in Israel’s Messiah, and we must not lose sight of that fact.

However, we must also remember that Scripture teaches Gentile believers are adopted into the family of God by being adopted into the family of Avraham.

For you did not receive a spirit of slavery to bring you back again into fear; on the contrary, you received the Spirit, who makes us sons and by whose power we cry out, “Abba!” (that is, “Dear Father!”). The Spirit himself bears witness with our own spirits that *we are children of God; and if we are children, then we are also heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with the Messiah*—provided we are suffering with him in order also to be glorified with him. (Romans 8:15-17)

¹⁰⁴ CJB, *Complete Jewish Bible*; NAS, *New American Standard Bible*; HNV, *Hebrew Names Version*; YLT, *Young’s Literal Translation*; NKJV, *New King James Version*; BBE, *The Bible in Basic English*.

Now what if God, even though he was quite willing to demonstrate his anger and make known his power, patiently put up with people who deserved punishment and were ripe for destruction? What if he did this in order to make known the riches of his glory to those who are the objects of his mercy, whom he prepared in advance for glory—*that is, to us, whom he called not only from among the Jews but also from among the Gentiles?* As indeed he says in Hoshea, “Those who were not my people [Gentiles] I will call my people; her who was not loved [Gentiles] I will call loved; and in the very place where they were told, ‘You are not my people,’ there *they will be called sons of the living God!*” (Romans 9:22-26)

For we are the temple of the living God—as God said, “I will house Myself in them, ... and I will walk among you. I will be their God, and they will be My people.” Therefore ADONAI says, “Go out from their midst; separate yourselves; don’t even touch what is unclean. Then I myself will receive you. In fact, *I will be your Father, and you will be my sons and daughters.*” says ADONAI-Tzva’ot.¹⁰⁵ (2 Corinthians 6:16-17)

It was the same with Avraham: “He trusted in God and was faithful to him, and that was credited to his account as righteousness.” Be assured, then, that *it is those who live by trusting and being faithful who are really children of Avraham.* Also the Tanakh, foreseeing that God would consider the Gentiles righteous when they live by trusting and being faithful, told the Good News to Avraham in advance by saying, “In connection with you, all the Goyim will be blessed.” So then, *those who rely on trusting and being faithful are blessed along with Avraham,* who trusted and was faithful. (Galatians 3:6-9)

For in union with the Messiah, you are all children of God through this trusting faithfulness; because as many of you as were immersed into the Messiah have clothed yourselves with the Messiah, in whom *there is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor freeman, neither male nor female; for in union with the Messiah Yeshua, you are all one.* Also, *if you belong to the Messiah, you are seed of Avraham and heirs according to the promise.* (Galatians 3:26-29)

Now because *you are sons*, God has sent forth into our hearts the Spirit of his Son, the Spirit who cries out, “Abba!” (that is, “Dear Father!”). So *through God you are no longer a slave but a son, and if you are a son you are also an heir.* (Galatians 4:6-7)

It is clear from the above Scriptures that *all those*, both Jew and Gentile, *who are in union with the Messiah* (Galatians 3:26) *are “children of God” and “seed of Avraham and heirs according to the promise.”* Jewish Believers in the Messiah are the “seed of Avraham and heirs according to the promise” because they are both the physical seed of Avraham *and* the “spiritual” seed of Avraham because they share his faith. Gentile Believers are the “seed of Avraham and heirs according to the promise” because they “rely on trusting and being faithful” and are therefore “blessed along with Avraham.”

Those children who have been adopted into *any* family as “sons and joint-heirs” are entitled to share in all the *benefits* of being in the family, but *they are also obligated to share in all the responsibilities* of being in the family.

So again we ask: if Gentiles, as children who have been adopted into the family of Avraham and into the family of God, are now permitted to participate in the *blessings* of the Covenant, how can they possibly be exempt from taking on the *obligations* of

¹⁰⁵ Tzva’ot, hosts or armies. ADONAI-Tzva’ot is usually rendered as LORD of Hosts.

the Covenant? If obedience to Torah is a beautiful thing as the Jews claim, why should Gentile God-Fearers be denied the right to also enjoy the beauty of obedience to Torah?

Remember who it was that at this time constituted the synagogue in every city where there were more than ten Jews: Jews, Gentile Converts, and God-Fearers, some of whom were Messianic and some of whom were not! Messianic Believers had no separate synagogues; they met in the same synagogues as non-Messianic Believers in HaShem.¹⁰⁶ Messianic Believers and non-Messianic Believers in HaShem did not have separate versions of Judaism. There was only one single, united Judaism for all who believed in HaShem, the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya`akov.¹⁰⁷

At this point, I believe, many become confused because of what is commonly taught about the Pentecost event. Remember that when Ruach HaKodesh came at Pentecost, those upon whom He fell did *not* become “the church” as it now exists (see Chapter 6). They all remained Jews who, as we have discussed, remained part of mainstream Judaism. No “church” existed for the new Gentile Believers to join. They joined their local *synagogue* where they could learn to obey the teachings of Torah as explained by the Shliachim and the other Messianic Rabbi/Pastors.

Returning now to the puzzle of the Declaration of the Jerusalem Council, it should be more evident why the decision was made to allow new Gentile Believers some leniency regarding *halakah*¹⁰⁸ and what was the intent of the statement, “For from the earliest times, Moshe has had in every city those who proclaim him, with his words being read in the synagogues every Shabbat.”

For a new Gentile Believer who was previously a pagan and who had just learned about the God of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya`akov for the first time, and who had never been exposed to the righteous, Torah-observant lifestyle (*halakah*) that a faithful Jew gradually learned over an entire lifetime, the task of learning to walk *halakah* in just a few weeks, or even a few months, would simply be totally overwhelming, and the new Believer would certainly be doomed to fail, and to fall away from fellowship out of sheer frustration.

The wise members of the Jerusalem Council well knew that “from generations of old Moshe has those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Shabbat.” Today the entire Torah (the five books of Moshe, Genesis through Deuteronomy) is taught in synagogues around the world in a one-year reading cycle. At the time of Yeshua and the Shliachim, the three-year cycle was used, and Jewish children were not expected to walk *halakah* until they had completed the teaching cycle four times and reached the age of bar-mitzvah.¹⁰⁹

Just as a newborn Jewish child was gradually exposed to “the teachings of Moshe” over a 12-year period, so every newly born-again Gentile Believer would likewise be

¹⁰⁶ “HaShem” is literally “the Name” and refers to the Name that is too sacred to be pronounced. It is a common Jewish reference to God.

¹⁰⁷ Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

¹⁰⁸ Literally, “the walk,” i.e., walking in obedience to the Torah.

¹⁰⁹ No, Olivia, the “through the Bible” concept did not originate with Dr. J. Vernon McGee; it originated in the synagogue well before the first century.

gradually exposed to “the teachings of Moshe” over a three-, six-, nine-, or even twelve-year period.

Gentile Believers would most certainly have been given the same options that non-Jewish Believers had *always* been afforded in the synagogue. They could either go through the formal “conversion” process (including circumcision) and thereby “become Jews” [Proselytes or Converts] and fully embrace all the 613 mitzvot of the Torah if they desired to, or they could remain in fellowship with the synagogue as Messianic God-Fearers and embrace whatever extent of “the teachings of Moshe” they had learned (provided, of course, that the “Minimum Requirements” were always observed).

Gill was essentially correct when he observed that the new Believers were given the very “minimum requirements” for fellowship [“that you abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality” (Acts 15:29)], and that “there would be no attempt to make any alteration in that form of service;” but this was permitted *not* because the new Gentile Believers would be *excused* from obedience to Torah, but rather because the new Gentile Believers would be given the opportunity to *learn* over a long period of time to become obedient, just as their Jewish-born brothers had been given.

Consider this: *If it is true* (and it is) that God gave the Torah to Israel through Moshe at Sinai, and *if it is true* (and it is) that Yeshua is God, and *if it is true* (and it is) that “God is one,” then it **must** also be true that it was the pre-incarnate Yeshua who gave the Torah to Israel through Moshe at Sinai. To believe otherwise, one is forced to depart from monotheism (only one God) and enter the world of polytheism (more than one God).

So when Yeshua said, “If you love Me, keep My *mitzvot* [commandments]” (John 14:15) and “If you keep My *mitzvot*, you will remain in My love; even as I have kept My Father’s *mitzvot*, and remain in His love” (John 15:10), then *He was referring to all the 613 mitzvot that He gave to Moshe for Israel to observe as an **everlasting** covenant.*

God does not change, Yeshua does not change, and Torah does not change. Just as the Amendments to the United States Constitution do not do away with the Constitution, so the Apostolic Scriptures do not do away with the Tanakh, nor does the Talmud! I do not believe for a minute that the Apostolic Scriptures are more authoritative than the Tanakh. Nor do I believe that the Talmud supersedes the Tanakh. I do not believe that the *legalistic* Rabbinic system of interpretation of Torah, much of which has been carried over into the Talmud, has ever been as authoritative as Torah or as binding as Torah upon Believers in HaShem, whether Jewish or non-Jewish. In fact, Yeshua condemned that legalistic system as “the traditions of the elders” and called those who would force others into submission to its demands “hypocrites,” “blind guides,” “fools and blind men,” and “sons of hell” (Matthew 23:13-33).

Please do not misunderstand. I am not suggesting for even a moment that the Talmud is “evil” or of no value to Messianic Believers, whether Jewish or non-Jewish. Far from it! The Talmud contains centuries of discussion and interpretation of the Sacred Text by some of Judaism's greatest minds. It is full of incomparable wisdom passed down through generations. It records centuries of “case law” in Jewish

jurisprudence, and it teaches us to look at the Tanakh through the eyes of the Sages. However, it contains the opinions of men and not the mind of God. I believe that, as a practical matter, the Talmud contains great wisdom and is worthy of serious consideration, except when it disagrees with the Sacred Text.

We should not think for even a moment that total obedience to Torah can ever save us or make us righteous. Rav Sha'ul covered that idea very carefully in his letter to the Galatians. Torah observance can never replace our faith and trust in the Messiah, who alone saves us and, because of our faith—not our works—declares us righteous.

The Temple service and sacrificial system cannot save us; the writer of the Letter to the Messianic Jews (Hebrews) makes it abundantly clear that Messiah is our *only* propitiating sacrifice!

The ruling of the Jerusalem Council, when properly understood, did *not* excuse or exempt those coming to Messianic faith from among the Goyim from any provision of the Torah except that they were not to be compelled to become “circumcised”—that is, they were not to submit to any kind of formal “conversion process” to become Jewish. Nor did it excuse the early Messianic leaders from teaching the non-Jewish Believers to be obedient to the entire Torah.

Remember what Yeshua taught:

“Don’t think that I have come to abolish the Torah or the Prophets. I have come not to abolish but to complete. Yes indeed! I tell you that until heaven and earth pass away, not so much as a yud or a stroke will pass from the Torah—not until everything that must happen has happened. So *whoever disobeys the least of these mitzvot and teaches others to do so will be called the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But whoever obeys them and so teaches will be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.* For I tell you that unless your righteousness is far greater than that of the Torah-teachers and P’rushim, you will certainly not enter the Kingdom of Heaven!” (Matthew 5:17-20).

As Messianic Believers, we are not made righteous because of our obedience to Torah. We are obedient to Torah because we have been made righteous by the shed blood of our Messiah, and his commandment is that we therefore live a righteous lifestyle as defined by His Torah!

Chapter 10.

“Christian” or “Messianic?”

Fast-forward another few years. Rav Sha’ul has completed several missionary trips throughout the Mediterranean region and has returned to Jerusalem to visit. Upon his arrival, Ya`akov and a number of the other Zakenim¹¹⁰ report to him a *false* rumor they have heard:

Now what they have been told about you [Sha’ul] is that you are teaching all the Jews living among the Goyim to apostatize from Moshe, telling them not to have a b’rit-milah¹¹¹ for their sons and not to follow the traditions (Acts 21:21).

Of course this was not true, and to demonstrate to the entire Messianic Community, both in Jerusalem and throughout the Diaspora, that the rumor was false, Sha’ul agreed to publicly demonstrate his obedience to Torah by undergoing a purification ritual in the Temple along with four other members of the Jerusalem Community so that “everyone will know that there is nothing to these rumors which they have heard about you; but that, on the contrary, *you yourself stay in line and keep the Torah*” (Acts 21:24).

Sha’ul had emphatically *not* been teaching that Torah had been canceled or that obedience to Torah is optional, but only that Gentiles coming to Messiah do not need to be circumcised to become righteous (since it is saving faith alone, and not any physical ritual, which makes one righteous).

Please hear me well: Sha’ul *never* stopped being a Jew to become a Christian! Neither did the multiplied tens of thousands of Jews in Jerusalem who had come to faith in the Messiah by this time.

During Sha’ul’s meeting with the Zakenim, they had told him, “You see, brother, how many *tens of thousands* of believers there are among the Judeans, and they are *all* zealots for the Torah.” (Acts 21:20)

As David Stern correctly translates in the *Complete Jewish Bible*, the Greek word in this sentence that most English translations render as “thousands” is μυριάδες (myriades), which should be translated as “myriads,” meaning “ten thousand,” not “thousand.”

By most estimates, Jerusalem's population at this time was about a hundred thousand. One or two myriads would not be referred to as “how many *myriads*,” but three

¹¹⁰ Elders.

¹¹¹ Circumcision.

or four *myriads* might be, and three or four myriads would represent between 30 and 40 percent of the entire population of Jerusalem at the time.

These Messianic Jews were still zealous for the Torah. They had given up nothing of their “Jewishness” in order to become “Christians.”

Later, at his trial before the *Kohen Gadol* Hananyah¹¹² and the Sanhedrin, Sha’ul did not say that he *used to be* a Pharisee; he said, “Brothers, I myself *am* a Parush¹¹³ and the son of P’rushim”¹¹⁴ (Acts 23:6).

A few days later he stood before Governor Felix, and again defended his “Jewishness.”

“But this I do admit to you: I worship the God of our fathers in accordance with the Way (which they call a sect¹¹⁵). **I continue to believe everything that accords with the Torah and everything written in the Prophets.** And I continue to have a hope in God—which they too accept—that there will be a resurrection of both the righteous and the unrighteous. Indeed, it is because of this that I make a point of always having a clear conscience in the sight of both God and man. After an absence of several years, I came to Yerushalayim to bring a charitable gift to my nation and **to offer sacrifices.** It was in connection with the latter that they found me in the Temple. I had been ceremonially purified, I was not with a crowd, and I was not causing a disturbance.” (Acts 24:14-18).

Two years later Sha’ul was still in prison in Caesarea, and was brought before the new governor, Festus. He told Festus, “I have committed no offense—*not against the Torah* to which the Jews hold, not against the Temple, and not against the Emperor.” (Acts 25:8).

The only possible interpretation of these statements is obvious: ***Sha’ul was still living a totally Torah-observant lifestyle.***

Several days later, Sha’ul appeared before King Agrippa and challenged him to find any fault with his Jewish lifestyle, because Agrippa was “so well informed about all the Jewish customs and controversies” (Acts 26:3), and Agrippa was unable to find any fault in him.

Months later, Sha’ul finally arrived in Rome to be placed in prison awaiting his trial before Caesar. Soon after his arrival, he called together the leaders of the Jewish community in Rome and essentially presented himself for their examination. “Brothers, although I have done nothing against either our people or the traditions of our fathers, I was made a prisoner in Yerushalayim and handed over to the Romans” (Acts 28:17). And they replied to him, “We have not received any letters about you from Y’hudah,¹¹⁶ and none of the brothers who have come from there has reported or said anything bad about you” (Acts 17:21).

¹¹² High Priest Ananias.

¹¹³ Pharisee.

¹¹⁴ Pharisees.

¹¹⁵ Please note that “the Way,” also called the “sect of the Nazarenes” (Acts 24:5) was *not* considered a separate religion, but only a sect or division of Judaism, as were the Pharisees (Acts 15:5), Sadducees (Acts 5:17), Zealots, and Essenes.

¹¹⁶ Judea.

The Book of Acts ends with Sha’ul spending an additional two years in a Roman prison. While many believe it was this imprisonment which ended with his martyrdom, others believe (primarily from information found in 1 Timothy, 2 Timothy, and Titus) that Paul was released, preached several more years, perhaps going all the way to Spain (cf. Romans 15:24), and was then returned to Rome to be executed (ca. 64-67 CE), probably by Nero as part of his plot to blame the burning of Rome on the Messianic Jews.

But nowhere in either sacred or secular history is there *any* evidence that either Sha’ul, or *any* of the other Shliachim, or *any* of the early Messianic Jewish Believers, died as anything other than as *Torah-observant Jews* who knew and trusted Yeshua as Israel’s Messiah.

Sha’ul didn’t “plant” any “churches” as we know them, and he *never* taught anything other than the Judaism in which he was raised and lived his entire life, with the addition of a resurrected Messiah and the inclusion of Gentiles in God’s plan of redemption.

On his missionary journeys, he always went to the *synagogue* in each city, and there he preached Yeshua as the resurrected Messiah. Some believed, and others didn’t believe. Among those who believed, he appointed Zakenim¹¹⁷ to be their shepherds, but he *never* encouraged them to leave the synagogue, and he *never* taught against the Torah or against a Torah-observant lifestyle.

Not many years before his death, he is recorded speaking to the Jewish leaders in Rome, but *not* about anything called “the church,” but about the “sect of Judaism” (Acts 28:22) that had come to be known as “the Way”—the exact same sect of Judaism that today we call “Messianic Judaism.”

¹¹⁷ Elders.

Chapter 11.

The Synagogue

from 70 to 325 CE

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Great Sanhedrin was moved to Yavne¹¹⁸ (Javne or Jabneh), where it became the center of Pharisaic Judaism and was presided over by Johanan ben Zakkai. One of their immediate goals seems to have been the “cleansing” of Pharisaism from outside influences, particularly Greek and Roman.

Between 70 and 90 CE, a group of leading Rabbis in Yavne became known as the “Council of Yavne.” The Council's purpose was to reorganize Judaism because the Temple was gone and sacrifices were abolished. Formalized synagogue worship was established as a replacement for the Temple (the Torah scroll now wears the crown and breastplate of the Kohen Gadol¹¹⁹), the Greek version of the Tanakh¹²⁰ called the Septuagint, was condemned, and the Masoretic Hebrew text was adopted as the “official” version of the Tanakh.

Before that time, there were eighteen benedictions or blessings, known as the *amidah*,¹²¹ that were recited as part of the daily service of worship. Sometime around 80 CE, the Council, at the urging of Rabban Gamli’el II, or Gamli’el of Yavne to distinguish him from his grandfather (Rabbi Sha’ul’s mentor), added a nineteenth blessing (actually inserted at the twelfth position in the liturgy) called the *Birkat ha Minim* (Blessing of the Heretics), which was actually a curse rather than a blessing.

One version of this “benediction” reads:

Blessed are You, O Lord our God, King of Justice. For the slanderers (*minim*, or heretics) let there be no hope, and let all wickedness perish as in a moment; let all your enemies be speedily cut off [killed], uproot and crush the dominion of arrogance, and cast down and humble speedily in our days. Blessed are you, O Lord, who breaks the enemies and humbles the arrogant.

¹¹⁸ Yavne (יבנה, “God causes to build”) is a city in the modern Center District of Israel, just south of Tel Aviv, also called Jamnia, Jabneel, and Jabneh in the Bible. A central city of Philistia, the Bible refers to its walls being destroyed by Uzziah. It was pillaged by Judas Maccabaeus and later rebuilt. In the last years before the sack of Jerusalem (70 CE), Jamnia became a great Jewish cultural center. At the prayer of Johanan ben Zakkai, Vespasian spared Jamnia and permitted Johanan to settle there as leader of the Jewish community after the fall of Jerusalem. The Great Sanhedrin was moved to Jamnia, and the city became the capital of the Jews until the rise of Simon Bar Kochba. [Source: reference.allrefer.com/encyclopedia/J/Jamnia.html]

¹¹⁹ High Priest.

¹²⁰ The Hebrew Bible, or so-called “Old Testament.”

¹²¹ “Standing” because they were recited while standing.

Originally directed toward the Sadducees and other “heretics,” the Genizah version replaces the word *minim* with *nozerim* (Nazarenes), a direct reference to both Yeshua and the Messianic Jews who followed Him.

A particularly distressing ruling concerning the *amidah* was that the entire body of the *amidah* could be recited silently or whispered, except for the *Birkat ha Minim*, which was required to be recited out loud, and anyone who refused was “excommunicated” or put out of the synagogue.

Although the *Birkat ha Minim* marked the *beginning* of the separation of Messianic Believers from the synagogue, the real split came during the Bar Kochba¹²² rebellion against Rome (132-135 CE). After the success of the first few years of the uprising, Rabbi Akiva, the leading rabbi at Yavne at the time, declared that the leader of the revolution was the Messiah and gave him the name Bar Kochba (“Son of the Star”) based on the prophecy of Bil’am [Balaam] in the Torah:

There shall come forth a star out of Ya`akov, a scepter shall rise out of Yisra'el, shall strike through the corners of Mo'av,¹²³ break down all the sons of tumult ... (Numbers 22:17).

Now, at Rabbi Akiva’s insistence, the *Birkat ha Minim* was applied against everyone who failed to acknowledge Bar Kochba as the Messiah. Obviously, those who knew that Yeshua was the Messiah could not possibly call Bar Kochba the Messiah, and it was most likely at this point (more than 100 years after the Resurrection of Yeshua) that the Messianic Believers first began to form their own synagogues.

Within a few years (ca. 135 CE), Bar Kochba was tricked into believing Rabbi Elazar was involved in treason, and He executed him, losing the support of Rabbi Akiva and the rest of the Rabbis. His “messiahship” was “revoked,” and the Rabbis reverted his name to Ben Kosiba, which was either his real name or, appropriately and literally, the “Son of the Lie.”¹²⁴

Unfortunately, the split between the Messianic and non-Messianic Jews was irreparable. So Messianic Judaism and Rabbinical Judaism parted company. But this division did not come until a full century after Yeshua’s resurrection, approximately 40 years after the last of the Messianic *Midrashim*¹²⁵ had been composed (the Book of the Revelation, ca. 96 CE), and at least 35 years after the death of Yochanan, the last surviving Shliach.¹²⁶

And so we can clearly see that *nothing* in the minds of either Yeshua or the Shliachim *ever* suggested that there be any form of Messianic Community apart from

¹²² Aramaic: Son of a Star. Simeon ben Kosiba, the leader of the last and most successful Jewish rebellion against Rome in 132-135 C.E. He died in battle when the rebellion was defeated. Rabbi Akiva believed he was the Messiah. See Appendix D.

¹²³ Moab.

¹²⁴ For more information see Shira Schoenberg, “The Bar-Kochba Revolt,” *Jewish Virtual Library* on-line at www.us-israel.org/jsource/Judaism/revolt1.html.

¹²⁵ Midrash is a commentary, plural midrashim. In a very real sense, the Apostolic Scriptures are Midrashim on the Tanakh, the entire collection of which would eventually be handed down to us as the Apostolic Writings, B’rit Hadasha, or so-called “New Testament.”

¹²⁶ Yochanan, called “John the Beloved” or “John the Revelator,” died ca. 100 CE.

the synagogue. In fact, the writer of the Epistle to the Messianic Jews specifically tells us to *not forsake the synagogue*:

Let us consider how to provoke one another to love and good works, not forsaking our own **assembling together**, as the custom of some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more, as you see the Day approaching. (Hebrews 10:25, NAS)

The Greek word here translated as “assembling together” is *ἐπισυναγωγή* (*episunagoge*), which is a combination of the two Greek words *ἐπὶ* (*epi*), upon or at, and *συναγωγή* (*sunagoge*), synagogue, or literally “at the synagogue.” So this phrase could very well be translated as “not forsaking our own synagogue.”

It was not until the Council of Nicea was convened by the Roman Emperor Constantine (325 CE) that the “church” as we know it today came into existence, and the Messianic Jews were given the option to either renounce all things Jewish and become Gentiles or be put to death.¹²⁷

Desiring to consolidate both the religious and secular aspects of the Empire under his authority (ca. 311 CE), Constantine, who was by virtue of his office as Emperor also the *pontifex maximus*, or high priest of the form of the Babylonian Mystery Religion that was practiced in the Empire, merged Messianic Judaism and the pagan Babylonian religion into a single, empire-wide religion that he called “Christianity” or “the Church.” He and his successor Emperor/Popes simply redefined the terms and practices of the Babylonian religion with “Bible words” and appointed their pagan priests as “bishops” of the new official state religion.¹²⁸ They renamed all the statues of the Roman gods and goddesses with the names of influential people in the Apostolic Scriptures, particularly the Shliachim, and replaced worship of these statues with “the veneration of saints” (which is not significantly different in any way!).^{129,130}

Then, in 325, Constantine called a council of 318 of these “bishops,” systematically excluding all bishops of Jewish ancestry, and, for all practical purposes, outlawed all things Jewish, thereby also outlawing virtually all things biblical that remained in the hybrid Roman state religion.¹³¹ It was also decreed at this council that all copies of the Jewish Scriptures should be destroyed. It is my considered opinion that the original Hebrew versions of the Apostolic Writings were also destroyed at this time, which explains why we have only the Greek copies extant today.

So we can clearly see that from 33 CE to 325 CE, a period of almost 300 years from the Resurrection, the Body of Messiah was in all respects an integral part of worldwide Judaism, and not at all anything remotely resembling a “new religion.” The only real “new religion” was, in fact, the Roman state religion which, by totally rejecting all things Jewish, rejected everything that Yeshua and the Shliachim stood for, lived by, and taught. Unfortunately, by patterning virtually all Protestant churches after the

¹²⁷ See Appendix E, “Canons from Nicea 1, 325 CE.”

¹²⁸ See Appendix E, “Anti-Semitic Decrees of Constantine and His Successors, High Priests of the Babylon Mystery Religion.”

¹²⁹ For more information on this subject see Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion* and Alexander Hislop, *The Two Babylons*, *op. cit.*

¹³⁰ See also Chapter 12, “Where did the word ‘Church’ Come From?” also posted on the Internet at www.familybible.org/Teaching/Messianic/church.htm.

¹³¹ See also Rick Aharon Chaimberlin’s article, “Anti-Judaism and the Council of Nicea” in the *Yasha Net Library* on-line at www.yashanet.com/library/antisem.htm.

Roman model and rejecting the “Old Testament” and the Torah of God as no longer relevant for “Christians,” the modern “Church” has also essentially rejected everything that Yeshua and the Shliachim stood for, lived by, and taught. I am forced to consider that the modern “Church” may very possibly be the very apostasy (ἀποστασία, apostasia) that Rabbi Sha'ul wrote about in 2 Thessalonians 2:3.

It should also be noted that the Council of Nicea and the “new religion” that was spawned there was the true source of the systematic persecution of Jews by “Christians” for nearly 1,700 years thus far, which has culminated in the “Final Solution” of Hitler’s Third Reich and America’s so-called “Roadmap for Peace,” which is a non-so-subtle plan carefully designed to complete the task of the failed “Final Solution” and rid the world of the “Jewish Menace” once and for all. But this has come to pass in fulfillment of Yeshua’s prophecy that just before the appearance of the Anti-Messiah,¹³² Israel must become “hated of all nations” (Matthew 24:9). Now that America (the American government, not the majority of the American people), Israel’s last ally, has turned against her, she finally stands alone against the entire world, waiting for Messiah to return and rescue her from her enemies. Oh, if only all Israel would cry out together to HaShem, ***“Barukh haba b’shem Adonai! Maranata! [Blessed is He Who comes in the name of the LORD! Our LORD comes!]***

¹³² The Antichrist.

Chapter 12.

Where Did the Word “Church” Come From?

[Much of the information in this chapter is speculation on my part, but is my best opinion based on the best research available to me at the present time.]

“Conventional,” “orthodox evangelical,” or “dispensational” Christian theology teaches that the “Church” came into existence at Pentecost and will cease to function in its present capacity at “the Rapture” (also known as “the Second Coming” or the “Translation of the Church”), and that the “Church” therefore consists of all the saints of “the present age,” and *I faithfully taught that doctrine for over thirty years*. My diligent studies of the Scriptures over the past 20 years or so have rendered that teaching in very serious doubt in my mind for the following reasons:

- a. The Greek word that is translated “church” in the English Bibles is *ἐκκλησία* (*ekklesia*), which is made up of the two Greek words *ἐκ* (*ek*), which means “out of,” and *καλεο* (*kaleo*), which means “to call.” *Εκκλησία* (*ekklesia*) therefore means “called out” or, when used with the definite article (“the”), “the called out ones.” This concept carries with it the idea of being “elect” or “chosen,” and it should be properly translated as either “called out” or “the called out ones” or simply “the elect” for simplicity’s sake. Other than the pre-existing religious bias of the Bible translators and the traditions of men, *there is absolutely no grammatical reason for this word to ever have been translated as “church.”* (Thus in Spanish, the word is not even translated, but only transliterated as *iglacia*.)
- b. The Hebrew word *מִקְרָא* (*miqra*) carries the same meaning as the Greek word *ἐκκλησία*, and is used in the Tenakh (the “Hebrew Bible” or so-called “Old Testament”—the only “Bible” that Yeshua and his *Shliachim* [Emissaries or Apostles] had) to refer to the “holy convocations” of Israel. *Miqra* can also readily be translated as “called out.”
- c. While most “conventional” Christian theologians teach that the so-called “Old Testament Saints” were saved by obedience to Torah (usually mistranslated as “the Law”), the Apostolic Scriptures (or so-called “Renewed Covenant” or New Testament)—particularly Hebrews 11; Romans 3:21-4:25; and Romans 11) teach that salvation (justification) has *always* been solely on the basis of faith in *Mashiach*, totally apart from any “works of righteousness,” and Rabbinical literature from the Second Temple Period to the present reveals that Judaism recognizes no such concept as “justification through Torah observance.”

- d. The “called out ones” *before* the resurrection of Mashiach were justified (saved, or declared righteous) by faith in the completed work of Mashiach that was yet to be performed.
- e. The “called out ones” *after* the resurrection of Mashiach are justified (saved, or declared righteous) by faith in the exact same completed work of Mashiach that has now been performed.
- f. The “called out ones” *before* the resurrection of Mashiach were either born or adopted as Israelites. (Genesis 17:10-13; Exodus 12:43-51; Deut 16:10-11; Josh. 8:33)
- g. The “called out ones” *after* the resurrection of Mashiach are either born or adopted as Israelites. (Rom. 9:1-8; cp. Rom. 8:15; Rom. 8:23; Rom. 11:17-27; Galatians 4:5; Eph. 1:5; Eph. 2:11-13)
- h. The “called out ones” *before* the resurrection of Mashiach and the “called out ones” *after* the resurrection of Mashiach are therefore related to Mashiach in exactly the same manner. (Rom. 3:30)

Where, then, is the scriptural basis for saying that “the called out ones” *before* the resurrection and the “called out ones” *after* the resurrection are two different groups of humanity?

There is, therefore, no Scriptural basis whatsoever to claim that God started something “new” or “different” at Pentecost. In fact, the Apostolic Scriptures *clearly* state that at the Pentecost event in Acts 2 the new Messianic Believers were “added to” *that which was already in existence*:

“So then, those who had received his word were baptized; and that day there were **added** about three thousand souls.” (Acts 2:41, NAS; emphasis added)

If three thousand souls were *added* that day, they were of necessity added to something *already existing*.

The only apparent difference between “the called out ones” *before* that Pentecost day and “the called out ones” *after* that Pentecost day is that *Ruach HaKodesh* was now to permanently indwell those who came to faith in Mashiach, whereas before Pentecost that indwelling *seems* (at least from our limited human perspective) to have been more temporary in nature.

Although the exact etymology of the modern English word “church” is far from certain, some dictionaries indicate that the word is *supposedly* derived from the Middle English word *chirche* or *kirke*, which in turn is derived from the Greek word *kyriakos*, which is said to mean “belonging to the Lord.” However, the strongest possible evidence against that position is simply that the word *kirke* is far more ancient than Christianity, and was originally derived from the name of the pagan sun-goddess Circe, whose priests and priestesses gathered in a “circle” to worship her (hence the source of the word “circle”).

Following this line of reasoning, some other Bible dictionaries and commentaries suggest that “church” came to be used as a substitute for the Greek word *ekklesia* because early believers may have met in a circle. However, that concept is highly

suspect because if one correctly understands that the believers met in synagogues until far after the end of the first century, there is nothing specific in synagogue worship that lends itself to the concept of a circle, unless it refers to Davidic dance, which is generally performed in a circle.

However, the practice of meeting in a “circle” could have developed during the Middle Ages (5th through 16th centuries), particularly in the British Isles, due to the influence of the Druids, Celts, and Saxons.

Throughout England, pagan religious gatherings were always held in a circle. The Druids [with their henges dating from 3,200 BCE or earlier (particularly Stonehenge)], the Celts, and Saxons also met in stone circles to worship their gods. Many of these stone circles still exist throughout England and about twenty-eight are found in the Wycliffe’s Yorkshire area. Many of the first English Christian buildings for worship were located on these circle sites or were built using stones from these circles. Through this association, the people of Wycliffe’s day continued to call these buildings a “*kirk*” (Scottish), a *cirice* (Old English), or *chirche* (Wycliffe’s version), each variation meaning “circle” and describing a place — occult — and not the people.¹³³

The etymology of this word is generally assumed to be from the Greek, *Kuriou oikos* (house of God); but this is most improbable, as the word existed in all the Celtic dialects long before the introduction of Greek. No doubt the word means “a circle.” The places of worship among the German and Celtic nations were always circular. (Welsh, *cyrch*; French, *cirque*; Scotch, *kirk*; Greek, *kirk-os*, etc.) Compare Anglo-Saxon *circe*, a church, with *circol*, a circle.¹³⁴

Other dictionaries and commentaries suggest that the word “church” derives from the Teutonic *kirk* or *kirche*, a circle of trees used for human sacrifices.

Since the “church” as we know it today owes most of its form and function to its Roman Catholic ancestor, I personally believe that the best explanation is that the word “church” apparently actually refers to the “inner circle” of the Babylonian Mystery Religion (closely related to the Teutonic *kirk* in both form and function).

In the instructions to the translators of the new Bible to be authorized for use by the Church of England, King James I specifically directed, “The old ecclesiastical words to be kept, as the word *church*, not to be translated *congregation*,” and “The names of the prophets and the holy writers, with the other names in the text, to be retained, as near as may be, accordingly as they are vulgarly used.”¹³⁵ In my opinion, these instructions did the world a disservice, in that retaining “the old ecclesiastical words” the anti-Jewish prejudice of virtually all English translations was intentionally perpetuated. [The fact that the King directed the translators to regard church tradition

¹³³ Steve Bydeley, internet article “A Study in the Word Church” <http://www.lapstoneministries.org/church.html>

¹³⁴ Entry “church” in *The Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*, E. Cobham Brewer, 1894.

¹³⁵ Isaac H. Hall, ed., *The Revised New Testament and History of Revision*, giving a literal reprint of the Authorized English Edition of the Revised New Testament, with a brief history of the origin and transmission of the New Testament Scriptures, and of its many versions and revisions that have been made, also a complete history of this last great combined movement of the best scholarship of the world; with reasons for the effort; advantages gained; sketches of the eminent men engaged upon it, etc., etc. prepared under the direction of Professor Isaac H. Hall, LL.B.; Ph. D. Philadelphia: Hubbard Brothers; Atlanta: C.R. Blackall & Co.; New York: A.L. Bancroft & Co., 1881. Accessed online 28 July 2016 at <http://www.bible-researcher.com/kjvhist.html>.

as more important than accurate translation adds to my overall distrust of the KJV.]

In 63 BCE Julius Caesar was officially recognized as the head of the Romanized form of the Babylonian Mystery Religion (which, though many different names are used for the gods and goddesses, is in reality the worship of Nimrod — the king of Babel who built the famous tower, Genesis 10:4-14 — and his mother, the “Queen of Heaven,” who became known as Ishtar), and was given the title of *Pontifex Maximus*, or “supreme bridge” (that is, the supreme bridge between man and the gods). The Roman emperor held that title until 376 CE, when Emperor Gratian rejected it and transferred it to the Bishop of Rome, the Pope, who retains it to this day.

When he became Emperor, Constantine (*Pontifex Maximus* of the Mystery Religion) desired to consolidate his power over both the civil and religious aspects of the Empire (ca. 311). At the time, Judaism (including Messianic Judaism as a subset, or “sect,” of Judaism) was one of the Empire's “authorized” religions. Constantine, who never actually became a Believer in Messiah, simply decreed that his more-inclusive religion, which he called “Christianity,” would be the “official” and only acceptable religion in the Empire.

All Constantine *allegedly* did was to take the Roman version of the Babylon Mystery Religion, dress it up with “Bible words,” and change the names of the pantheon of “gods” and “goddesses” to the names of prominent first-century Messianic Believers, particularly the Apostles. The names of the gods and goddesses were then removed from their statues in Roman temples, their new names were chiseled in, and the “worship” of these gods and goddesses continued as “the veneration of saints.” For example, the mother of Nimrod, who was worshipped as the “Queen of Heaven,” was renamed “Mary” and continued to be worshipped as the “Queen of Heaven,” and the statue of “Peter” that presently stands in the Vatican is actually a statue of the Roman god Jupiter, which has simply been renamed.¹³⁶

The first level of pagan priests under Constantine was supposedly known as the “circle,” and derived that name from their practice of meeting in a circle to worship their chief god, Jupiter, the equivalent of the Greek god Zeus (see the reference to the worship of Circe above). Sun worship (the worship of Saturn) was so prevalent in ancient Rome that they named the first day of the week *Sun-day*, and had a law that no work could be done on *Sun-day* under penalty of death.

Constantine simply appointed the priests from the Mystery Religion as “bishops” (presently called the College of Cardinals) in his new hybrid religion, and he himself continued to rule over them as their “high priest” (*Pontifex Maximus*).

He then called the Council of Nicea, to which only the Gentile bishops were invited, and made the observance of any Jewish tradition punishable by death. Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits were replaced with the Feast of Ishtar (one of the many names of the pagan goddess of fertility—two of the most common symbols of fertility are eggs and rabbits); Shabbat worship was replaced with Sun-day worship; the Lord’s “birthday observance” was moved from Sukkot (Tabernacles) to Saturnalia (the feast of Saturn, Jupiter’s father, observed on December 25); all Hebrew versions

¹³⁶ Woodrow, Ralph. *Babylon Mystery Religion*. Riverside, CA: Ralph Woodrow Evangelistic Association, 1966, pp. 79, 89-91.

The Model for the Messianic Community

of the Scriptures were destroyed [including, I believe, all extant copies of the original Hebrew versions of the Apostolic Scriptures, thus we now have only the remaining Greek copies]; and all Messianic Jewish Believers were given the choice to either become “Gentile Christians” or die.

It is entirely possible that by the time the Bible was finally translated into English, the entire pagan Roman cult had come to be known as “the circle,” and this term was later rendered into Old and Middle English as “church.”

When Tyndale produced the first English translation of the Bible, he correctly translated the word *ekklesia* as “assembly.” However, when King James commissioned the 1611 translation, he specifically decreed that the word be translated using the common term for the Roman cult, “church,” and modern translators have followed that tradition without regard to the actual grammatical meaning of *ekklesia*.

The body of true “Called Out Ones” (*Miqra or Ekklesia*) that Yeshua established—beginning with Avraham—has always survived alongside the apostate versions of both the synagogue and the “church,” just as He predicted in His parable of the wheat and the tares (Matt. 13:1-30). He will sort them all out when He returns to rule over the earth.

[This *opinion* is where my research has currently taken me. The subject is still under serious investigation.]

Chapter 13.

Summary and Conclusions

From our study of the birth and early childhood of Messianic Judaism, we should be able to draw the following conclusions:

1. Yeshua, His *Talmidim*, and His *Shliachim* were all born as Jews, lived their entire lives as Jews, and died as Torah-observant Jews. What other lifestyle could any of them ever even consider?
2. The only “Scriptures” that any of them knew were the *Tanakh*, or Hebrew Bible.
3. The only form of worship that any of them knew was that of the Temple and Synagogues.
4. Since the people of Israel were the only people on earth to have received revelation from the one true God, the only place to learn about Him was in Israel’s Temple/Synagogue environment.
5. Neither Yeshua nor His Shliachim had any intention of starting a “new religion,” but only of explaining and modeling Biblical Judaism as God intended it to be.
6. When Ruach HaKodesh came at Pentecost, those upon whom He fell, and those who came to trust in Messiah that day and in the months and years following, did not stop being Jews; neither has any Jew who has *ever* embraced Messiah stopped being a Jew.
7. With the *possible* (though I think very unlikely) exception of Dr. Luke, all the writers of the Apostolic Scriptures were Torah-observant Jews.¹³⁷
8. Yeshua taught that the entire Tanakh speaks of Him (Luke 24:25-27, 44-47; cp. John 1:45). He also said that if we do not believe (or understand) what Moshe wrote (the Torah), we could not believe (or understand) what He, Yeshua, taught (John 5:46-47). Since the “Church” rejects the Tanakh, and particularly the Torah, as authoritative, how can they possibly understand correctly what Yeshua taught? The letters which His Shliachim wrote about His life and ministry and to explain His teachings that they were commissioned to pass on — and which we have received as the Apostolic Scriptures—can in a very real sense be

¹³⁷ *Lukas* (“Luke”) is a Greek name. If he was not actually Jewish-born, Dr. Luke was most certainly a proselyte to Judaism. Though we don’t know where he was born, it is possible that he was born in the Diaspora. Just as Rav Sha’ul also had a Greek name, Paul, it is (and was) common for Jews to have both a Hebrew name and a name in the vernacular of the country of their birth. Rav Sha’ul was a Pharisee, and each Pharisee was expected to gain one proselyte each year. Since Dr. Luke was so close to Rav Sha’ul, it is possible that he was one of Sha’ul’s proselytes.

considered as God-inspired *midrashim* (commentaries) on the Tanakh, which enable Believers to properly understand both the Tanakh and Yeshua's teaching as interpreted by Ruach HaKodesh through the Shliachim.

9. Since Hebrew was the common language of *Eretz Yisra'el* [the Land of Israel] in the late Second Temple Period,¹³⁸ and "Koine" Greek was the *lingua franca*¹³⁹ of all Goyim in the then-known world, and since the Gospel was to be delivered "to the Jew first, and also to the Greek," the case has been made by some very reputable scholars that the letters of the B'rit Hadasha were very probably originally written in Hebrew (the native tongue of all the writers except *perhaps* Dr. Luke) for transmission to the Jewish Messianic Believers, both in Eretz Yisra'el and in the Diaspora, and were immediately translated into Greek for transmission to the Non-Jewish Messianic Believers. At the very least, the early Church fathers held that the original source document for the Synoptic Gospels was written in Hebrew by *Mattityahu*¹⁴⁰ (see Appendix B). We now have no copies of the original Hebrew manuscripts of those letters because Constantine and the Nicaean Council most likely destroyed them.
10. Though not all Jews in the first century believed that Yeshua was the Messiah, the Jews absolutely did *not* categorically reject their Messiah as is commonly taught. Within less than 20 years after Yeshua's resurrection, perhaps as much as 30 to 40 percent (or more) of the entire city of Jerusalem had become Messianic, as had multiplied tens of thousands of Jews in the Diaspora. There was a far greater percentage of Messianic Believers among first-century Judaism than there is today among the general population of "Christian" America.
11. The Shliachim never established "churches" as we know them, but only declared to all Israel (and to anyone else who would receive the Truth) that Yeshua of Nazareth was the resurrected Messiah promised by God through the Prophets, and that the Goyim (Gentiles) were invited to fully participate in the God, the Covenants, the Torah, the Land, the People, and the Redemption of Israel.
12. From the Exodus from Egypt up through the end of the Second Temple Period, and even until today, non-Jews have always been welcome to participate in Jewish religious life, as long as certain basic forms of "acceptable behavior" are observed.
13. The decree of the Jerusalem Council did not exempt Gentile converts from obedience to the entire Torah, only from circumcision. The Talmud, or "Oral Torah," to which Yeshua referred as "tradition of men" (Mark 7:5-13), although valuable for our understanding, comes from men and not from God, and has *never* been

¹³⁸ "One way that the Jewish people resisted the pagan influence of Greece was by maintaining loyalty to the law of God and by speaking their native language. In the letter of Aristeeas, for example, we discover a reference to the language of the people. The language of the Torah, Hebrew, is said to be the language of the people, though some have confused this with Aramaic. While it would not be correct to say that Hebrew was the only language understood and spoken by the Jewish people during the time of Jesus, there is abundant evidence that indeed the people's holy books, prayers, studies in the classroom, parables, and quite naturally, then, their everyday speech, was conducted in the language of the Bible—Hebrew." (Young, Brad. *Jesus the Jewish Theologian*. Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1999, p. 263.)

¹³⁹ A common language or medium of communication between peoples of different languages. (www.dictionary.com)

¹⁴⁰ Matthew's Hebrew name.

binding upon either Jew or Gentile. Gentile Converts to Messianic Judaism could either go through the formal “conversion” process (including circumcision) and thereby “become Jews” (Proselytes or Converts) and fully embrace all the requirements of *halakah* if they desired to, or they could remain in fellowship with the synagogue as Messianic God-Fearers and embrace that extent of *halakah* they had learned, provided, of course, that the “Minimum Requirements” of decent behavior were observed. Being obedient to at least the moral requirements of Torah, however, was never in question, as God’s divine instruction never changes.

14. For at least the first 45 to 50 years following the Messiah’s Resurrection, Jews, Gentile Converts, and God-Fearers all met together in the same Synagogues. After the *Birkat ha Minim* was introduced into the liturgy (ca. 89-90 CE), it is likely that the first totally Messianic synagogues began to appear, and this process was most certainly greatly accelerated by the declaration of Simon bar Kochba as the Messiah (ca. 135 CE) and expulsion from the Synagogue of those Messianic Jews who refused to acknowledge him as such.
15. God has never repealed the fourth commandment which establishes the seventh day of the week as Shabbat (the Sabbath), nor has He ever condoned the first day of the week as the “appropriate” day of worship. From the giving of the Torah at Sinai to the Council of Nicea in 325 CE, the “Lord’s Day” was observed as the seventh-day Shabbat. Yeshua confirmed this by declaring Himself as “the Lord of Shabbat” (Matthew 12:8; Mark 2:28; Luke 6:5), thus demonstrating that the seventh-day Shabbat (and not the “first day of the week”) was His day, the Lord’s Day. Whenever Messianic Believers are spoken of in the Apostolic Scriptures as being together on “the first day of the week,” it was for the closing ceremony of Shabbat, the Havdalah observance, which began on Shabbat shortly (about 40-45 minutes) after sunset on Saturday evening (according to the western calendar), marking the end of Shabbat and the beginning of the first day of the week.
16. It was not until Constantine blended Roman Paganism with Messianic Judaism that “Christianity” or “the Church” *as we now know it* came into being. With this hybrid religion being the official state religion of the Roman Empire, and every citizen of the empire being a part of this religion, Messianic Jews were suddenly a very small minority of what had suddenly become “Christianity.”¹⁴¹

Thus we can see that “the church” *as we now know it* bears almost no resemblance at all to the Body of Messiah as it existed for the first 300 years following the

¹⁴¹ “Easter,” with its flowers, eggs, bunnies, chicks, and new clothing is nothing but a thinly-veiled observance of the pagan fertility Feast of Ishtar. It has nothing whatever to do with the Resurrection of Messiah, which actually occurred on the Feast of First Fruits that fell “three days and three nights” after the day before the Passover on which Yeshua was executed. “Christmas,” or “Christ-mass,” which literally means a repeated sacrifice of Messiah, likewise has nothing to do with the Birth of Messiah which, as we have demonstrated elsewhere, actually occurred during the Feast of Tabernacles, thus fulfilling the “type” which is portrayed by this biblical feast. (See http://familybible.org/beit_midrash/theology/yeshuas_birthday.html.)

As every high-school Latin student is taught, December 25 is actually Saturnalia, the feast day of the Roman sun god Saturn. It begs the question why Gentile Christianity has seen a need to create new “holidays” based on pagan beliefs and practices, when the Bible provides detailed instructions for observance of all the special feasts and festivals that God ordained millennia ago.

Resurrection, and Scripture tells us that in the *Olam Haba*,¹⁴² the Messianic Kingdom, Messiah will reign from His throne in Jerusalem, Temple worship will be reestablished, people from all the nations will come up to Jerusalem to worship, and the Jewish people will be the leaders of all religious life.

That is to say, the lifestyle (at least the “religious” lifestyle) in the Messianic Kingdom, also known as the Millennium, will be virtually identical to that of the Messianic Community for the first 300 years of its existence, with the addition of the Restored Temple. As the Prophets have written:

But in the *acharit-hayamim*¹⁴³ it will come about that the mountain of ADONAI’s house [the Millennial Temple on Mount Zion in Jerusalem from which Yeshua HaMashiach will reign physically for a thousand years] will be established as the most important mountain. It will be regarded more highly than the other hills, and peoples will stream there. Many Gentiles will go and say, “Come, let’s go up to the mountain of ADONAI, to the house of the God of Ya`akov! He will teach us about his ways, and we will walk in his paths.” For out of Tziyon¹⁴⁴ will go forth Torah, the word of ADONAI from Yerushalayim.¹⁴⁵ He will judge between many peoples and arbitrate for many nations far away. Then they will hammer their swords into plow-blades and their spears into pruning-knives; nations will not raise swords at each other, and they will no longer learn war. Instead, each person will sit under his vine and fig tree, with no one to upset him, for the mouth of ADONAI-Tzva’ot¹⁴⁶ has spoken. ... I will make the lame a remnant and those who were driven off a strong nation.” ADONAI will rule them on Mount Tziyon from that time forth and forever.” (Micah 4:1-4,7; cp. Isaiah 2:2-4)

ADONAI-Tzva’ot says, “The fast days of the fourth, fifth, seventh and tenth months are to become times of joy, gladness and cheer for the house of Y`udah.¹⁴⁷ Therefore, love truth and peace.” ADONAI-Tzva’ot says, “In the future, peoples and inhabitants of many cities will come; the inhabitants of one city will travel to another and say, ‘We must go to ask ADONAI’s favor and consult ADONAI-Tzva’ot. I’ll go too.’” Yes, many peoples and powerful nations will come to consult ADONAI-Tzva’ot in Yerushalayim and to ask ADONAI’s favor.” ADONAI-Tzva’ot says, “When that time comes, ten men will take hold—speaking all the languages of the nations—will grab hold of the cloak¹⁴⁸ of a Jew¹⁴⁹ and say, ‘We want to go with you, because we have heard that God is with you’” (Zechariah 8:19-23).

Although it is clearly evident that Micah, Isaiah, and Zechariah were writing of the *Olam Haba*, the Messianic Kingdom, since the liberation of Jerusalem during the 1967 Six-Day War, we have seen the beginning, or the birth pangs, of the Kingdom Age.

¹⁴² The World to Come.

¹⁴³ Last days.

¹⁴⁴ Zion.

¹⁴⁵ Jerusalem.

¹⁴⁶ YHWH of Hosts.

¹⁴⁷ Judah.

¹⁴⁸ Tallit, or prayer shawl.

¹⁴⁹ Many commentators, particularly within the Messianic Jewish community, believe that this phrase indicates that in the Kingdom Age the ratio of Gentile Believers to Jewish Believers will be approximately ten to one.

When attacked by four Islamic nations (Egypt, Syria, Iraq, and Jordan), against overwhelming odds, Israel was miraculously preserved by God's intervention. In just six days, outgunned by nearly twenty-four to one (based on the total estimated population of all countries involved), tiny Israel (which occupies only an estimated 0.1% of the land mass of the Middle East) had soundly defeated all her surrounding nations and nearly doubled her geographical area, having driven back her enemies far into their own countries.

Since that war, Jewish people from all over the world have been flooding into Israel in fulfillment of God's promise to return His people to His land. According to a *Zola Levitt Presents* broadcast in May of 2004, slightly over half of the world's Jewish population now resides in Israel. In 2000 and 2004, symbolic Paschal Lamb sacrifices were made on the Hill of Hananiah and the Mount of Olives, respectively, both within view of the site of the Holy of Holies.¹⁵⁰ And the list goes on.

Many have said that the *olam hazeh* (the world which now is) is provided as a "school" in which each person is given the opportunity to decide whether or not he or she chooses to live forever under the Kingship of God in the *Olam Haba* (the world which is to come) and, if so, to learn the proper way to live there.

If the life-style of the Messianic Kingdom, when Messiah returns to reign physically from His throne in Jerusalem, is going to be the same as the life-style of the early Messianic Community, does it not stand to reason that this is the life-style that He would prefer us to live now? And if we plan on living forever in the *Olam Haba*, the future Kingdom of God, in the lifestyle of the early Messianic Community, doesn't it only make good sense to start learning how to live that lifestyle right now, right here in the *olam hazeh*?

As I said at the beginning of our journey together, much of the information I have presented here is highly speculative and is certainly open to interpretations other than my own. But still, to my mind, it would have been a very strange thing indeed for Jewish believers in a Jewish Messiah, steeped in centuries of Jewish culture and led by Jewish Rabbis (the Apostles) equipped with Jewish Scriptures and meeting in Jewish synagogues, to have constructed anything remotely resembling today's predominantly Gentile church.

Many Christian congregations like to refer to themselves as a "first-century church," and they earnestly strive to live that lifestyle *as they understand it*. If you are a Believer in Yeshua as Israel's Messiah who earnestly wishes to live as a true "first-century Believer," it my hope and prayer that this brief study would encourage you to carefully reevaluate your faith and practice in light of what I sincerely believe the first-century Messianic Community *actually* looked like, and what the Messianic Kingdom and the *Olam Haba* is also going to look like. The answers you seek, and the "first-century church" that you are striving to emulate, may be found in the pages of the Torah!

If you have read this far, you may well be asking yourself, "Why is this fellow making such a big deal out of all this? Just who does he think he is, anyway, telling us that so much of what we hold dear—what the Church has been teaching for nearly

¹⁵⁰ www.templemountfaithful.org/Events/pesach2004.htm and www.templemountfaithful.org/pesach2000.htm

two thousand years—is wrong? *So what* if the Church chooses to ignore God’s Sabbath and worship on Sunday instead? *So what* if the Church chooses to ignore God’s seven eternal Appointed Times and celebrate Christmas and Easter the way they want to? *So what* if the Church chooses to elect or appoint unqualified elders and deacons who do not live up to the Biblical standards for leadership? *So what* if the Church chooses to *hire*¹⁵¹ “preachers” to tickle their ears and fire them when they teach what they think the Scriptures say instead of what the parishioners want to hear? *So what* if the Church chooses to be inclusive and welcome into full membership those who live a lifestyle that God calls an abomination? What’s the difference, anyway?”

That’s a fair enough question, and it deserves an answer. I am not in any way *condemning* those who choose to live a Gentile lifestyle, to worship on the first day of the week, and to observe Easter and Christmas as religious holidays; it is not my place to either judge or condemn.¹⁵² It is far better that you worship the Creator of the Universe on those days than to not worship Him at all!

However, Yeshua taught us, “You will know *the truth*, and *the truth* will set you free” (John 8:32). He clearly intended His followers to know and obey “the truth.” But in recent decades our society has been taught that there is no such thing as “objective truth,” that “truth” is “whatever works for you.” In a popular motion picture of the late 1990s, there is a scene in which an older, experienced attorney tells a younger attorney, “The only truth that matters is the truth that I create for the jury in that courtroom.”

Many, or perhaps even most, people today feel that every individual is responsible for creating his or her own version of “truth”—the Buddhist, the Hindu, the Moslem, the Christian, or the Jew is each entitled to his own “truth.” And even within Christianity, each of the more than 45,000 denominations is entitled to create its own “truth,” just like the lawyer in the movie.

But for the person who would be faithful to the King of the Universe,¹⁵³ faithful to Him Who is revealed in the pages of Scripture, there can be one, and only one, single, absolute “Truth.” And it is up to each Believer to strive for the knowledge and understanding of that one absolute Truth (see Appendix I).

¹⁵¹ The biblical process is for qualified elders to appoint a teaching elder from their own congregation. (John 10:12-12; 1 Tim. 3:1-7; Titus 1:5)

¹⁵² For those Gentile Christians who have an interest in “Jewish evangelism,” the burning question is, “how is it possible for a Jew to be saved *outside of the Church*?” For me, the burning question is, “how is it possible for a Gentile to be saved *in the Church*?” I believe that “the Church,” having deliberately rejected God’s Torah and His holy Appointed Times and replaced them with their own rules of congregational government and personal conduct and their own liturgical calendar, is in a state of apostasy, and is trying to approach God on their own terms, expecting God to honor their human efforts in spite of the fact that the Tanakh is replete with examples of God rejecting those who failed to approach Him in the prescribed manner; for example, Cain’s unacceptable sacrifice, the death of Aaron’s sons for offering unholy fire, the whole affair of the golden calf, and the kingdom being wrenched from King Saul for offering an unauthorized sacrifice. I cannot help but wonder if the current apostasy of the Gentile Church is what Yeshua was thinking about when He said, “... but the Son of Man having come, shall he find the faith upon the earth?” (Luke 18:8, Young’s Literal Translation)

¹⁵³ Traditional Hebrew *b’rakhot* (blessings) begin with the phrase, “Blessed are you, ADONAI our God, King of the Universe.”

The Truth is either that the King of the Universe has different standards of righteousness for different groups of people or that he has one standard of righteousness for everybody. Scripture says that God is no respecter of persons (Acts 10:34-35).

The Truth is either that the King of the Universe has repealed *all* His commandments or that He has repealed *none* of them, not even the Fourth Commandment. The Scriptures say that His word is absolutely true, that every single one of His righteous ordinances is everlasting, and that not even the smallest letter or smallest portion of a letter of His instruction will be done away with until all Scripture has been completely fulfilled (Psalm 119:160; Matt. 5:18).

The Truth is either that the King of the Universe has given us His “grace” to free us from the requirements of His divine instruction for righteousness (Torah) so that we may live any way we wish to and to set our own standards for coming into His presence, or that His “grace” frees us from the penalty of sin and from the power of sin and *gives us the ability* to live in obedience to His divine instruction for righteousness and fellowship with Him (Torah).

The Truth is either that the King of the Universe has decreed that anyone may come into His presence in any way they see fit, or that there is only *one way* to come into His presence. Yeshua taught that nobody may come to the Father except through Him (John 14:6), and the Biblical record shows what happens to those who try to approach God in their own way (Lev. 10:1; 1 Sam. 8-14).

The Truth is either that that we may replace God’s appointed times and seasons with festivals that are rooted in paganism and expect God to bless them, or that the King of the Universe has established certain “appointed feasts, the appointed feasts of the LORD, which you are to proclaim as sacred assemblies” (Lev. 23:1-2) and He expects us to observe them just as our Messiah did (Luke 2:41; Luke 4:16; Luke 22; John 5:1; John 7:1-13; John 10:22-23).

If the President of the United States sent you a letter asking you to come to the White House at 6:00 p.m. Friday evening to have dinner, stay overnight, and spend all day Saturday with him, would you show up at the appointed time or would you just pop in on him at 10:00 a.m. on Sunday morning? If your elder brother’s birthday were in mid-September, would you insist on sending his birthday card at the end of December? If your best friend’s name were Fred, would you insist on calling him Bob? Does the King of the Universe deserve less respect than the President of the United States, or your elder brother, or your best friend?

If you are a Gentile Believer in the Messiah, the Scriptures declare that you have been adopted into the family of Avraham (Israel) and have been invited to fully participate in the God, the Covenants, the Torah, the Land, the People, and the Redemption of Israel. I heartily encourage you to fully embrace that invitation and participate in that wonderful experience. It will change your life, your understanding of the Scriptures, and your relationship to your Savior and to His Bride.

Glossary

Apostolic Scriptures or **Apostolic Writings**: the collection of divinely-inspired *midrashic* letters written by the Messianic Jewish Rabbis of the first century to help Believers in Yeshua the Messiah to properly interpret the Torah. These documents are included in English Bibles as the so-called “New Testament.” I believe the choice of the term “New Testament” is both historically and theologically unfortunate, because it forces an incorrect understanding of the true nature of both the Tanakh (the Hebrew Bible, see below) and the Apostolic Scriptures. The word “New” forces a comparison with something else that is automatically assumed to be “Old,” which in turn suggests related terms like obsolete, passé, superseded, and outdated. This term has produced the incorrect theological interpretation that the “New Testament” or “New Covenant” has somehow replaced and superseded the “Old Testament” or “Old Covenant.”

In His “Sermon on the Mount,” Yeshua made it perfectly clear that the Tanakh [or Hebrew Bible, see below] will *never* become obsolete or superseded:

“Don’t think that I came to destroy the law or the prophets.¹⁵⁴ I didn’t come to destroy, but to fulfill [a term used by both ancient and modern rabbis to mean “interpret correctly”]. For most assuredly, I tell you, until heaven and *eretz* [earth] pass away, not even one smallest letter or one tiny pen stroke shall in any way pass away from the law [Torah, also used to indicate the entire Tanakh, see below], until all things are accomplished. Whoever, therefore, shall break one of these least *mitzvot* [instructions, commandments, including the seventh-day Shabbat], and teach others to do so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven.” (Matthew 5:17-19)

Just as the Bill of Rights expands, explains, and clarifies the intent of the Constitution of the United States, so the B’rit Hadasha expands, explains, and clarifies the intent of the Tanakh, which is the “Constitution” of the Kingdom of God. Thus, just as the Amendments to the Constitution of the United States become part and parcel of that Constitution, so the B’rit Hadasha likewise becomes part and parcel of the Tanakh.

B’rakhah [pl. b’rahkot], blessing. Nearly every Jewish prayer begins with the words “*Baruch atah Adonai Eloheinu, melech ha-olam*. Blessed are you, ADONAI our God, King of the universe.”

¹⁵⁴ **Torah** (Law or Pentateuch), **Nevi’im** (Prophets), and **Kituvim** (Writings), are the three divisions of the Tanakh (TNK). The phrase “Torah and Nevi’im” (the Law and the Prophets) is a Hebrew idiom used to refer to the entire Tanakh.

B'rit Hadasha [Renewed Covenant]: see Apostolic Scriptures.

BCE and **CE**: **B**efore the **C**ommon **E**ra and Common Era; same as BC and AD, but less offensive to non-Messianic Jews who (rightfully) resent being forced to acknowledge the calendar as being defined by the birth of a Messiah they can't understand, and therefore can't accept.

Challah: a special kind of very sweet, golden, egg bread used for Shabbat and holidays. The taste and texture are somewhat similar to egg twist rolls (little yellow rolls that look like knots). The loaf is usually braided, but on certain holidays it may be made in other shapes.

Eretz: ארץ earth, land, ground.

Eretz Yisra'el: the Land of Israel.

Gemara: a collection of legal and ethical discussions by the rabbis of the third through the fifth centuries, edited about 500 CE; together with the Mishnah, it forms the Talmud.

Goy: גוי (pl. *goyim*; lit. *nation*) anybody who is not a physical descendant of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov (Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob); a non-Jewish person.

HaMashiach: המשיח the Messiah. Literally “the Anointed One.” See Mashiach, below.

Halakah: הלכה (alt. *halakhah*, *halachah*, *chalachah*) the way one goes, the walk; the word for Jewish law, or for the legal and regulatory portions of Torah and of the Talmud and, by extension, of all Jewish lore.

Havdalah: הבדלה (lit. make a separation) ceremony that marks the end of the Sabbath and the beginning of the week; the blessing spoken over wine to mark the difference between the Sabbath and the weekdays.

Kiddush: קדש (alt. *Kidush*) blessing recited or chanted over wine on Shabbat or festivals emphasizing their holiness: “*Barukh atah Adonai Elohaynu melekh ha-olam, borei p'riy ha-gafen. Amein*. Blessed are You, Lord, our God, King of the Universe, who creates the fruit of the vine. Amen.” To pour out the first cup of wine, or the blessing of sanctification; by extension, a light meal after the wine.

Kohen: כהן (alt. *cohen*, *cohan*; pl. *kohenim*; *kohanim*, *cohanim*) descendant of the ancient priestly class, the descendants of Aaron; a priest.

Kohen Gadol: כהן גדול (alt. *Kohen haGadol*, *Cohen haGadol*, *Cohen Gadol*; pl. *Kohanim Gedolim*) the High Priest.

Mashiach: משיח (alt. *moshiach*, *mashiyach*, *mashiyakh*) lit. “the Anointed One.” Messiah. The Jews anointed three classes of people: prophets, priests, and kings. Yeshua HaMashiach was all three. The equivalent Greek term is *Christos*, from whence comes the word “Christ.”

Messianic Community: the called-out community of Believers in Messiah; refers to the entire Body of Messiah as a whole, as well as to the local congregation. I personally use the terms Miqra (which see), Messianic Community, and Body of Messiah interchangeably. The Messianic Community is to be carefully distinguished from the organized Gentile “Christian Church” in that I believe “the church,” as it presently

exists, is seriously contaminated with pagan beliefs and practices¹⁵⁵ and, because of a theology of “cheap grace” and a basically “open door policy” of admitting members, consists of only perhaps as many as ten to twenty percent truly born-again Believers in Messiah. For more information on this idea, see John Warwick Montgomery, *Damned through the Church*. Minneapolis: Bethany House Publishers, 1970. ISBN: 0871230909 (currently out of print, but you may find copies on the Internet or in used bookstores).

Midrash: מדרש (pl. *Midrashim*) (1) homiletic interpretation of the Scriptures; exegesis; commentary; (2) a collection of works compiled between the third and twelfth centuries that seeks out underlying truths and meanings of the Bible; they are largely the result of the process of delving into the ramifications of a biblical verse and of the ancient rabbis’ practice of reading “between the lines” of Scripture.

Mikvah: מקוה (1) a pool of water conforming to certain dimensions and specifications, and connected to “living” water, used for legal and spiritual purposes; also called in Latin a *ritularium*; (2) the ritual act of bathing or of being immersed in the mikvah pool. Christian “baptism” by immersion is an equivalent practice, except that in Christian baptism the act is actually performed upon the recipient by a pastor,

¹⁵⁵ The following are but a few examples of paganism in “the Church:”

- God specifically ordained the Shabbat, the seventh day of the week, as a perpetual day of worship to be observed by *all* His people. With extremely rare exceptions, “the Church” has replaced the God-ordained day of worship with the pagan “Sun-day”— the day the pagan Roman religion dedicated to the Roman sun god. “The Church” generally refers to this pagan observance as “the Lord’s Day,” and some actually consider those who faithfully observe the LORD’S Shabbat as heretics, legalists, and/or “Judaizers.”
- God ordained the feasts of Passover, Unleavened Bread, and First Fruits as Biblical symbols of the Messiah’s death, His sinless life, and His resurrection, and He established specific dates on which they are to be observed. Not only does “the Church” disobediently fail to observe these sacred days, but they have also moved them far from their biblical dates, replacing them with the pagan Feast of Ishtar (Easter), with all its fertility symbolism, and passing it off as a so-called celebration of the Messiah’s resurrection. Even in that, they have moved the observance of “Resurrection Day” far from the anniversary of the date on which the Resurrection actually occurred.
- The celebration of Messiah’s birth has been moved from its rightful place during the Feast of Tabernacles (Sukkot) to Saturnalia, the feast day of the false Roman god Saturn, on what is now December 25 on the modern calendar, and has given it the name “Christ-mass” which, according to Roman Catholic theology, is a ritualized repetition of Messiah’s murder.
- The night of the annual high holy day of Satan worship has been renamed “Halloween,” which is a contraction for Hallowed (or Holy) Evening, and the observance of this Satanic holy day is permitted by most churches and promoted by many of them.
- Many congregations “vote” on the admission of new members, or permit new members to join, with a total disregard for the spiritual status of those new members; as a result, many congregations are composed mostly of non-Believers.
- The Apostolic Scriptures specify that all congregational leaders are to be appointed to their positions by other spiritually qualified leadership based upon their spiritual qualifications; see Acts 14:23; 15:22; Titus 1:5-7, 1 Timothy 3:1-7, 1 Timothy 3:8-13. However, in most congregations, members elect leaders based on popularity or as a reward for services rendered, such as being a generous contributor, or simply because someone happens to be willing to assume the responsibility of the office at the time.
- Most congregations are operated as democratic organizations with the congregation voting on most decisions. In the Apostolic Scriptures, appointed leaders (Pastor/Teachers or Elders) are to provide benevolent leadership in the best spiritual interest of the congregation, and members are to follow that leadership; see 1 Tim. 5:17; Titus 3:1; 1 Pet. 5:1-5; Heb. 13:17; 2 Cor. 2:9, 1 Thess. 5:12,. Most congregations in America simply “hire” a pastor or minister, based on academic or professional qualifications while giving little, if any, attention to spiritual qualifications, and make that hireling subject to the whims of boards, committees, and even the membership in general.

The list of pagan and humanist practices in “the Church” goes on and on.

whereas the mikvah is performed by the individual him/herself either alone or under the supervision or observation of the Rabbi.

Miqra: מִקְרָא (alt. *miqrah*, *mikra*, *mikrah*) a calling together; convocation, assembly, especially for worship and for the performance of sacred rites; indicates something or someone “called out” [for that assembly]; a public meeting (the act, the persons, or the place); also a rehearsal, assembly, calling, convocation, reading; in the NASB translated as assemblies (2 times), assembly (2), convocation (14), convocations (3), reading (1), summoning (1). Similar to Greek ἐκκλησία (*ekklesia*), called-out ones, which is erroneously translated “church” in the King James Version, and which error has continued in later English translations of the Scriptures. There is simply no valid linguistic reason for either translating the word *ekklesia* or for referring to the people of Messiah as “the church” — it is only a Gentile tradition with roots in paganism. See also Messianic Community, above.

Mishnah: code of Jewish oral law edited by Rabbi Judah HaNasi (c. 135 to 220 C.E.) about 200 C.E.; together with the Gemara forms the Talmud.

Mishpachah: מִשְׁפָּחָה (alt. *mishpocha*) clan, family, tribe, people, nation.

Olam Haba: עוֹלָם הַבָּא the world to come; in Hebrew thought refers both to the afterlife and to the Messianic Kingdom. There is no formal Jewish “doctrine” concerning either the Messianic Kingdom or the afterlife, because traditional Judaism is more about living righteously in the here and now than it is about what happens after we die. Many Jews believe that when Messiah comes there will be a general resurrection of the dead, and all Israel plus the righteous from all the nations will have a share in the Olam Haba, but mostly they just don’t think in terms of a “heaven or hell” afterlife as most Gentiles do.

Pilgrim Festival/Feast: *Shalosh Regalim* — Three times a year (Pesach, Shavu`ot, and Sukkot) the Torah requires all Israel to go in joyous celebration to Jerusalem. [If anyone would try to coerce you into being overly “Torah-observant,” simply remind him/her that in order to be completely “Torah-observant” he/she *must* attend these three Feasts in Jerusalem *every year*.]

Pesach: פֶּסַח (alt. *Pesah*; pl. *Pesachim*) Passover. Memorializes the night when the Hebrews were protected by the blood of lambs, a type of when God’s people are redeemed by the blood of The Lamb of God. One of three pilgrim festivals to Jerusalem.

Principles of Faith: Rambam’s (which see) thirteen principles of faith, which he taught were the minimum requirements of Jewish belief, are:

1. God exists
2. God is one and unique
3. God is incorporeal
4. God is eternal
5. Prayer is to be directed to God alone and to no other
6. The words of the prophets are true
7. Moses’ prophecies are true, and Moses was the greatest of the prophets
8. The Written Torah (first five books of the Bible) and Oral Torah (teachings now contained in the Talmud and other writings) were given to Moses
9. There will be no other Torah

10. God knows the thoughts and deeds of men
11. God will reward the good and punish the wicked
12. The Messiah will come
13. The dead will be resurrected¹⁵⁶

Rabbi: רבני (lit. my great one, my honorable sir, simply a title of respect) a Jewish teacher or religious authority (pl. *rabanim*); the spiritual leaders of most Messianic congregations are referred to as “Rabbi” if they are Jewish and as “Pastor” if they are non-Jewish; there is no difference in their function. Additionally, many of the Messianic Pastors *voluntarily* defer to a Messianic Rabbi to function as their advisor or mentor. In some Messianic groups, oversight of several congregations which have Non-Jewish Messianic Pastors will be assigned to a Messianic Rabbi, who functions much the same as a Bishop does in several Christian denominations.

Rambam: (Maimonides; Rabbi Moshe ben Maimon, 1135-1204 CE) A physician born in Moorish Cordoba, Rambam lived in a variety of places throughout the Moorish lands of Spain, the Middle East and North Africa, often fleeing persecution. He was a leader of the Jewish community in Cairo. He was heavily influenced by Greek thought, particularly that of Aristotle.

Rambam was the author of the *Mishneh Torah*, one of the greatest codes of Jewish law, compiling every conceivable topic of Jewish law in subject matter order and providing a simple statement of the prevailing view in plain language. In his own time, he was widely condemned because he claimed that the *Mishneh Torah* was a substitute for studying the Talmud.

Rambam is also responsible for several important theological works. He developed the 13 Principles of Faith (which see, above), the most widely accepted list of Jewish beliefs. He also wrote the *Guide for the Perplexed*, a discussion of difficult theological concepts written from the perspective of an Aristotelian philosopher.¹⁵⁷

Rav: רב (lit. great, strong, captain, chief) a Sage of the Talmud; shortened form of *Rabbi*.

Ruach HaKodesh: רוח הקודש Holy Spirit (lit. Holy Breath); the Spirit of Mashiach.

Shabbat: שבת (lit. end, cease, rest) the Jewish Sabbath, a day of rest and spiritual enrichment.

Shliach: שליח (pl. *shliachim*, *shluchim*) to send or to be sent; an emissary, one sent forth with the full power and authority of the sender; the Greek equivalent is *Apostle*. Today’s ambassadors from Israel to other countries or to the United Nations are called *Shliachim* in Hebrew.

Sha’ul: שאול probably best-known and least understood of all Messianic Rabbis, he was Yeshua’s Shliach sent primarily to the Goyim [Gentiles], and was the writer of approximately half the letters of the *B’rit Hadasha*. Also known as the Apostle Paul of Tarsus.

¹⁵⁶ www.jewfaq.org/beliefs.htm.

¹⁵⁷ Rich, *op. cit.*, www.jewfaq.org/sages.htm#Rambam.

Shavu`ot: שבוע (alt. *Shavuoth*, sg. *Shavuah*; lit. *weeks*) The Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (50 days); one of the three Pilgrim Feasts. The 50th day from Yom Habikkurim memorializes the receiving of the Torah, and the beginning of the wheat harvest. Also, it represents the betrothal between Israel and the LORD. It was on this day that Ruach HaKodesh came to permanently indwell the Miqra (Acts 2) as the “down-payment” or the “bride price.”

Shem Kodesh or Shem HaKodesh: שם הקדש religious name; most Jewish males have two names—a religious name, called the *shem kodesh* (or *shem hakodesh*), and a secular name, called the *kinnui* in Hebrew. The religious name is a Hebrew name, and the secular name is in whatever vernacular language is in use. Observant American Jews today, for example, have both a religious Hebrew name and a secular English name. Among the Jews of Eastern Europe, Yiddish was the everyday or secular language, so they had a religious Hebrew name and a secular Yiddish name, the *kinnui*. In France, the secular name is in French; in ancient Babylonia, the *kinnui* was in Babylonian; etc.

Shemoneh Esrei: שמונה עשרה (lit. eighteen) a prayer that is the center of any Jewish religious service. Also known as the *Amidah* [standing] or the *Tefilah* [prayer].

Sukkot: סוכה (alt. *Sukot*; sg. *sukkah*, *sukah*) booths, temporary dwellings; name of the festival that commemorates the Israelites’ wanderings in the desert after leaving Egypt; the Feast of Tabernacles (Booths); One of three Pilgrim Feasts. The biblical feast given to Israel by the LORD as a picture of when He, as HaMeshiach, would dwell (literally “tabernacle”) among men. Fulfilled as the birthday of Yeshua (see Appendix H).

Talmid: תלמיד (fem. *talmidah*; pl. *talmidim*) disciple, student; a true talmid does not only want to *know* what the teacher *knows*, he/she wants to *become* what the teacher *is* [this of course presupposes that the teacher is worth emulating].

Talmud: the two commentaries on the Mishnah, one produced in Eretz Yisra'el about 275 CE, the other in Babylonia about 500 CE; the designation for both the Mishnah and the commentaries on it (Gemara). The Talmud is the collected legal and ethical discussions of the rabbis.

Tanakh: תנ"ך (alt. *Tanach* or *Tenakh*) an acronym (TNK) for the three divisions of the Hebrew Bible; **T**orah (Instruction, incorrectly translated as “Law”), **N**evi'im (Prophets), and **K**'tuvim (Writings).

Torah: תורה (1) teaching or instruction, but usually erroneously translated “law”; (2) divine instruction from God; (3) in its most narrow sense, the Five Books of Moshe (Moses), the Pentateuch — B'resheet (Genesis), Sh'mot (Exodus), Vayikra (Leviticus), B'midbar (Numbers), D'varim (Deuteronomy), called the “Written Torah” and hand written on a parchment scroll; (4) the Torah plus the Prophets (Nevi'im) and Writings (K'tuvim) are together called the **TaNaKh** (*Tanakh*, above), the Hebrew Bible, or the so-called “Old Testament”; (5) in a broad sense, the whole written Word of God is the Torah, including both the Tanakh and the B'rit Hadasha; (6) in its broadest sense, “Torah” is all of Judaism, which flows from those books. Additional material called the “Talmud” or “Oral Torah” is considered in varying degrees as authoritative in traditional Judaism. Uncapitalized, the word can be understood as “principle.”

Torah-observant: walking in yielded obedience to the teaching of the Scriptures; in traditional Judaism this includes obeying the complex instructions of the Talmud as well.

Yeshua: ישוע Rabbi Yeshua ben Yosef. Son of the Most High, Messiah of Israel, God's Anointed One, the Name which is above every name, also called "Jesus" of Nazareth. This name, which God the Father commanded through the angel that Miriam and Yosef call their son, the Messiah, literally means "Yahweh's Salvation," or alternatively, "Yahweh is Salvation". The name became "Jesus" through the normal process of transiting through the chain of languages: Hebrew to Greek to German to Latin to Elizabethan English to modern English. When the Hebrew name ישוע is transliterated into Greek, it becomes IEZY (or IESU), and the Greeks generally add an "S" to the end of masculine names, making it read Ἰησοῦς (IESOUS), which becomes IESUS when transliterated into Latin. When the Latin and Greek versions of the Apostolic Scriptures were translated into German and English, the "I" was changed to "J" (which wasn't added to the alphabet until the 14th to 17th centuries), evolving the Hebrew name Yeshua into "Jesus"—a "made-up" word which is, by the way, absolutely impossible to say in either Hebrew or Aramaic, as neither language has the equivalent of the "jay" sound. Nobody who ever knew the Messiah in the flesh could possibly have called him "Jesus" because the word could not be pronounced in their language.

Yom haBikkurim: יום הבכורים The Day of First Fruits, barley harvest, the day from which we start counting the Omer 50 days to Shavu'ot (Pentecost). The first Shabbat following Passover. Given by God as a teaching picture of Messiah's resurrection.

Yom ha-Kippurim: יום כפּפּרים *Yom Kippur* (alt. *Kipur*) The Day of Atonement; The Great Fast.

Zaken: זקן (alt. *zaqen*, *zeken*; pl. *zakenim* or *zekenim*) elder (-est), aged, old or ancient man or woman, senator; leader of a local Messianic Community; pastor.

Appendices

Appendix A. Tisha b'Av and 17 Tammuz

*A brief listing of infamous events that took place on
Tisha B'Av and 17 Tammuz throughout history*

Moshe declared 17 Tammuz and 9 Av (21 days apart) as special Fast Days of Mourning annually. Zechariah said that in the Messianic Kingdom, however, these Fast Days would become Feast Days of celebration. Originally, the fast was observed on the Ninth of Tammuz because that was the day Jerusalem fell before the destruction of the First Temple in 586 BCE. However, after Jerusalem fell on the 17th of Tammuz—before the destruction of the Second Temple—the Sages combined both tragedies into a single observance on the 17th of Tammuz.

The Fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz

Mentioned by the prophet Zechariah (Zech. 8:19) as “the fast of the fourth month,” the 17th of Tammuz marks the beginning of the destruction of Jerusalem. On this day in 70 CE, the Romans breached the walls encircling Jerusalem, which led to the destruction of the Second Temple. During the siege preceding the first destruction of the Temple in 587 BCE, the Babylonians breached the walls on the ninth of Tammuz (Jeremiah 39:2), but both events are commemorated on the same date. The Temple's actual destruction took place on the 9th of Av—both in 587 BCE and 70 CE. (See Tisha B'Av, below.)

“Five catastrophes befell our fathers on the 17th of Tammuz: the tablets (of the Covenant) were broken, the daily Temple sacrifices were suspended, the walls to the city were breached, Apostamus burned a Torah scroll, and an idol was erected in the Temple” (Ta'an 26a). The tablets were broken because Moses ascended Mount Sinai on the 7th of Sivan, remained there for 40 days, and descended to find the people worshipping the Golden Calf on the 17th of Tammuz. The daily sacrifices were suspended during the civil [*sic.*] of the Hasmoneans John Hyrcanus and Aristobulus because the Greeks at that time laid siege to Jerusalem and there was no access to sacrificial animals.¹⁵⁸ The inhabitants of Jerusalem would lower money over the city wall in a basket, and the enemy would send up lambs

¹⁵⁸ I have not been unable to determine the source of this quote. The extremely awkward wording of this sentence fragment is presented exactly as I found it written identically on eight or nine different web sites.

in return. “On one occasion, a pig was sent up instead, and it dug its hooves into the wall, and the earth shook over an area of 500 parasangs ... Apostamus burned the Torah scroll.”

It is not known precisely to what this refers. However, some identify it with the incident in which the Roman procurator discovered a Torah scroll, desecrated it, and burned it.

For “traditional” Jews, this day is observed by fasting. The fast begins at sunrise and ends at sunset. This applies to all fasts, with the exception of Yom Kippur and Tisha B’Av, both of which begin on the preceding night. Fasting is the only restriction imposed; working and bathing as usual are permitted.

The fast of the Seventeenth of Tammuz extends only from dawn until dark. During the Shaharit service, the community recites special penitential prayers (*selihots*). The Torah is read at both Shaharit and Minhah services, and a haftarah (prophetic reading) is chanted as on other fast days. The Seventeenth of Tammuz initiates a period of mourning, known as *bein ha-metzarim*, “between the straits,” which concludes three weeks later with the fast of Tishah be-Av.

The Three Weeks and the Nine Days

For the traditional, the days between the 17th of Tammuz and the 9th of Av are considered days of mourning, for they witnessed the collapse of Jerusalem. In the Ashkenazi Jewish *minhag* (custom), weddings and other joyful occasions are traditionally not held in this period.

A further element is added within the three weeks, during the nine days between the 1st and 9th day of Av. During this period, the pious refrain from eating meat and drinking wine, except on Shabbat or at a Seudat Mitzvah (such as a Pidyon Haben or completing the study of a religious text). Many minhags ban cutting one’s hair during this period. However, the length of time varies: some refrain only during the week in which Tisha B’Av falls.

Tisha B’Av (Av 9)

This is the saddest day of the Jewish calendar. On this day both the First and Second Temples were destroyed (587 BCE and 70 CE). On this day in 1290, King Edward I signed the edict compelling the Jews to leave England. The Jewish expulsion from Spain also occurred on this day in 1492. Tisha B’av also marked the outbreak of World War I. The date is also associated with the final collapse of the abortive revolt (135 CE).

Year	Day	Event
	17 Tammuz	Noah sent the dove out of the ark to see if the waters had receded. (Genesis 8:9)
	17 Tammuz	Joseph and Samuel are born 40 weeks after 1 Tishrei.
	17 Tammuz	Moshe broke the tablets at Mount Sinai in response to the sin of the Golden Calf. Levites kill 3000 Israelites and become set apart for HaShem. (Exodus 32:25-29)
	17 Tammuz	Moshe's spies search out the promised land. Day 19 (Numbers 13, 14 Mishna, Ta'anit 29a)
-1312	9 Av	Spies return from 40 days in Israel with evil reports of the Land of Israel. Jewish people cry in despair, give up hope of entering the Land of Israel.
-587	17 Tammuz	The daily offerings in the First Temple were suspended during the siege of Jerusalem, after the Kohanim could no longer obtain animals.
-587	9 Av	Destruction of the First Temple by the Babylonians, under Nebuchadnezzar. About 100,000 Jews were killed during the invasion. Exile of the remaining tribes in the southern kingdom to Babylon and Persia.
-168	17 Tammuz	Antiochus defiled the Temple by offering a slaughtered pig on its altar and spreading pig's blood and entrails on the walls and inner parts of the Holy of Holies in the Temple. This was the "abomination of desolation" foretold by Dani'el and was also a precursor to the antichrist who will come in the End Times.
70	17 Tammuz	Jerusalem's walls were breached before the destruction of the Second Temple.
70	9 Av	The Romans, under Titus, destroyed the Second Temple. Over 2,500,000 Jews died from war, famine, and disease. Over 1,000,000 Jews were exiled to all parts of the Roman Empire. Over 100,000 Jews were sold as slaves by Romans. Jews were killed and tortured in gladiatorial "games" and pagan celebrations.
71	9 Av	Turnus Rufus plows the site of the Temple. Romans build pagan city of Aelia Capitolina on site of Jerusalem.
134	17 Tammuz	Prior to the Great Revolt, the Roman general Apostamos the Wicked burned a Torah scroll, setting a precedent for the horrifying burning of Jewish books throughout the centuries ¹⁵⁹ .
135	9 Av	Bar Kochba revolt crushed. Betar destroyed - over 100,000 killed.

¹⁵⁹ Some sources claim that Apostamos was a Roman general and that this event occurred just prior to the Bar Kochba revolt. Other sources claim that Apostamos was a general of Antiochus and that this event occurred ca. 168 BCE.

The Model for the Messianic Community

Year	Day	Event
1095	9 Av	Pope Urban II declared the First Crusade. 10,000 Jews were killed in the first month of the Crusade. Crusades brought death and destruction to thousands of Jews, totally obliterating many communities in the Rhineland and France.
1239	17 Tammuz	Pope Gregory IX ordered the confiscation of all Talmud manuscripts. (Was this when the Hebrew manuscripts of the Messianic Scriptures disappeared?)
1290	9 Av	Expulsion of Jews from England, accompanied by pogroms and confiscation of books and property.
1391	17 Tammuz	More than 4,000 Spanish Jews were killed in Toledo and Jaen, Spain
1492	9 Av	Inquisition in Spain and Portugal culminates in the expulsion of the Jews from the Iberian Peninsula. King Ferdinand of Spain issued the expulsion decree, setting Tisha B'Av as the final date by which not a single Jew would be allowed to walk on Spanish soil. Families were separated; many died by drowning, and there was a massive loss of property. With funds from Ferdinand, Christopher Columbus, a Messianic Jew, set sail to find the land that would become a Jewish refuge until the State of Israel was reborn in 1948.
1559	17 Tammuz	The Jewish Quarter of Prague was burned and looted.
1776	17 Tammuz	United States of America gained its independence from England and became a place of religious freedom for both Jews and Gentiles for over 200 years.
1914	9 Av	Britain and Russia declare war on Germany. First World War begins. First World War issues unresolved, ultimately causing Second World War and Holocaust. 75% of all Jews were in war zones. Jews in armies of all sides - 120,000 Jewish casualties in armies. Over 400 pogroms immediately following the war in Hungary, Ukraine, Poland, and Russia.
1942	9 Av	Deportations from the Warsaw Ghetto to the Treblinka concentration camp begin.
1944	17 Tammuz	The entire population of the Kovno ghetto was sent to the death camps
1970	17 Tammuz	Libya ordered the confiscation of all Jewish property.
1989	9 Av	Iraq walks out of talks with Kuwait.
1994	9 Av	The deadly bombing of the AMIA building (the Jewish community center in Buenos Aires, Argentina), which killed 86 people and wounded some 300 others.

Appendix B. Evidences for a Hebrew Source of the B'rit Hadasha

This Appendix is an edited version of the Internet article "In Which Language was the 'New Testament' Originally Written?" by Rabbi Julio Dam. It was found online in several places. The original document was probably posted at www.geocities.com/Athens/Acropolis/7775/Language.htm, which no longer exists online. Rabbi Dam is the spiritual leader of Messianic Congregation Beit Shalom in Asuncion, Paraguay.

The Importance of Discovering the Original Language

Why is it important to discover the language in which the Apostolic Scriptures (the B'rit Hadasha or so-called "New Testament" documents) were originally written? As Messianic Pastor Julio Dam points out, each language has an inner structure, a specific flavor, and idioms of its own, which give it a unique cultural background. All of these elements shape the way that those speaking a given language actually think, and make it important that we know for certain in which language the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written.

To understand the teaching of Yeshua and His talmidim more precisely and with any real depth of comprehension, it would be ideal if we could read their words in the actual language in which they were originally spoken or written, because a language's words, especially its idioms, are only fully comprehensible in the context of that language. The second-best condition would be to attempt to reconstruct the original text from the language one has at hand. However, translating words literally, especially idioms, from one language to another often makes them absurd and reveals their foreign origin. In fact, we use many words every day that would either have a completely different meaning, or perhaps make no sense at all, if translated literally into another language.

For example, in English we use the term "my darling" as a term of endearment. When we want to express that same term of endearment in Spanish, we would use the term "mi vida," which, if translated literally back into English, would come back as "my life"—a phrase that may have a totally different meaning in a different context.

Another example of a literal translation taking on an entirely different meaning comes from an early experiment in computer-generated translation. The scientists working on the project wished to develop a computer program that could translate between English and Russian. After creating complete dictionaries for both languages and cross-references between them, they had the computer translate the well-known English phrase "The spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" into Russian. They then took the Russian result and translated it directly back into English, getting: "The vodka is fine, but the meat has spoiled."

The use of idioms compounds the problem, because we use many idiomatic expressions that we don't even think of as idioms.

For example, what does “taking my hair” mean in English? It could mean several different things, depending upon the context in which it was used. However, if (a) we understand that “taking my hair” is the literal translation of the Spanish idiom “tomar el pelo,” and (b) we understand that it is being used in its idiomatic context, then we can translate it dynamically instead of literally and arrive at the intended English equivalent idiom, “pulling my leg.” But in order to translate the phrase and arrive at the originally intended meaning, one has first to know that it was originally spoken or written in Spanish, and that it was intended in its idiomatic sense. Only then may one try to find an equivalent idiom in English, as we did here.

On the other hand, if we assumed that “tomar el pelo” was originally spoken or written in French, we would be at a total loss to find anything in French like “prenez les cheveux,” the literal translation. We would therefore erroneously conclude that the original writer had a poor grasp of French.

This is exactly what happened with the original language of the Apostolic Scriptures, as we shall try to prove, with the “French” in our hypothetical example standing for Greek and/or Aramaic, and our “Spanish” for Hebrew.

What we will try to prove, then, is that the original language of the Apostolic Scriptures was *neither* Greek nor Aramaic (as popularly believed), but Hebrew—the same Hebrew that the original Hebrew Bible (the Tanakh, or so-called “Old Testament”) was written in. It is only natural that the language of the Apostolic Scriptures should be Hebrew, since we are dealing with the same country, only in a later period of its history.

Are there any proofs that the original language was Hebrew, and not Greek or Aramaic? Yes, there most definitely are, both external and internal to the Scriptures. We will deal with the external proofs first.

External Proofs for a Hebrew Original

Several external sources (i.e., outside Scripture) point to Hebrew as the written language of the Apostolic Scriptures, as Dr. David Bivin has most eloquently attested.¹⁶⁰ The two primary sources that we will very briefly examine are the testimony of the Church Fathers and of the Dead Sea Scrolls.

The Testimony from the Church Fathers

- Papias (c. 150 CE), Bishop of Hierapolis, said: “Matthew put down the words of the Lord in the Hebrew language, and others have translated them, each as best he could.”
- Irenaeus (120-202 CE), Bishop of Lyons, France, wrote: “Matthew, indeed, produced his Gospel written among the Hebrews in their own dialect.”
- Origen (c. 225 CE) said: “The first Gospel composed in the Hebrew language, was written by Matthew ... for those who came to faith from Judaism.”

¹⁶⁰ Bivin and Blizzard Jr., *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, 1988, pp. 45-78.

- Eusebius (c. 325 A.D.), Bishop of Caesarea, wrote: “Matthew had first preached to the Hebrews, and when he was about to go to others also, he transmitted his Gospel in writing in his native language.”¹⁶¹
- And Jerome, translator of the Scripture into Latin (the Vulgata or Vulgate version), says the same.

The Testimony from the Dead Sea Scrolls

The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered by an Arab shepherd boy in the caves of Qumran in the Judean wilderness, contain a treasure trove of Scripture: about 40,000 fragments of rolls, including 600 partial manuscripts, both scriptural and non-scriptural. Says Dr. Bivin: “Of the ten major non-biblical scrolls published to date, only one, the Genesis Apocryphon, is in Aramaic. The most recently published scroll, and the longest to date (28 feet, equivalent to over 80 Old Testament chapters), is the now famous Temple Scroll, also written in Hebrew ... If we compare the total number of pages in these ten sectarian scrolls, we again find a nine-to-one ratio of Hebrew to Aramaic (179 pages in the nine Hebrew scrolls to 22 pages of Aramaic in the Genesis Apocryphon).”¹⁶²

In sum, as far as the external evidence (texts not in the Bible) is concerned, both the Church Fathers and the Dead Sea Scrolls state clearly and without subtlety that Hebrew was the language spoken and written at the time of Rabbi Yeshua.

Internal Proofs for a Hebrew Original

The internal proofs for Hebrew being the original language spoken by Rabbi Yeshua are equally direct and even more convincing, for we can take the Apostolic Scriptures and prove so now, in our own native language, be it English or Spanish or any other.

First, Scripture itself says the language of Rabbi Yeshua and His disciples was Hebrew. Despite this scriptural proof, several translations, especially the NIV, have arbitrarily changed the word *εβραϊστί* (*Hebraisti*) in the Greek manuscripts to “Aramaic” (see John 19:13,19; Luke 23:38; Acts 21:40). It does not require one to be a Greek scholar to understand that *Hebraisti* says “Hebrew,” not “Aramaic.”

Additionally, there are over 5,366 Greek manuscripts of the Apostolic Scriptures, each differing from the other and containing several hundred variants. However, in each one of these manuscripts there are idioms which are almost meaningless in any language—including Greek—except in Hebrew! How can this phenomenon be explained unless Hebrew was the original language?

Of these many Hebraisms, one of the most common is “Son of man.” What does “Son of man” mean in English, Spanish, German, or any other language? Absolutely nothing; it has meaning only in Hebrew. The expression “ben Adam” means literally “son of Adam” and, by extension, “son of man” and “man,” Adam being, of course, the first man alive. On any street corner in Israel, you may hear, “Here comes this ben Adam,” meaning “Here comes this man.”

¹⁶¹ *Ecclesiastical History*, III 24, 6.

¹⁶² Bivin and Blizzard Jr., op. cit., p. 49, 52.

This phrase occurs no less than 92 times in the Tanakh and 43 times in the Apostolic Scriptures (per *Cruden's Concordance*), and is obviously the same Hebrew idiom.

Most scholars claim that the Apostolic Scriptures were written in Koine (or common) Greek because Koine is a rather unsophisticated version of Greek, and many assume the Apostles were unsophisticated men. But when we find the many Hebraisms there, we begin to understand that the text is not Koine Greek, but a Hebrew original. Since the Hebrew original was translated almost literally into Greek, the text sounds like poor Greek.

As another example, the idiom “Peace be to you” appears twelve times in the Apostolic Scriptures. What kind of a greeting is “Peace be to you” in English, Spanish, French, or any other language except Hebrew? It is meaningless. Only in Hebrew does it make any real sense. This is the most common, everyday greeting in Israel today: the world-famous “shalom” or “shalom aleikhem.” Shalom literally means “peace,” but it is used as an everyday greeting, meaning anything from “Hi” to “Goodbye” to “How are you?” depending on the speaker's intonation and mood, like the Hawaiian greeting “Aloha.”

The third internal proof of the Hebrew character of the Apostolic Scriptures is the use of two very Jewish ways of speaking: that of repeating things twice, and the answering of a question with another question. Yeshua did both quite often. In Matthew 27:46: “At about three, Yeshua uttered a loud cry, ‘Eli! Eli! L’mah sh’vaktani? (My God! My God! Why have you deserted me?)’” and in Luke 20:2-3 (NAS): “... and they spoke, saying to Him, ‘Tell us by what authority You are doing these things, or who is the one who gave You this authority?’ Jesus answered and said to them, ‘I will also ask you a question, and you tell Me ...’”

It is important to stress that these two characteristics, especially the former, are strongly associated with Hebrew. We don’t see them in English or in any other European language. If this is true, then how did it come about that “everybody knows” that the Apostolic Scriptures were originally written in Greek or Aramaic?

Assumptions and Prejudices Leading to the Greek and Aramaic Theories

First, let us say that the issue of the Apostolic Scriptures being written in Greek or Aramaic did not exist in the Fourth or Fifth Century C.E. It is a rather modern theory. The question we must ask is this: What basis does the “Aramaic theory” have? What are its external and internal proofs?

The answer—quite unbelievably—is: None!

There are a few isolated “loaned” Aramaic words present in the Apostolic Scriptures, but these are far outweighed by the Hebrew words and idioms.

The basis of the “Greek theory” is the fact that the Apostolic Scripture manuscripts that survive are all in Greek, and not a single copy of the Hebrew originals remains. Admittedly, this might be a sufficient basis for the theory, but only if we disregard the other evidence: the statements by the church fathers, the Hebraisms, the idioms, the language of the Dead Sea Scrolls, etc.

In sum, what we have are theologians' *assumptions*. These assumptions have historically been based upon or influenced by ugly, anti-Semitic prejudices. Why do we say prejudice? Is there a basis for raising up the ugly specter of anti-Semitism within the Church? Judge for yourself.

The Church: A History of Unremitting Anti-Semitism

Historically, the Church has had a consistent record of being very anti-Semitic for most of the 2,000 years of its history.

Consider first the Inquisition, with hundreds of thousands of Jews (and Christians) tortured and slaughtered simply because they were Jews.

Consider the anti-Semitic statements by the fathers of the Church, such as Chrysostom, Eusebius, Origen, Cyril, Hippolytus, and even Martin Luther, the father of the Reformation. Let us quote a couple of brief paragraphs from sermons that Luther wrote just four days before he died.

The Jews deserve the most severe penalties. Their synagogues should be razed to the ground, their homes destroyed. They themselves should be exiled to living in tents, like the gypsies. Their religious writings [the Tanakh and the Talmud] should be taken away from them. The Rabbis should be forbidden to teach the Law [the Torah]. They should be forbidden to do any profession. Only the hardest, most strenuous work should be allowed to them. Their fortunes should be confiscated from them ... A Jewish heart is as hard as a stick, a stone, as iron, as a devil.¹⁶³

The famous historian, the late William Schirer, author of *The Rise and Fall of the Third Reich*, says that the influence of Martin Luther on the German Church is one of the two factors explaining its behavior towards the Jews during the Holocaust (p. 294).

Throughout the centuries, there has been a Satan-led movement away from anything Jewish. In this spirit, the Church was forbidden to celebrate Passover on the "Jewish" (i.e., scriptural) dates set for it, and could celebrate it only on any other date **except** the "Jewish" (scriptural) date.

Those who insisted on celebrating Pesach (Passover) on the correct date were called "quatorcediman," from the fourteenth day of the first month, on which Passover was ordained by God to be celebrated. Even today the Church celebrates "Easter" (the pagan Feast of Ishtar re-dressed up with "Bible" words), not Passover.

The wisdom of the Jewish sages from which the Jewish Rabbi Yeshua drew countless parables and examples (later collected into the Talmud) was condemned by all within the Church, including Luther, as we just quoted. The books of the Talmud were not merely condemned, but were burned along with their owners.

A sustained campaign of "de-Judaization" continues to this day. We can only offer some brief highlights here:

¹⁶³ Eric W. Gritsch, "Was Luther an Anti-Semite?" *Christian History Magazine*, Vol. 12, No. 3, pp. 38-39. Retranslated from the Spanish by Rabbi Dan.

- Statements by almost all of the Church Fathers like Chrysostom, Hippolytus, Origen, Cyril, Eusebius (“Abraham was a Christian; he was not a Jew.”), Bishop Agobard, and, of course, Luther.
- For twenty centuries the Jews have been accused of kidnapping Christian children and drinking their blood for Passover meals. (The last time this accusation surfaced—believe it or not—was in 1992 in the Soviet Union.)
- Jews were accused of murdering God. [Can anyone murder God?]
- All sorts of doctrines were made “Judenrein” (free of Jews), as if the Renewed Covenant was never made with “the House of Israel and the House of Judah” but with the Church.
- The appropriate name for the Land of Israel has been obliterated for the last 2,000 years at the bidding of Emperor Julius Caesar, who swore to wipe the name of Judea from the face of the earth—and he succeeded. Even *contemporary* Christian authors call Israel “Palestine,” and both the news media and the United States government insist on referring to Israel using such terms as “the Middle East” or the “West Bank”!
- The true name of our Lord was Yeshua. What the Church has created in His place is a very Gentile-sounding “Jesus.” Even most paintings of Him are obviously Gentiles.
- The name of Rabbi Yeshua’s brother was Ya`akov (Jacob) —apparently too Jewish for the Christians, although there is a form of “Jacob” in every known language—so the anti-Semites “Gentilized” it to “James,” as in the book of “James,” even though in the Greek manuscripts it is quite clearly titled Ἐπιστολὴ Ἰακώβου (*Epistole Iakobus*, the Letter of Ya`akov).
- Marcion, a historically recognized heretic within the Church, created two Gods: A Jewish god, the god of the “Old” Covenant, “Yahweh,” akin to a small deity, severe, for the Jews; and a Gentile God, Jesus, the God of Love. [How many Gods are there?] However, Marcion’s spirit lives on in the Church today.
- There are several specific references in Scripture to both Yeshua and Sha’ul (Paul) speaking Hebrew. Westcott and Hort arbitrarily changed the Greek word “hebraisti” (which should obviously be translated as “Hebrew”) to “Aramaic.”¹⁶⁴

¹⁶⁴ The Westcott and Hort (WH) version of the Greek text (1881), also called the “Critical Text” (CT), formed the basis for many of the pre-World War II English translations. However, Westcott and Hort had only about 1400 manuscript sources to work with compared to over 5000 manuscripts available today. Though the WH was the “standard” critical text for a generation or two, it is no longer considered such by anyone, and has not been for many years. In fact, the only WH-based English Bible translation currently in print that the writer is aware is the *New World Translation* of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, which cannot really be considered a Bible translation because of glaring theological errors introduced by its editors.

The King James and New King James Versions are based on the *Textus Receptus* (Received Text, or TR) version of the Greek text. The TR was based on only about 20 Byzantine Greek texts which were available in the 1500’s, which many believe were “edited” by the Church in the fourth century.

The Majority Text (MT) by Hodges and Farstad is based on the majority reading in the over 5000 Greek manuscripts now available, and contains 1,838 differences when compared to the TR. The main argument in its favor is the number of manuscripts.

The “standard” text or texts today are the Nestle or Nestle-Aland text (1st edition, 1898; 27th edition, 1993) and/or the various editions of *The Greek New Testament* published by the United Bible Societies (1st edition,

The above discussion demonstrates that the “Aramaic” and “Greek” theories were not isolated mistakes or misconceptions, but part of a worldwide, centuries-old “de-Judaization” campaign by the anti-Semites within the Church to make the Church “Judenrein,” despite the fact that we worship a Jewish God of Israel and the promised Messiah of Israel.

The external and internal proofs clearly show, on the other hand, that the B'rit Hadasha was originally written in Hebrew, not in Greek or Aramaic.

In addition to the above evidence for a Hebrew original of the Apostolic Scriptures, see also Norman B. Willis, “Was the ‘New’ Testament originally written in Greek, or in Hebrew?” on the Internet at www.nazareneisrael.org/studies/Minim.doc.

Renowned Jewish historian Flavius Josephus also wrote that although he far exceeded those of his own nation in Jewish learning, he could not pronounce Greek with sufficient exactness, and that “our nation does not encourage those that learn the languages of many nations ...” Furthermore, Josephus reveals, “The Greeks called old nations by names of their own,” (Antiq. I,v,) “and put the Hebrew names into their own form” (c.vi.) This explains why some Hebrew names end up in English texts in a Grecianized form.

1966; 4th edition, 1993). Eberhard Nestle originally used as his text the consensus reading of three editions of the Greek New Testament in his day, Tischendorf, WH, and Weymouth, later substituting Weiss for Weymouth. The UBS editors used WH as their starting point and departed from it as their evaluation of manuscript evidence required.

The *New American Standard Bible*, which I personally consider to be as close as possible to an accurate, literal, English translation of the Greek text, is based on the 23rd edition of the Nestle *Greek New Testament*, which is recognized and used by most evangelical Bible schools and seminaries as being the most reliable. As the last two editions of Nestle and UBS contain an identical text, we now essentially have a new “received text.”

Appendix C. Scholars Who Support a Hebrew Origin for the B'rit Hadasha¹⁶⁵

Many competent scholars contend that the New Testament was first written in Hebrew (or Aramaic, a sister language), basing their assertion on valid grounds.

“The writers were Hebrews; and thus, while the language is Greek, the thoughts and idioms are Hebrew ... If the Greek of the New Testament be regarded as an inspired translation from Hebrew or Aramaic originals, most of the various readings would be accounted for and understood.” Dr. E. W. Bullinger, *Companion Bible* (app. 94).

“... we must not forget that Christianity grew out of Judaism ... The Pauline epistles were letters written by Paul to small [Messianic] congregations in Asia Minor, Greece, and Rome. These early [believers] were mostly Jews of the dispersion, men and women of Hebrew origin ... The Epistles were translated into Greek for the use of converts who spoke Greek.” [George Lamsa, *Holy Bible from the Peshitta*, p. xi]

Following is a listing of some linguistic and Biblical authorities who maintain or support a belief in a Hebrew origin of the New Testament:

Black, Matthew. *An Aramaic Approach to the Gospels and Acts*. Oxford: Oxford University Press; 3rd edition, 1991, entirety.

Bivin, D. and Blizzard, R. B. *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*. Shippensburg, PA: Destiny Image Publishers; Revised edition, 1995, entirety.

Bullinger, E. W. *The Companion Bible*, Appendix 95. Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications; 1993.

Burkitt, F. Crawford. *The Earliest Sources for the Life of Jesus*. New York: Gordon Press Publishers, pp. 25, 29.

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Appendix D. The Bar-Kochba Revolt (132-135 C.E.)

by Shira Schoenberg

*www.us-israel.org/jsource/Judaism/revolt1.html
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The Bar Kochba revolt marked a time of high hopes followed by violent despair. The Jews were handed expectations of a homeland and a Holy Temple, but in the end were persecuted and sold into slavery. During the revolt itself, the Jews gained enormous amounts of land, only to be pushed back and crushed in the final battle of Bethar.

When Hadrian first became the Roman emperor in 118 C.E., he was sympathetic to the Jews. He allowed them to return to Jerusalem and granted permission for the rebuilding of their Holy Temple. The Jews' expectations rose as they made organizational and financial preparations to rebuild the temple. Hadrian quickly went back on his word, however, and requested that the site of the Temple be moved from its original location. He also began deporting Jews to North Africa.

The Jews prepared to rebel until Rabbi Joshua ben Hananiah calmed them. The Jews then satisfied themselves with preparing secretly in case a rebellion would later become necessary. They built hideouts in caves and did shoddy work building weapons so that the Romans would reject the weapons and return them to the Jews.

The Jews organized guerilla forces and, in 123 C.E., began launching surprise attacks against the Romans. From that point on, life only got worse for the Jews. Hadrian brought an extra army legion, the "Sixth Ferrata," into Judea to deal with the terrorism. Hadrian hated "foreign" religions and forbade the Jews to perform circumcisions. He appointed Tinneius Rufus governor of Judea. Rufus was a harsh ruler who took advantage of Jewish women. In approximately 132 C.E., Hadrian began to establish a city in Jerusalem called Aelia Capitolina, the name being a combination of his own name and that of the Roman god Jupiter Capitolinus. He started to build a temple to Jupiter in place of the Jewish Holy Temple.

As long as Hadrian remained near Judea, the Jews stayed relatively quiet. When he left in 132, the Jews began their rebellion on a large scale. They seized towns and fortified them with walls and subterranean passages. Under the strong leadership of Shimon Bar-Kochba, the Jews captured approximately 50 strongholds in Palestine and 985 undefended towns and villages, including Jerusalem. Jews from other countries, and even some gentiles, volunteered to join their crusade. The Jews minted coins with slogans such as "The freedom of Israel" written in Hebrew. Hadrian dispatched General Publius Marcellus, governor of Syria, to help Rufus, but the Jews defeated both Roman leaders. The Jews then invaded the coastal region and the Romans began sea battles against them.

The turning point of the war came when Hadrian sent into Judea one of his best generals from Britain, Julius Severus, along with former governor of Germania, Hadrianus Quintus Lollius Urbicus. By that time, there were 12 army legions from

Egypt, Britain, Syria, and other areas in Palestine. Due to the large number of Jewish rebels, instead of waging open war, Severus besieged Jewish fortresses and held back food until the Jews grew weak. Only then did his attack escalate into outright war. The Romans demolished all 50 Jewish fortresses and 985 villages. The main conflicts took place in Judea, the Shephela, the mountains, and the Judean desert, though fighting also spread to Northern Israel. The Romans suffered heavy casualties as well and Hadrian did not send his usual message to the Senate that "I and my army are well."

The final battle of the war took place in Bethar, Bar-Kochba's headquarters, which housed both the Sanhedrin (Jewish High Court) and the home of the Nasi (leader). Bethar was a vital military stronghold because of its strategic location on a mountain ridge overlooking both the Valley of Sorek and the important Jerusalem-Bet Guvrin Road. Thousands of Jewish refugees fled to Bethar during the war. In 135 C.E. Hadrian's army besieged Bethar and on the 9th of Av, the Jewish fast day commemorating the destruction of the first and second Holy Temples, and the walls of Bethar fell. After a fierce battle, every Jew in Bethar was killed. Six days passed before the Romans allowed the Jews to bury their dead.

Following the battle of Bethar, there were a few small skirmishes in the Judean Desert Caves, but the war was essentially over and Judean independence was lost. The Romans plowed Jerusalem with a yoke of oxen. Jews were sold into slavery and many were transported to Egypt. Judean settlements were not rebuilt. Jerusalem was turned into a pagan city called Aelia Capitolina and the Jews were forbidden to live there. They were permitted to enter only on the 9th of Av to mourn their losses in the revolt. Hadrian changed the country's name from Judea to Syria Palestina.

In the years following the revolt, Hadrian discriminated against all Judeo-Christian sects, but the worst persecution was directed against religious Jews. He made anti-religious decrees forbidding Torah study, Sabbath observance, circumcision, Jewish courts, meeting in synagogues, and other ritual practices. Many Jews assimilated and many sages and prominent men were martyred including Rabbi Akiva and the rest of the *Asara Harugei Malchut* (ten martyrs). This age of persecution lasted throughout the remainder of Hadrian's reign, until 138 C.E.

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Appendix E.

Anti-Semitic Decrees of Constantine and His Successors, High Priests of the Babylon Mystery Religion in Rome

Summary

The following is a brief summary of the anti-Semitic decrees that began with Emperor Constantine and continued with his successors.

- Sunday [not Shabbat] declared to be the day of rest: “On the *venerable Day of the Sun* [the day on which the sun god was worshipped], let the magistrates and people residing in cities rest, and let all workshops be closed. ...”¹⁶⁶
- The Council of Laodicea (c. 364) ordered that *all* religious observances were to be conducted on Sunday, not Shabbat. “Christians shall not Judaize and (thus) be idle on Saturday but shall work on that day.” [Observance of the biblical Shabbat outlawed.]
- Jews declared to have “soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes.”
- Observance of the Resurrection on its biblical date was forbidden.
- Christians were forbidden “to have anything in common with the Jews.”
- Christians were required “to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews.”
- Jews declared to “have no longer been led by reason but by wild violence, as their delusion may urge them.”
- Jews were forbidden to “celebrate two Passovers in the same year” [permitted by Torah¹⁶⁷].
- Christians forbidden to “tarnish your soul by communications with such wicked people [the Jews].”

¹⁶⁶ In 46 BC, when the Roman “Julian calendar” was adopted, December 24th was the shortest day of the year. Therefore, December 25th was the first annual day that daylight began to increase; thus, the origin of the rebirth, or annual birthday of the Invincible Sun. In accordance with the Julian calendar, the Saturnalia festival [Feast of Saturn] appears to have originally taken place on December 17, was preceded by the Consualia near December 15, and followed by the Opalia on December 19. These pagan celebrations typically lasted for a week, ending just before the late Roman Imperial Festival for “Sol Invictus” (Invincible Sun) on December 25. In 1582, Pope Gregory XIII ordered the adoption of the current “Gregorian Calendar” to eliminate the solar time-shift error introduced over 1,629 years by the inaccurate Julian calendar. By December 1582, the shortest day of the year on the Julian calendar had shifted 12 days from December 24, 46 BCE, to Wednesday, December 12, 1582 CE. However, the original December 25 “birth date” was retained for all pagan sun gods by the Saturnalia, Consualia, Opalia, Sol Invictus traditions, which were now incorporated into the Roman Catholic “Twelve Days of Christ-mass.” On the new Roman Catholic Gregorian calendar, the shortest annual day was numerically shifted back 10 days to December 22, where it remains to this day, while the original order of the seven days of the week remained unchanged. Therefore, Wednesday, December 12, 1582, became Wednesday, December 22, 1582, and the true Sabbath day (Friday sunset to Saturday sunset) remained unchanged. [www.sabbatarian.com/ Paganism/RomanEmpire.html]

¹⁶⁷ Any Jew who was unable to observe the Passover on the evening of 14 Nisan was permitted to observe it the previous day. Thus Yeshua and his Talmidim observed Passover the night *before* the Paschal lamb was slain.

- Jews forbidden to observe Unleavened Bread, because it involves a “fast” “whilst others are seated at a banquet” during the Feast of Ishtar (Easter).
- Christians forbidden “to have anything in common with the murderers of our Lord.”
- Christians commanded to “have nothing in common with the Jews.”
- Any Jew who “dares to attack with [any] manifestation of anger another who has” become a Christian is to be burned alive, “together with all his accomplices.”
- Any Christian who attends synagogue services is also to be burned alive.
- Marriages between Jews and Christian women of the imperial weaving factory are to be dissolved.
- Jewish husbands of Christian women are to be punished with death.
- A Jew shall not possess a Christian slave. “... that slave shall at once be appropriated for the imperial treasury.”
- Any Jew who circumcises a Christian slave (as required by Genesis 17:12, 13) “will not only be fined for the damage done to that slave but he will also receive capital punishment” (be executed).
- Jews forbidden to hold any public office that exercises authority over any Christian.
- Jews required to accept financially ruinous public offices without hope of exemption.
- Jews forbidden to have any judgment over Christians, “carry out judicial sentences, nor be wardens of the jail.”
- Jews declared to be “the enemies of the heavenly majesty.”
- Jews forbidden to build a new synagogue.
- Any new synagogue that is built immediately becomes the property of the Catholic Church, and the builder “shall be punished by a fine of fifty pounds gold for his daring.”
- Any Jew who converts anyone to Judaism “shall see his wealth confiscated and himself soon subjected to a death sentence.”
- No person “who cherish[es] the Jewish superstition, may offer testimony against orthodox Christians who are engaged in litigation, whether one or the other of the parties is an orthodox Christian.” But a Jew may offer testimony on behalf of an orthodox Christian against some one who is not a Christian.
- Christians forbidden to observe Passover: “All the brethren in the East who have hitherto followed the Jewish practice will henceforth observe the custom of the Romans and of yourselves and of all of us who from ancient times have kept Easter together with you.”
- Synod of Elvira of 306 (a council or assembly of churches or church officials) prohibited intermarriage and sexual intercourse between Christians and Jews, and prohibited them from eating together.

- Council of Orleans (533-541) prohibited marriages between Christians and Jews and forbade the conversion to Judaism by Christians.
- Trulanic Synod (692) prohibited Christians from being treated by Jewish doctors.
- Synod of Narbonne (1050) prohibited Christians from living in Jewish homes.
- Synod of Gerona (1078) required Jews to pay taxes to support the Church.
- Third Lateran Council (1179) prohibited certain medical care to be provided by Christians to Jews.
- Fourth Lateran Council (1215) required Jews to wear special clothing to distinguish them from Christians.
- Council of Basel (1431-1443) forbade Jews to attend universities, them from acting as agents in the conclusion of contracts between Christians, and required that they attend church sermons.

On The Keeping of Easter

Edited from www.fordham.edu/halsall/source/const1-easter.html.¹⁶⁸

*From the Letter of the Emperor to all those not present at the Council.
(Found in Eusebius, Vita Const., Lib. iii., 18-20.*

“When the question relative to the sacred festival of Easter arose, it was universally thought that it would be convenient that all should keep the feast on one day; for what could be more beautiful and more desirable, than to see this festival, through which we receive the hope of immortality, celebrated by all with one accord, and in the same manner?

“It was declared to be particularly unworthy for this, the holiest of all festivals, to follow the custom [the calculation] of the Jews, who had soiled their hands with the most fearful of crimes, and whose minds were blinded. In rejecting their custom, we may transmit to our descendants the legitimate mode of celebrating Easter, which we have observed from the time of the Saviour’s Passion to the present day [according to the day of the week].

“We ought not, therefore, to have anything in common with the Jews, for the Saviour has shown us another way; our worship follows a more legitimate and more convenient course (the order of the days of the week); and consequently, in unanimously adopting this mode, we desire, dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews, for it is truly shameful for us to hear them boast that without their direction we could not keep this feast. How can they be in the right, they who, after the death of the Saviour, have no longer been led by reason but by wild violence, as their delusion may urge them? They do not possess the truth in this Easter question; for, in their blindness and repugnance to all improvements, they frequently celebrate two passovers in the same year. We could not imitate those who are openly in error. How, then, could we follow these Jews, who are most certainly

¹⁶⁸ This text is part of the Internet Jewish History Sourcebook The Sourcebook is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts for introductory level classes in modern European and World history.

blinded by error? For to celebrate the passover twice in one year is totally inadmissible.

“But even if this were not so, it would still be your duty not to tarnish your soul by communications with such wicked people [the Jews]. Besides, consider well, that in such an important matter, and on a subject of such great solemnity, there ought not to be any division. Our Saviour has left us only one festal day of our redemption, that is to say, of his holy passion, and he desired [to establish] only one Catholic Church. Think, then, how unseemly it is, that on the same day some should be fasting whilst others are seated at a banquet; and that after Easter, some should be rejoicing at feasts, whilst others are still observing a strict fast.

“For this reason, a Divine Providence wills that this custom should be rectified and regulated in a uniform way; and everyone, I hope, will agree upon this point. As, on the one hand, it is our duty not to have anything in common with the murderers of our Lord; and as, on the other, the custom now followed by the Churches of the West, of the South, and of the North, and by some of those of the East, is the most acceptable, it has appeared good to all; and I have been guarantee for your consent, that you would accept it with joy, as it is followed at Rome, in Africa, in all Italy, Egypt, Spain, Gaul, Britain, Libya, in all Achaia, and in the dioceses of Asia, of Pontus, and Cilicia.

“You should consider not only that the number of churches in these provinces make a majority, but also that it is right to demand what our reason approves, and that we should have nothing in common with the Jews.

“To sum up in few words: By the unanimous judgment of all, it has been decided that the most holy festival of Easter should be everywhere celebrated on one and the same day, and it is not seemly that in so holy a thing there should be any division. As this is the state of the case, accept joyfully the divine favour, and this truly divine command; for all which takes place in assemblies of the bishops ought to be regarded as proceeding from the will of God.

“Make known to your brethren what has been decreed, keep this most holy day according to the prescribed mode; we can thus celebrate this holy Easter day at the same time, if it is granted me, as I desire, to unite myself with you; we can rejoice together, seeing that the divine power has made use of our instrumentality for destroying the evil designs of the devil, and thus causing faith, peace, and unity to flourish amongst us.

“May God graciously protect you, my beloved brethren.”

Jews and the Later Roman Law (315-531 CE)¹⁶⁹

The Middle Ages, for the Jew at least, begin with the advent to power of Constantine the Great (306-337). He was the first Roman emperor to issue laws which radically limited the rights of Jews as citizens of the Roman Empire, a privilege conferred upon them by Caracalla in 212. As “Christianity” grew in power in the Roman Empire it influenced the emperors to further limit the civil and political rights of the Jews. Most

¹⁶⁹ Source: www.fordham.edu/halsall/jewish/jews-romanlaw.html. This text is part of the Internet Jewish History Sourcebook. The *Sourcebook* is a collection of public domain and copy-permitted texts for introductory level classes in modern European and World history.

of the imperial laws that deal with the Jews since the days of Constantine are found in the Latin Codex Theodosianus (438) and in the Latin and Greek code of Justinian (534). Both of these monumental works are therefore very important, for they enable us to trace the history of the progressive deterioration of Jewish rights.

The real significance of Roman law for the Jew and his history is that it exerted a profound influence on subsequent Christian and even Muslim legislation. The second-class status of citizenship of the Jew, as crystallized in the Justinian code, was thus entrenched in the medieval world, and under the influence of the Church the disabilities imposed upon him received religious sanction and relegated him even to lower levels.

In our first selection, laws of Constantine the Great, Judaism is denied the opportunity of remaining a missionary religion because of the prohibition to make proselytes.

The laws of Constantine (337-361), the second selection, forbade intermarriage between Jewish men and Christian women. A generation later, in 388, all marriages between Jews and Christians were forbidden. Constantine also did away with the right of Jews to possess slaves. This prohibition to trade in and to keep slaves at a time when slave labor was common was not merely an attempt to arrest conversion to Judaism; it was also a blow at the economic life of the Jew. It put him at a disadvantage with his "Christian" competitor to whom this economic privilege was assured.

The third selection, a law of Theodosius II (408-410), prohibits Jews from holding any advantageous office of honor in the Roman state. They were compelled, however, to assume those public offices which entailed huge financial losses and almost certain ruin, and they were not even granted the hope of an ultimate exemption. This Novella (New Law) III of Theodosius II also makes a direct attack on the Jewish religion by reenacting a law which forbade the building of new Jewish synagogues. This prohibition was known a generation before this. It was reenacted now, probably to pacify the aroused Christian mob in the Eastern Empire which desired to crush the religious spirit of the Jews who were massing at Jerusalem and confidently looking forward to the coming of a Messianic redeemer in 440. This disability, later taken over by some Muslim states, was re-enunciated by the Church which sought to arrest the progress of Judaism, its old rival.

A Latin law of Justinian (527-565), the final selection, does not allow a Jew to bear witness in court against an orthodox Christian. Thus as early as the sixth century the Jews were already laboring under social, economic, civil, political, and religious disabilities.

I. Laws of Constantine the Great, October 18, 315: Concerning Jews, Heaven-Worshippers,¹⁷⁰ and Samaritans

"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

¹⁷⁰ Heaven-Worshippers were a sect closely allied to Judaism.

attached himself to the worship of God [Christianity], he must speedily be given to the flames and burn, 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.”

II. Laws of Constantius, August 13, 339: Concerning Jews, Heaven-Worshippers, and Samaritans

“This pertains to women, who live in our weaving factories and whom Jews, in their foulness, take in marriage. It is decreed that these women are to be restored to the weaving factories. [Marriages between Jews and Christian women of the imperial weaving factory are to be dissolved and the wives returned to their slave-like employment.]

“This prohibition [of intermarriage] is to be preserved for the future lest the Jews induce Christian women to share their shameful lives. If they do this they will subject themselves to a sentence of death.” [The Jewish husbands are to be punished with death.]

A Jew Shall Not Possess a Christian Slave

“If any one among the Jews has purchased a slave of another sect or nation, that slave shall at once be appropriated for the imperial treasury.

“If, indeed, he shall have circumcised the slave whom he has purchased, he will not only be fined for the damage done to that slave but he will also receive capital punishment.

“If, indeed, a Jew does not hesitate to purchase slaves—those who are members of the faith that is worthy of respect [Christianity]—then all these slaves who are found in his possession shall at once be removed. No delay shall be occasioned, but he is to be deprived of the possession of those men who are Christians.”

III. A Law of Theodosius 11, January 31, 439: Novella III: Concerning Jews, Samaritans, Heretics, And Pagans

“Wherefore, although according to an old saying [of the Greek Hippocrates, the ‘father’ of medicine] ‘no cure is to be applied in desperate sicknesses,’ nevertheless, in order that these dangerous sects which are unmindful of our times may not spread into life the more freely, in indiscriminate disorder as it were, we ordain by this law to be valid for all time:

“No Jew — or no Samaritan who subscribes to neither [the Jewish nor the Christian] religion — shall obtain offices and dignities; to none shall the administration of city service be permitted; nor shall any one exercise the office of a defender [that is, overseer] of the city. Indeed, we believe it sinful that the enemies of the heavenly majesty and of the Roman laws should become the executors of our laws — the administration of which they have slyly obtained and that they, fortified by the authority of the acquired rank, should have the power to judge or decide as they wish against Christians, yes, frequently even over bishops of our holy religion themselves, and thus, as it were, insult our faith.

“Moreover, for the same reason, we forbid that any synagogue shall rise as a new building. [Fewer synagogues meant less chance of Christians becoming Jews.] However, the propping up of old synagogues which are now threatened with imminent ruin is permitted. To these things we add that he who misleads a slave or a freeman against his will or by punishable advice, from the service of the Christian religion to that of an abominable sect and ritual, is to be punished by loss of property and life. [That is, the Jew who converts anyone to Judaism loses life and property.]

“On the one hand, whoever has built a synagogue must realize that he has worked to the advantage of the Catholic church [which will confiscate the building]; on the other hand, whoever has already secured the badge of office shall not hold the dignities he has acquired. On the contrary, he who worms himself into office must remain, as before, in the lowest rank even though he will have already earned an honorary office. And as for him who begins the building of a synagogue and is not moved by the desire of repairing it, he shall be punished by a fine of fifty pounds gold for his daring. Moreover, if he will have prevailed with his evil teachings over the faith of another, he shall see his wealth confiscated and himself soon subjected to a death sentence. [That is, the Jew who converts anyone to Judaism loses life and property.]

“And since it behooves the imperial majesty to consider everything with such foresight that the general welfare does not suffer in the least, we ordain that the tax-paying officeholders of all towns as well as the provincial civil servants - who are obligated to employ their wealth and to make public gifts as part of their burdensome and diverse official and military duties shall remain in their own classes, no matter what sect they belong to. Let it not appear as if we have accorded the benefit of exemption to those men, detestable in their insolent maneuvering, whom we wish to condemn by the authority of this law. [Jews have to accept financially ruinous public offices without hope of exemption.]

“This further limitation is to be observed, namely, that these public servants from these above mentioned sects shall never, as far as private affairs are concerned, carry out judicial sentences, nor be wardens of the jail. This is done in order that Christians, as it sometimes happens, may not be hidden away and suffer a double imprisonment through the hatred of the guards [imprisonment is bad enough without having a Jewish jailer.] And furthermore it may be doubted that they have been justly imprisoned.”

IV. A Law Of Justinian, July 28, 531: Concerning Heretics and Manichaeans and Samaritans

“Since many judges, in deciding cases, have addressed us in need of our decision, asking that they be informed what ought to be done with witnesses who are heretics, whether their testimony ought to be received or rejected, we therefore ordain that no heretic, nor even they who cherish the Jewish superstition, may offer testimony against orthodox Christians who are engaged in litigation, whether one or the other of the parties is an orthodox Christian.” [But a Jew may offer testimony on behalf of an orthodox Christian against some one who is not orthodox.]

V. Canons of the Council of Elvira¹⁷¹

Source: www.bu.edu/religion/courses/syllabi/rn301/canons.htm

Canon 15. Christian girls are not to marry pagans [which would include Jews], no matter how few eligible men there are, for such marriages lead to adultery of the soul.

Canon 16. Heretics shall not be joined in marriage with Catholic girls unless they accept the Catholic faith. Catholic girls may not marry Jews or heretics, because they cannot find a unity when the faithful and the unfaithful are joined. Parents who allow this to happen shall not commune for five years.

Canon 17. If parents allow their daughter to marry a pagan priest [which would include a Jewish Rabbi], they shall not receive communion even at the time of death. [Which, in Catholic theology, means they are condemned to hell, because receiving the Eucharist is one of the “sacraments” necessary to enter heaven.]

Canon 21. If anyone [including Jews] who lives in the city does not attend church services for three Sundays, let that person be expelled [from the city] for a brief time in order to make the reproach public. [Jews must attend Catholic church services.]

Canon 22. If people fall from the Catholic church into heresy [observe any Jewish customs] and then return, let them not be denied penance, since they have acknowledged their sin. Let them be given communion after ten years’ penance. If children have been led into heresy, it is not their own fault, and they should be received back immediately.

Canon 28. A bishop may not receive the offerings of those who are not allowed to receive communion. [No Jew may make a contribution. But why would they want to?]

Canon 39. A pagan [including a Jew] who requests the laying on of hands [prayer for healing] at a time of illness, may receive the imposition of hands and become a Christian if his or her life has been reasonably honest. [In order to be prayed for, a Jew must first become a Catholic.]

Canon 43. In accordance with the Scripture we shall celebrate Pentecost and not continue the false practice [of celebrating Shavu`ot on the fiftieth day after Passover rather than Pentecost on the fiftieth day after Easter]. If one does not accept this practice, it will be considered a new heresy. [Obedience to the Bible’s clear teaching is a heresy.]

Canon 45. A catechumen who has stayed away from the church [or adopted Jewish practices] for a long time may be baptized if one of the clergy supports his or her claim to be a Christian, or if some of the faithful attest to this, and it appears that the person has reformed.

¹⁷¹ Held early in the fourth century at Elliberis, or Illiberis, in Spain, a city now in ruins not far from Granada. The exact year in which it was held is a matter of controversy upon which much has been written. Estimates range from 300 to 342.

Canon 46. If a Christian gives up the faith and stays away from the church [practices Messianic Judaism] for a long time, provided he or she has not become an idolater, he or she may be received back and commune after ten years of penance.

Canon 49. Landlords are not to allow Jews to bless the crops they have received from God and for which they have offered thanks. Such an action would make our blessing invalid and meaningless. Anyone who continues this practice is to be expelled completely from the church. [Any landlord who permits Jews to say *b'rakhot*¹⁷² will be excommunicated. Since every Jewish prayer is a *b'rakhah*, then landlords are not to allow Jews to pray.]

Canon 50. If any cleric or layperson eats with Jews, he or she shall be kept from communion as a way of correction.

Canon 51. If a baptized person has come from heresy [Judaism], he must not become a cleric. One who has already been ordained is to be removed from office immediately. [Any person of Jewish heritage is barred from church leadership.]

Canon 78. If a Christian confesses adultery with a Jewish or pagan woman, he is denied communion for some time. If his sin is exposed by someone else, he must complete five years' penance before receiving the Sunday communion.

VI. Additional Anti-Semitic Canon Laws

Source: www.dsca.ch/vaticano/preamble2.html

- Prohibition of mixed marriages and sexual intercours between Christians and Jews (Synod of Elvira, ca. 306)
- Prohibition for Christians of sitting at the table with Jews (Synod of Elvira, ca. 306).
- Jews were not allowed to hold public office (Synod of Clermont, 535).
- Jews were not allowed to have Christian slaves, either men or women (Third Synod of Orléans, 538).
- Jews were not allowed to go out in the streets in the Holy Week (Third Synod of Orléans, 538).
- The Talmud and other Jewish books were burned (Twelfth Synod of Toledo, 681).
- Christians were not allowed to consult Jewish physicians (Synod of Trullano, 682).
- Christians were not allowed to live with Jews (Synod of Narbonne, 1050).
- Jews were taxed to support the Church in the same measure as Christians (Synod of Gerona, 1078).
- Prohibition of working on Sundays (Synod of Szabalcs, 1092).
- Jews were not allowed to bring accusations or testify against Christians (3rd Lateran Council, 1179, can. 26).

¹⁷² "Blessings" — see *b'rakhah* in Glossary.

- Jews were not permitted to be plaintiffs or witnesses against Christians in the courts (3rd Lateran Council, 1179)
- Jews were not allowed to disinherit their brothers who converted to Catholicism (3rd Lateran Council, 1179, can. 26).
- Jews had to wear a badge on their clothing (4th Lateran Council, 1215, can. 68 – like a decree issued by the Caliph Omar II, 634 – 44, obliging the Christians to wear a blue belt and the Jews a yellow belt.)
- Prohibition of building Synagogues (Council of Oxford, 1222).
- Christians were not allowed to take part in Jewish ceremonies (Synod of Vienna, 1267).
- Ghettos were obligatory (Synod of Breslavia, 1267).
- Christians were not allowed to sell or rent premises to Jews (Synod of Ofen, 1279).
- The conversion of a Christian to Hebraism or the reconversion of a baptized Jew to his former religion was considered heresy (Synod of Mainz, 1310).
- Prohibition of selling or pledging objects belonging to the Church to Jews (Synod of Lavour, 1368).
- Jews were not allowed to act as mediators between Christians, particularly in marriages (Council of Basel, 1434, XIX session).
- Jews were denied university degrees (Council of Basel, 1434, XIX session)

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Appendix F.

A Brief Overview of Replacement Theology

For those who are not familiar with the term “Replacement Theology,” also known as “the doctrine of Spiritual Israel,” it is the heretical teaching that God, Who cannot lie and Who *never* changes, has arbitrarily cancelled the “everlasting covenants” that He made with Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya`akov, and “with their descendants forever,” because they supposedly “rejected Messiah” at His first appearance, and that He has transferred those promises and blessings to the Gentile “church.” This is a lie straight from the pit of Hell, and it is particularly detestable to all true Believers in Israel’s Messiah, because to accept this teaching is to make God a liar, and to make the Bible just another book of legends and fables.

When God selected Avraham to be the one through whom He would work out His plan of redemption, He made a series of “everlasting covenants” with Avraham, his son Yitzchak, his grandson Ya`akov, and ultimately to their descendants forever. These unconditional covenants included these provisions:

“I will make of you a great nation.

I will bless you, and make your name great.

You will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, and I will curse him who curses you.

In you will all of the families of the earth be blessed. ...

I will give this land [all the land from the Nile River in Egypt to the west to the Euphrates River in what is now Iraq in the east] to your seed [descendants].” Genesis 12:1-7; cp. Genesis 22:15-18

God later confirmed that covenant to Avraham’s son Yitzchak ...

“But my covenant I establish with Yitzchak, whom Sarah will bear to you at this set time in the next year.” Gen. 17:21; cp. Gen 26:1-5

... and to his grandson Ya`akov, whom God later named Yisra'el.

Ya`akov went out from Be'er-Sheva, and went toward Charan. He came to a certain place, and stayed there all night, because the sun had set. He took one of the stones of the place, and put it under his head, and lay down in that place to sleep. He dreamed. Behold, a stairway set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. Behold, the angels of God ascending and descending on it. Behold, the LORD stood above it, and said, “I am the LORD, the God of Avraham your father, and the God of Yitzchak. The land whereon you lie, to you will I give it, and to your seed. Your seed will be as the dust of the earth, and you will spread abroad to the west, and to the east, and to the north, and to the south. In you and in your seed will all the families of the earth be blessed. Behold, I am with you, and will keep you, wherever you go, and will bring you again into this land. For I will not leave you, until I have done that which I have spoken of to you.” (Genesis 28:10-15)

God appeared to Ya`akov again, when he came from Paddan-Aram, and blessed him. God said to him, “Your name is Ya`akov. Your name shall not be Ya`akov any more, but your name will be Yisra'el.” He named him Yisra'el. God said to him, “I

am El Shaddai. Be fruitful and multiply. A nation and a company of nations will be from you, and kings will come out of your loins. The land which I gave to Abraham and Yitzchak, I will give it to you, and *to your seed after you will I give the land.*" (Genesis 35:9-12, emphasis added)

God later made specific provisions that Gentiles could also participate in these covenants, but *only* by becoming part of the holy community of Israel.

"When a stranger resides with you in your land, you shall not do him wrong. *The stranger who resides with you shall be to you as the native among you*, and you shall love him as yourself, for you were aliens in the land of Egypt; I am the LORD your God. ... I am the LORD your God, who brought you out from the land of Egypt. ... You shall thus observe all My statutes and all My ordinances and do them; I am the LORD." (Leviticus 19:33-37, NAS, emphasis added)

The LORD said to Moses and Aaron, "This is the ordinance of the Passover: no foreigner is to eat of it; but every man's slave purchased with money, *after you have circumcised him*, then he may eat of it. *A sojourner or a hired servant shall not eat of it.* ... All the congregation of Israel are to celebrate this. *But if a stranger sojourns with you, and celebrates the Passover to the LORD, let all his males be circumcised, and then let him come near to celebrate it; and he shall be like a native of the land. But no uncircumcised person may eat of it.* The same law [i.e., the entire Torah] shall apply to the native as to the stranger who sojourns among you." (Exodus 12:43-49, NAS, emphasis added)

Until several years after Pentecost, the *only* way for a Gentile to enter into fellowship with the Messianic Community was to be circumcised and "convert" to Judaism. The Messianic Believers who were Pharisees felt that the Gentiles should also be required to obey not just the written Torah, but the Oral Tradition as well. However, the Shliachim [Apostles] (all of whom were Messianic Jewish Rabbis) deliberated the issue and came to the conclusion (through the guidance of Ruach HaKodesh, the Holy Spirit) that since the act of circumcision did not play a role in the salvation process (as evidenced by the fact that Ruach HaKodesh had already indwelt hundreds of uncircumcised Gentiles), it would no longer be a required part of the "conversion" process. They also ruled that it would be too great a "culture shock" for a new convert to Messianic Judaism to be required to immediately fully Torah-observant to be accepted into the holy community.

They therefore arrived at an acceptable compromise position. If the newly-converted Gentiles would refrain from those activities that the Jews considered particularly reprehensible (abstain from things sacrificed to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality), there could be immediate fellowship while the Gentiles gradually were taught to walk Biblically *halakah* (according to the teachings of Moses as recorded in the Tanakh [the Hebrew Bible], not according to the oral traditions) as they participated in synagogue life and learned how to live a fully Torah-observant Jewish lifestyle (Acts 15:1-29, with particular attention to v.21).

This continued to be the pattern for the Holy Community until approximately 311 CE when Emperor Constantine decided to make "Christianity" the official religion of the Roman Empire, forcibly uniting "church" and state. Everybody who was then born into the empire was also born into the "church." Retaining his title of *Pontifex Maximus*

as head of the Babylonian Mystery Religion in Rome, he also claimed the right to be the “head” of the “church.”

Because everyone born in the Empire was also born into the “church,” Gentiles soon became the “ethnic majority” in the “church.” In 325 Constantine convened the Council of Nicea, which none of the Jewish bishops were invited to attend, at which the “church’s” new “official position” on the “church’s” relationship to the Jews was published over Constantine’s signature:

“We ought not therefore to have anything in common with the Jews, for the Savior has shown us another way. And consequently in unanimously adopting this mode, we desire dearest brethren, to separate ourselves from the detestable company of the Jews. How can they be in the right, they who, after the death of the Savior, have no longer been led by reason but by wild violence as their delusion may urge them? It would still be your duty not to tarnish your soul by communications with such wicked people as the Jews. It is our duty not to have anything in common with the murderers of our Lord.” [*The Nicean and Post-Nicean Fathers*, p. 54]

The “adopted” children of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya`akov had effectively stolen the birthright of the natural-born children, and had now driven the natural-born children out of the Holy Community. It was the Council of Nicea which took their birthright from Israel and gave it to the Gentile “church.” In 325 CE the “church replaced Israel in God’s plan”—but God had nothing whatsoever to do with it!

Replacement theology is particularly detestable to Jews because it is the theology that many government and religious leaders have used for over 1700 years to excuse their attempts to exterminate the “Jewish vermin” from the earth. It is the excuse for every atrocity that has been committed against the Jewish people from the Inquisition to Hitler’s “final solution.” It says that God, Who hates divorce, has divorced His bride and married another. (Isaiah 49:18; Isaiah 61:10; Isaiah 62:5; Psalm 60:5; Psalm 108:6; Psalm 127:2; the entire book of Hosea)

Appendix G. Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust

Canonical and Nazi Anti-Jewish Measures

by Raul Hilberg

Adapted from http://www.motl.org/resource/curriculum/curriculum_4.htm

Canonical (Church) Law	Nazi Measure
Prohibition of intermarriage and of sexual intercourse between Christians and Jews, Synod of Elvira, 306	Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, September 15, 1935
Jews and Christians not permitted to eat together, Synod of Elvira, 306	Jews barred from dining cars (Transport Minister to Interior Minister, December 30, 1939)
Jews not allowed to hold public office, Synod of Clermont, 535	Law for the Re-establishment of the Professional Civil Service, April 7, 1933
Jews not allowed to employ Christian servants or possess Christian slaves, 3d Synod of Orleans, 538	Law for the Protection of German Blood and Honor, September 15, 1935
Jews not permitted to show themselves in the streets during Passion Week, 3d Synod of Orleans, 538	Decree authorizing local authorities to bar Jews from the streets on certain days (i.e. Nazi holidays), December 3, 1938
Burning of the Talmud and other books, 12th Synod of Toledo, 681	Book burnings in Nazi Germany
Christians not permitted to patronize Jewish doctors, Trullanian Synod, 692	Decree of July 25, 1938
Christians not permitted to live in Jewish homes, Synod of Narbonne, 1050	Directive by Goring providing for concentration of Jews in houses, Dec 28, 1938
Jews obliged to pay taxes for support of the Church to the same extent as Christians, Synod of Gerona, 1073	The "Sozialausgleichsabgabe" which provided that Jews pay a special income tax in lieu of donations for Party purposes imposed on Nazis, Dec. 24, 1940
Jews not permitted to be plaintiffs, or witnesses against Christians in the Courts, 3d Lateran Council, 1179	Proposal by the Party Chancellery that Jews not be permitted to institute civil suits, September 9, 1942
Jews not permitted to withhold inheritance from descendants who had accepted Christianity, 3d Lateran Council, 1179	Decree empowering the Justice Ministry to void wills offending the "sound judgment of the people," July 31, 1938
The marking of Jewish clothes with a badge, 4th Lateran Council, 1215, Canon 68 (Copied from the legislation by Caliph Omar II [634-44], who had decreed that Christians wear blue belts and Jews, yellow belts.)	Decree of September 1, 1941

Canonical (Church) Law	Nazi Measure
Construction of new synagogues prohibited, Council of Oxford, 1722	Destruction of synagogues in entire Reich, November 10, 1938
Christians not permitted to attend Jewish ceremonies, Synod of Vienna, 1267	Friendly relations with Jews prohibited, October 24, 1941
Jews not permitted to dispute with simple Christian people about the tenets of the Catholic Religion, Synod of Vienna, 1267 Compulsory ghettos, Synod of Breslau, 1267	Order by Heyrich, September 21, 1939
Christians not permitted to sell or rent real estate to Jews, Synod of Ofen, 1279 Adoption by a Christian of the Jewish religion or return by a baptized Jew to the Jewish religion defined as heresy, Synod of Mainz, 1310	Decree providing for compulsory sale of Jewish real estate, December 3, 1938 Adoption by a Christian of the Jewish religion places him in jeopardy of being treated as a Jew, June 26, 1942
Sale or transfer of Church articles to Jews prohibited, Synod of Lavour, 1368 Jews not permitted to act as agents in the conclusion of contracts between Christians, specially marriage contracts, Council of Basel, 1434	Decree of July 6, 1938, providing for liquidation of Jewish real estate agencies, brokerage agencies, and marriage agencies to non-Jews.
Jews not permitted to obtain academic degrees, Council of Basel, 1434	Law against overcrowding of German schools and universities, April 25, 1933

Concerning the Jews and their Lies
by Martin Luther, 1542 (Excerpts from)

Source: International March of The Living. "Anti-Semitism and the Holocaust."
www.motl.org/resource/curriculum/curriculum_4.htm, copyright ©2002 March of the
Living International, 136 East 39 Street, New York, NY 10016-0914, Tel.: 212-252-0900; Fax:
212-252-0474. All Rights Reserved.

"First, their synagogues or churches should be set on fire...

"Second, their homes should likewise be broken down and destroyed. They ought to be put under one roof or in a stable, like Gypsies, in order that they may realize that they are not masters in our land, as they boast, but miserable captives...

"Third, they should be deprived of their prayer books and Talmuds in which such idolatry, lies, cursing, and blasphemy are wrought.

"Fourth, their rabbis must be forbidden under threat of death to teach any more...

"Fifth, passport and traveling privileges should be absolutely forbidden the Jews.

"Sixth, they ought to be stopped from usury. All their cash and valuables of silver and gold ought to be taken from them and put aside for safekeeping. For this reason, as said before, everything that they possess they stole and robbed from us through their usury, for they have no other means of support...

"Seventh, let the young and strong Jews and Jewesses be given the flail, the ax, the hoe, the spade, the distaff, and spindle..."

Appendix H.
Dates for the Births of
Yochanan the Immerser
and
Yeshua HaMashiach

December 25 is the day that is marked on the Gregorian calendar as the date of birth for Yeshua HaMashiach, but as we have demonstrated elsewhere, that date was established by a corrupt and pagan Roman church to “Christianize” and give some sense of legitimacy to their worship of the Roman sun god Saturn, which was simply another name for Nim’rod.

Nim’rod, whose name means “rebellion” or “the valiant,” was a son of Kush [Cush], the grandson of Ham, and the great-grandson of Noah [Noah]. He founded the city of Babel [later renamed Babylon], became the first ruler of the Babylonian empire, founded astrology, and built the tower of Babel, which was very probably an observatory for the study of astrology.¹⁷³ After his death, the people of Babel claimed he was resurrected as the god Tammuz, believed to be both the son and husband of Semiramis. This marked the beginning of all pagan religions, particularly the Babylonian Mystery Religion and its variants.

They also elevated his mother to deity and worshipped her as “the Queen of Heaven.” As Queen of Heaven, she has been worshipped as Semiramis, Ashtoreth, Astarte, Ishtar, Venus, and Diana, among other names and designations of the fertility goddess, and now Miriam [Mary], Yeshua’s mother, is worshipped by many as the current “Queen of Heaven.” Ishtar is phonetically the word from which “Easter” is derived; thus, the ancient worship of the fertility goddess Ashtoreth is preserved in bunnies (because rabbits are the ultimate expression of fertility), baby chicks, and spring flowers (symbols of new life). God took the kingdom from Solomon and delivered it to Jeroboam “because they have forsaken Me, and have worshiped Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians” (1 Kings 11:33) — that is, because they celebrated the “Feast of Ishtar” (Easter). So one must ask the question: why do most Christians feel that God would have changed His mind and now approve of the celebration of Ishtar with its bunnies, baby chicks, and spring flowers?

The events of Nim’rod’s life are recorded in Genesis 10:8 ff., from which we learn (1) that he was a Cushite; (2) that he established an empire in Shinar (the classical Babylonia), the chief towns being Babel, Erech, Accad and Calneh; and (3) that he extended this empire northward along the course of the Tigris over Assyria, where he founded a second group of capitals, Nineveh, Rehoboth, Calah and Resen.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷³ Genesis 11:4 says literally, “... let us build for ourselves ... a tower, and at the top, the heavens...” This may very well be a reference to the astrological signs of the Zodiac.

¹⁷⁴ Dr. William Smith. Entry for ‘Nimrod’, *Smith's Bible Dictionary*. On the Internet at <http://www.biblestudytools.net/Dictionaries/SmithsBibleDictionary/smt.cgi?number=T3203>. 1901.

Some argue that December 25 was chosen so Christ-mass would coincide with Chanukah, which falls on the 25th day of Kislev. According to that argument, a Jewish rabbi was asked what month on the Jewish calendar corresponded to the Roman month of December, and he indicated Kislev. The Romans, not having a firm understanding of the Hebrew calendar, erroneously assumed that the entire Jewish month of Kislev was the same as the entire Roman month of December, and thus Christmas was set on the 25th day of December.

I believe it is much more rational to assume that December 25 was chosen for Christ-mass because it was already in the Roman tradition as the day to celebrate Saturnalia, the festival of Saturn, which was another name for Nimrod or Tammuz.

Although most people claim that it is not possible to know the date of Messiah's birth with any certainty, I believe that using the evidence of Scripture, it is a simple task to calculate the actual birth date of Mashiach to within a very few days; the exact date is then easily extrapolated.

The Conception of Yochanan the Immerser (Luke 1:5-25)

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Yehudah [Judah], a certain Kohen [priest] named Zekharyah [Zechariah], of the priestly division of Aviyah [Abijah]. He had a wife of the daughters of Aharon [Aaron], and her name was Elisheva [Elizabeth]. **6** They were both righteous before God, walking blamelessly in all the mitzvot [commandments] and ordinances of the Lord. **7** But they had no child, because Elisheva was barren, and they both were well advanced in years. **8** Now it happened, while he executed the Kohen's office before God in the order of his division, **9** according to the custom of the Kohen's office, his lot was to enter into the temple of the Lord and burn incense. **10** The whole multitude of the people were praying outside at the hour of incense. **11** An angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. **12** Zekharyah was troubled when he saw him, and fear fell on him. **13** But the angel said to him, "Don't be afraid, Zekharyah, because your request has been heard, and your wife, Elisheva, will bear you a son, and you shall call his name Yochanan [John]. **14** You will have joy and gladness; and many will rejoice at his birth. **15** For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and he will drink no wine nor strong drink. He will be filled with the Ruach HaKodesh [the Holy Spirit], even from his mother's womb. **16** He will turn many of the children of Yisra'el to the Lord, their God. **17** He will go before his face in the spirit and power of Eliyah [Elijah], 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord." **18** Zekharyah said to the angel, "How can I be sure of this? For I am an old man, and my wife is well advanced in years." **19** The angel answered him, "I am Gavri'el [Gabriel], who stands in the presence of God. I was sent to speak to you, and to bring you this good news. **20** Behold, you will be silent and not able to speak, until the day that these things will happen, because you didn't believe my words, which will be fulfilled in their proper time." **21** The people were waiting for Zekharyah, and they marveled while he delayed in the temple. **22** When he came out, he could not speak to them, and they perceived that he had seen a vision in the temple. He continued making signs to

them, and remained mute. **23** It happened, when the days of his service were fulfilled, he departed to his house. **24** After these days Elisheva, his wife, conceived, and she hid herself five months, saying, **25** “Thus has the Lord done to me in the days in which he looked at me, to take away my reproach among men.” (Luke 1:5-25, HNV)

First Chronicles tells us that the Levitical priesthood was divided into 12 divisions. The ancient Jewish Historian Josephus (Antiquities 7) tells us that each division served for a period of one week. The first division began its period of service on the first day of the year — 1 Nisan (also called Aviv or Abib) — as God had established the calendar in Exodus 12:2. Three weeks out of each year — during the weeks of Pesach (Passover), Shavuot (Pentecost), and Sukkoth (Tabernacles) — all 24,000 priests served together.

As Zekharyah was in the division of Aviyah (Luke 1:5), his term of service began in early Spring on the first day of the eighth week (27th of Ayyar) and ran for one week through the 4th of Sivan. As the following week (5-11 Sivan) was Shavuot, the Feast of Pentecost, he would have stayed in the temple and served that week also with all the priests. Luke 1:23-24 tells us that Zekharyah finished his duties at the Temple, and that Elisheva conceived shortly after his return home. This sets the date for Yochanan's conception at approximately the third week of Sivan. [In Gregorian year 2001, that week corresponds to the first week of June. Adding nine months to that date puts the birth of Yochanan sometime near the first week of the Gregorian month of March.]

The Conception of Yeshua (Luke 1:26-55)

26 Now in the sixth month [of Elisheva's pregnancy, verse 36], the angel Gavri'el was sent from God to a city of the Galil [Galilee], named Natzeret [Nazareth], 27 to a virgin pledged to be married to a man whose name was Yosef [Joseph], of the house of David. The virgin's name was Miryam [Mary]. 28 Having come in to her, the angel said, “Rejoice, you highly favored one! The Lord is with you. Blessed are you among women!” 29 But when she saw him, she was greatly troubled at the saying, and considered what kind of salutation this might be. 30 The angel said to her, “Don't be afraid, Miryam, for you have found favor with God. 31 Behold, you will conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and will call his name “Yeshua” [the Hebrew word for “Salvation” or “Yahweh Saves”] 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of Ha`Elyon [the Most High]. The Lord God will give to him the throne of his father, David, 33 and he will reign over the house of Ya`akov [Jacob] forever. There will be no end of his kingdom.” 34 Miryam said to the angel, “How will this be, seeing I am a virgin?” 35 The angel answered her, “The Ruach HaKodesh will come on you, and the power of Ha`Elyon will overshadow you. Therefore also the holy one who is born from you will be called the Son of God. 36 Behold, Elisheva, your relative, also has conceived a son in her old age; and this is the sixth month with her who was called barren. 37 For no word from God will be void of power.” 38 Miryam said, “Behold, the handmaid of the Lord; be it to me according to your word.” The angel departed from her.

39 Miryam arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, into a city of Yehudah, 40 and entered into the house of Zekharyah and greeted Elisheva. 41 It happened, when Elisheva heard Miryam's greeting, the baby leaped in her womb, and Elisheva was filled with the Ruach HaKodesh. 42 She called out with a loud voice, and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 Why am I so favored, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For behold, when the voice of your greeting came into my ears, the baby leaped in my womb for joy! 45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of the things which have been spoken to her from the Lord!" 46 Miryam said, "My soul magnifies the Lord. 47 My spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior, 48 For he has looked at the humble state of his handmaid. For behold, from now on, all generations will call me blessed. 49 For he who is mighty has done to me great things. Holy is his name. 50 His mercy is for generations of generations on those who fear him. 51 He has shown strength with his arm. He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their heart. 52 He has put down princes from their thrones. And has exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things. He has sent the rich away empty. 54 He has given help to Yisra'el, his servant, that he might remember mercy, 55 As he spoke to our fathers, Toward Avraham [Abraham] and his seed forever." 56 Miryam stayed with her about three months, and returned to her house. (Luke 1:26-55, HNV)

Near the end of the sixth month of Elisheva's pregnancy, the angel Gavri'el appeared to Miryam and told her about Elisheva, saying, "This is the sixth month with her who was called barren." Miryam immediately left Natzeret (verse 39, "with haste") and went to the "hill country" near Jerusalem to the home of Zekharyah and Elisheva. We know for sure that Miryam was already pregnant with Yeshua because Yochanan, still in Elisheva's womb, recognized the unborn Yeshua. [What further evidence do the baby-killers need that life begins at conception?]

This sets Yeshua's conception around the end of Kislev during Chanukah (mid-December), the Feast of Lights, demonstrating in a special way that Yeshua is the Light of the World.

"Yeshua is shown celebrating Chanukah in John 10:22, 23. It is at this celebration that He declares 'I and My Father are One' [John 10:30], which testifies to His Divine origin in His conception. It also reinforces Chanukah as the time of His conception."¹⁷⁵

The Birth of Yochanan [Luke1:56-80]

57 Now the time that Elisheva should give birth was fulfilled, and she brought forth a son. **58** Her neighbors and her relatives heard that the Lord had magnified his mercy towards her, and they rejoiced with her. **59** It happened on the eighth day, that they came to circumcise the child; and they would have called him Zekharyah, after the name of the father. **60** His mother answered, "Not so; but he will be called Yochanan." **61** They said to her, "There is no one among your relatives who is called by this name." **62** They made signs to his father, what he would

¹⁷⁵ MRav Dr. David Hargis, www.messianic.com/articles/dates.htm

have him called. **63** He asked for a writing tablet, and wrote, "His name is Yochanan." They all marveled. **64** His mouth was opened immediately, and his tongue freed, and he spoke, blessing God. **65** Fear came on all who lived around them, and all these sayings were talked about throughout all the hill country of Yehudah. **66** All who heard them laid them up in their heart, saying, "What then will this child be?" The hand of the Lord was with him.

67 His father, Zekharyah, was filled with the Ruach HaKodesh, and prophesied, saying, **68** "Blessed be the Lord, the God of Yisra'el, For he has visited and worked redemption for his people; **69** And has raised up a horn of salvation for us in the house of his servant David **70** (As he spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets who have been from of old), **71** Salvation from our enemies, and from the hand of all who hate us; **72** To show mercy towards our fathers, To remember his holy covenant, **73** The oath which he spoke to Avraham, our father, **74** To grant to us that we, being delivered out of the hand of our enemies, should serve him without fear, **75** In holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life. **76** And you, child, will be called a prophet of Ha'Elyon, For you will go before the face of the Lord to make ready his ways, **77** To give knowledge of salvation to his people by the remission of their sins, **78** Because of the tender mercy of our God, Whereby the dawn from on high will visit us, **79** To shine on those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death; To guide our feet into the way of shalom." **80** The child grew, and grew strong in spirit, and was in the desert until the day of his public appearance to Yisra'el. (Luke 1, HNV)

The prophet Mal'akhi (Malachi) tells us that Eliyah (Elijah) the prophet must come to prepare the hearts of the fathers and their children before Mashiach comes.

4 "Remember the law of Moshe [Moses] my servant, which I commanded to him in Horev for all Yisra'el, even statutes and ordinances. **5** Behold, I will send you Eliyah the prophet before the great and terrible day of the LORD comes. **6** He will turn the hearts of the fathers to the children, and the hearts of the children to their fathers, lest I come and strike the eretz with a curse." (Malachi 4, HNV)

Therefore, in anticipation of the coming of Mashiach, when Pesach (Passover) is celebrated, a place at the table is set, and a cup of wine is poured for Eliyah (Elijah), and the door of the house is left open so that he may come in to the celebration. It is clear that for centuries before the birth of Messiah the Jews had been anticipating the return of Eliyah during Pesach.

The way in which Gavri'el worded his announcement to Zekharyah makes it clear that Yochanan was to be the fulfillment of Mal'akhi's prophecy: *"He will turn many of the children of Yisra'el to the Lord, their God. He will go before his face in the spirit and power of Eliyah, 'to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,' and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just; to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."*

Luke 1:56 tells us that Miryam stayed with Elisheva for three months, which would have been until Yochanan was born. We can now calculate the date of Yochanan's birth with great accuracy.

- A full term pregnancy term is 41 weeks.
- There are 27 weeks in the first six months (two trimesters) of pregnancy.

- There are 27 weeks from the spring service of Abiyah to Chanukah.
- There are 14 weeks remaining to accomplish the last trimester and bring the pregnancy to full term.
- There are exactly 14 weeks from Chanukah to Passover (Nisan 14-22).

Therefore, Yochanan was born at Passover, most certainly on the first day of Unleavened Bread. He was circumcised on the eighth day, which would be the last day of Passover/Feast of Unleavened Bread. His birth therefore fulfills both Mal'akhi's prophecy and the Jewish expectation that it would occur at Passover.

The Birth of Yeshua (Luke 2)

1 Now it happened in those days, that a decree went out from Caesar Augustus that all the world should be enrolled. **2** This was the first enrollment made when Quirinius was governor of Aram. **3** All went to enroll themselves, everyone to his own city. **4** Yosef also went up from the Galil, out of the city of Natzeret, into Yehudah, to the city of David, which is called Beit-Lechem [Bethlehem], because he was of the house and family of David; **5** to enroll himself with Miryam, who was pledged to be married to him as wife, being great with child. **6** It happened, while they were there, that the day had come that she should give birth. **7** She brought forth her firstborn son, and she wrapped him in bands of cloth, and laid him in a feeding trough [better translated as “food tray” for reasons we will see later], because there was no room for them in the inn. (Luke 2, HNV)

For the past several hundred years, Gentile Christians have taught that poor Mary and Joseph were forced to go to Bethlehem in the middle of winter to register for their taxes, and that there were so many people trying to register at the same time that all the motels and hotels were full. Nearly all of us have seen the Christmas play in which a third-grader with a pillow tied to his tummy and a cotton beard hanging by strings from his ears comes to the door and tells Mary and Joseph that the inn is full, but they are welcome to sleep in his barn out behind the inn. They trudge through the snow out to the barn where Joseph moves the cattle, sheep, donkeys, and sometimes even chickens out of the way to find some clean straw, and he makes a bed in a manger for their baby “Jesus” to sleep in. It’s a beautiful story, but it’s simply not true ... it’s only a Gentile myth.

First, when the decree was issued, citizens were given a full year to register for the census. There was absolutely no reason for thousands of Bethlehemites to have to come to their hometown all at once to register. That being the case, we must ask why Joseph would bring his wife Mary all the way from Nazareth to Bethlehem to register when her pregnancy was so far along.

There were three great feasts during the year which the people of Adonai were expected to make every reasonable effort to attend in Jerusalem: Pesach (the feast of unleavened bread and Passover), Shavuot (Pentecost, the feast of harvest), and Sukkoth (the Feast of Ingathering, Booths, or Tabernacles). [*“You shall observe a feast to me three times a year.” Exodus 23:14*]

During these three feasts, the population of “the metropolitan Jerusalem area” would swell from about a hundred twenty thousand to something over two million people (according to Josephus). Every home in the entire area was open to guests, and of course all the hotels and motels would have been booked up for months.

However, during the feast of Sukkoth [Tabernacles or Booths, pronounced “**sue**-coat”], every family was expected to live at least part of each day in their tabernacle or booth, called a sukkah (pronounced **sue**-kah), which is a temporary dwelling usually made out of palm and/or bamboo branches, to remind them that for 40 years their ancestors had lived in temporary shelters in the wilderness on their trek to the Promised Land. At night, these sukkoth [the plural form of sukkah] were available for the overnight lodging of out-of-towners, and the homeowners would stock them with food for the travelers. They placed the food on a food tray attached to the inside wall of the sukkah to keep it off the ground.

Beit-Lechem (Bethlehem) was a small village in the suburbs just about four miles south of Jerusalem. Miriam and Yosef had apparently decided to register with the census-takers when they came up to Jerusalem for the Feast of Tabernacles. Evidently they had intended to stop overnight in Bethlehem, register in the morning, and then proceed on into Jerusalem for the feast. When they checked the “hotel” for available rooms, as there were no vacancies, the innkeeper offered them shelter in his sukkah, his tabernacle, which had been erected and well-stocked with food for the express purpose of sheltering feast-keepers. It was not a shelter for animals at all. And when their Baby was born, they laid Him on the food shelf to keep Him up off the damp ground. When the (probably agnostic) Gentiles who translated the “King James” Bible reached this passage in Luke’s gospel, they knew nothing of Jewish tradition or how Sukkoth was observed. Thinking only in terms of life in Medieval England, they translated the word for “food tray” as “manger,” and the whole Gentile myth of Yeshua’s birth in a barn was created out of an ignorant error in translation.

As to establishing the date for His birth, one thing is very certain ... He was certainly *not* born during the winter. Luke 2:8 tells us: *“There were shepherds in the same country staying in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock.”*

The weather in Israel is very similar to that in central California. By December it is quite cold, and the sheep have all been brought into the fold for the winter. “As is well known, the shepherds in Palestine do not ‘abide in the fields’ during the winter season. The shepherds always bring their flocks in from the mountain slopes and fields not later than the fifteenth of October!” [Ralph Woodrow, *Babylon Mystery Religion*. Self-published, 1966, p.160]

Since we have already shown that Yeshua was exactly six months younger than Yochanan, it is now easy to place His birth in mid-Tishrei. The only reason that Beit-Lechem would possibly crowded in mid-Tishrei would be for Sukkoth. The first and last days of Sukkoth were “high Shabbats,” and travel on those days was forbidden. Therefore Yosef would have planned their trip to arrive no later than a few hours before sunset preceding the first day of Sukkoth. According to Luke’s account, Yeshua was born that night, on 15 Tishrei.

8 There were shepherds in the same country staying in the field, and keeping watch by night over their flock. **9** Behold, an angel of the Lord stood by them, and

the glory of the Lord shone around them, and they were terrified. **10** The angel said to them, “Don’t be afraid, for behold, I bring you good news of great joy which will be to all the people. **11** For there is born to you, this day, in the city of David, a Savior, who is Messiah the Lord. **12** This is the sign to you: you will find a baby wrapped in strips of cloth, lying in a feeding trough” [food tray]. **13** Suddenly, there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God, and saying, **14** “Glory to God in the highest, On eretz [earth] shalom [peace], good will toward men.” **15** It happened, when the angels went away from them into the sky, that the shepherds said one to another, “Let’s go to Beit-Lechem, now, and see this thing that has happened, which the Lord has made known to us.” **16** They came with haste, and found both Miryam and Yosef, and the baby lying in [on] the feeding trough [food tray]. **17** When they saw it, they publicized widely the saying which was spoken to them about this child. **18** All who heard it wondered at the things which were spoken to them by the shepherds. **19** But Miryam kept all these sayings, pondering them in her heart. **20** The shepherds returned, glorifying and praising God for all the things that they had heard and seen, even as it was spoken to them.

21 When eight days were fulfilled for the circumcision of the child, his name was called Yeshua, which was given by the angel before he was conceived in the womb. **22** When the days of their purification according to the law of Moshe were fulfilled, they brought him up to Yerushalayim, to present him to the Lord **23** (as it is written in the law of the Lord, “Every male who opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord”), **24** and to offer a sacrifice according to that which is said in the law of the Lord, “A pair of turtledoves, or two young pigeons.” (Luke 2, HNV)

The “birth” of a Jewish baby boy was not considered complete until he had been circumcised on the eighth day. On the eighth day, Yeshua’s “presentation” in the Temple included His circumcision according to Torah. Thus we see that the birth of Yeshua HaMashiach spanned the entire eight days of Sukkoth, including His birth on the holy Shabbat which was the first day of Sukkoth and His circumcision on the holy Shabbat which was the eighth and final day of Sukkoth.

At His birth he was placed on the *food tray* in the sukkah, thus demonstrating that He is indeed the true Bread of Life (John 6:33-51). God’s preparation of the Feast of Sukkoth centuries before His birth gives extra significance to Yochanan’s comment **“The Word became flesh, and lived** [literally, the word for “lived” is “tabernacled”] **among us. We saw his glory, such glory as of the one and only Son of the Father, full of grace and truth”** (John 1:14).

“Note that God provided two holy feasts that lasted eight days, Passover/Unleavened Bread and the Feast of Tabernacles. John the Baptist, the forerunner of Messiah, was born and circumcised in the eight days of the first, then six months later Yeshua, the Messiah, was born and circumcised the eight days of the second. John came in the first month of the year and Yeshua came in the seventh month. In ministry, John introduced the way through Messiah and then Yeshua perfected it, even as the first and seventh months signify. ...

The Feast of Tabernacles is a most important commemoration. Zechariah 14:16,17 tells us that one day all nations will be required by law to honor this

feast. For what greater reason, than it is the birthday of the King of Kings! Why should we delay?”

— (MRav Dr. David Hargis, www.messianic.com/articles/dates.htm)

Appendix I. What is Truth?

If you have read this far, you may well be asking yourself, “Why is this fellow making such a big deal out of all this? Just who does he think he is, anyway, telling us that so much of what the Church has been teaching for nearly two thousand years is wrong? So what if the Church chooses to worship on Sunday and celebrate Christmas and Easter the way they want to? What’s the difference, anyway?”

Yeshua taught us, “You will know *the truth*, and *the truth* will set you free” (John 8:32). It is obvious that it was His intent for His followers to know and obey “the truth.” But in recent decades our society has been taught that there is no such thing as “objective truth,” that “truth” is “whatever works for you.” In a popular motion picture of the late 1990s, there is a scene in which an older, experienced attorney tells a younger attorney, “The only truth that matters is the truth that I create for the jury in that courtroom.”

Most people today feel that every individual is responsible for creating his or her own version of “truth”—the Buddhist, the Hindu, the Moslem, or the Christian is each entitled to his own “truth.” And even within Christianity, each denomination is entitled to create its own “truth.”

But for the person who would be faithful to the King of the Universe, to Him Who is revealed in the pages of Scripture, there can be one, and only one, single, absolute Truth. And it is up to each Believer to strive for the knowledge and understanding of that one absolute Truth, as demonstrated in the following message that I first delivered in the early 1990s.

Title: What is Truth?

Topic: Knowing truth in uncertain times

Theme: God wants us to know *His* truth, which is *The Truth*

Proposition: The only “True Truth” is God’s Truth

Text: John 18:33-38 (CJB)

So Pilate went back into the headquarters, called Yeshua, and said to him, “Are you the king of the Jews?” Yeshua answered, “Are you asking this on your own, or have other people told you about me?” Pilate replied, “Am I a Jew? Your own nation and head cohanim have handed you over to me; what have you done?” Yeshua answered, “My kingship does not derive its authority from this world’s order of things. If it did, my men would have fought to keep me from being arrested by the Judeans. But my kingship does not come from here.” “So then,” Pilate said to him, “You are a king, after all.” Yeshua answered, “You say I am a king. The reason I have been born, the reason I have come into the world, is to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to me.” Pilate asked him, “What is truth?”

What is “truth”? What an interesting question for our times.

Without a doubt, it is a gross understatement to say that we live in uncertain times. It’s getting progressively harder to know who to believe about almost any subject.

I remember a time when, if we wanted to know the truth about what was happening in the world, all we had to do was turn on the radio or television and tune in to Walter Cronkite, Chet Huntley, David Brinkley, or any one of a dozen other reporters. And if they said a thing, we could be pretty sure that it was at least close to the truth.

Now, it's not a secret that so-called "news" programs are driven more by ratings and political agendas than by the truth, and many have gone so far as to actually go out and create events so that they would have something sensational to "report at six" or show "film at eleven." Now they interrupt the eight o'clock program, the nine o'clock program, and the ten o'clock program with a shot of the "reporter" sitting in front of a bank of television monitors, saying in his or her most conspiratorial voice, "Twenty years after the king's death, Phyllis Diller is having his baby! Stay tuned for details following tonight's movie of the week!"

Then after sitting through 57 minutes of editorials and political commentaries, they finally give the details on "tonight's big story:" "Last night, twenty years after the death of Elvis Presley, the late king of rock and roll, Phyllis Diller had his daughter, Lisa Marie, and her new husband, Michael Jackson, over to her Bel Air estate for a belated wedding reception. Barry Manilow provided the entertainment for the gala event! And goodnight from Babylon!"

By the way, we no longer have news reporters. We have commentators. News reporters used to tell us what happened. Now commentators tell us what they think about what may or may not have happened. And if it did happen, it may or may not have happened the way they said it did.

You might guess that I don't watch much TV news anymore, but I do listen to Glenn Beck once in a while! (Have I just accidentally revealed my political leaning?)

Newspapers aren't any better now. The motto of the New York Times used to be "All the news that's fit to print." Now their motto is "All the views that fit, we print." If you wanted to read the editorials, you used to have to turn to the editorial page. Now virtually every page consists of editorials rather than news ... including the comics page.

Remember the Saturday Evening Post? Now there was a family magazine! (Yes, I'm really that old.) I remember every Thursday when it arrived in the mail (I never did understand why they didn't call it the Thursday Afternoon Post), I would grab it away from my younger brother—that was my right; I was the oldest; and besides, he couldn't even read yet—I would grab the Post and turn to the jokes and cartoons on the very last page.

Tabloids used to be an oddity to pass the time in the checkout line at the supermarket. Now it's hard to tell the difference between the National Inquirer, People Magazine, and US News and World Report! Not only can you not trust the press any more, but you also can't trust many of the folks in our state and national capitals.

And while I'm on the subject of "Who do you trust?" ... how about that Supreme Court?!? This august group of men and women is appointed for life for the specific purpose of protecting us from a government that tends to overstep its authority from time to time. The High Court's job is to make sure that all the players follow the rules as defined by our Constitution. But instead of making sure that our leaders stay

within the limits imposed upon them by our wise Founding Fathers, the Court has taken up the occupation of writing their own laws and imposing them upon us, while at the same time maintaining that they themselves are not subject to the limits that the Constitution places on them in the performance of their duties.

It is they who have rewritten the laws of our land to make it unlawful for us to have prayer in our children's school classrooms or at their graduations and to make it unlawful for the American citizens to tell their elected representatives that they can serve in office for only half of their life rather than for their whole life.

But we must not, under any circumstances, allow God's Ten Commandments to adorn the wall of any schoolhouse, courtroom, or other public building. Not only does that violate the sacred "wall of separation between church and state"—which wall, by the way, does not exist in any single one of this country's founding documents; it is a total fiction invented by corrupt politicians and a corrupt Supreme Court to further their own political agendas—but displaying God's Law in public places violates the sacred "wall of separation between church and state"; it is also considered a form of child abuse for us to force our "superstitions" upon our children. If you think that I am being facetious, I assure you that I have never been more serious.

On the radio many years ago I heard a discussion between Dr. James Dobson, the Christian psychologist, and one of the best-known Christian youth workers in the United States. They were discussing the moral state of American adolescents, and the guest made the point that among the thousands of young people that he has worked with in recent years, one of the major concerns of the young people — remember, this is their concern for themselves — is that "they do not know the difference between right and wrong," and that concerns them greatly. Most young people want to do what is right, but without proper guidance, they simply do not know what to do.

So this youth worker started a program of work with these young people to help them learn and apply basic moral values, and he enlisted the aid of their parents. But the parents told him that they were powerless to help, because *they themselves simply do not know the difference between right and wrong*. In fact, most of them (the parents) had been taught that no moral absolutes exist.

I submit for your consideration that this generation that honestly does not know right from wrong is the product of a political system that removes from our public schools, from our courts, and from our nation's history books the basic Biblical values upon which this nation was founded.

It's no wonder that you cannot trust our media or their representatives; it's no wonder that you cannot trust our courts; it's no wonder that you cannot trust our military; it's no wonder that you cannot trust our legislative bodies.

They have been converted in large numbers to the only state-authorized and state-sponsored religion in the United States: secular humanism. And one of the main tenets of the humanistic faith is that there is no such thing as objective truth.

But I have some good news for you. They are terribly, horribly wrong! The message that I have to share with you is that:

- First of all, there is a truth: an absolute, objective truth

- Second, the truth is, in fact, knowable, and
- Third, God wants us to know the truth.

There is a Truth

What is Truth?

For 6,000 years of man's history, that we know of, men have been trying, like Pilate, to answer the question, "What is truth?"

To my ears, the question, "What is truth?" sounds much like the word games that philosophers play, like "Why is there air?" and "What is the sound of one hand clapping?" It seemed appropriate to seek the answer to a philosophical question by asking a philosopher, so I consulted the Dictionary of Philosophy and Religion in hopes of finding a concise definition of "truth."

Instead of finding an acceptable answer to my question, "What is truth?" I found a two-page article with thirty-six definitions of truth—all different! But these can be reduced to five basic philosophies of truth:

First: the **coherence theory** states that what is true is a coherent system of ideas. If I understand that theory rightly, it means that the entire collection of our humanity's ideas, at least those ideas that have not yet been abandoned, constitute truth.

Second: the **pragmatic theory** says that whatever is a "workable" or satisfactory solution of a problematic situation is true—that is, whatever makes sense to me and solves my immediate problem is my "truth" for that occasion. "Hey, whatever works!"

Third: the **semantic theory** states that "assertions about truth are in a meta-language and apply to statements of the base language"—that is, truth is such a meta-physical concept that it cannot even be intelligently expressed in real language.

Fourth: the **performative theory** states that truth occurs whenever I agree with a given statement—that is, whatever I agree with at a given moment in time is truth for me in that particular time and place.

And finally, the **correspondence theory** states that what corresponds to reality is true.

According to the philosopher who wrote this book, "Although in its initial stage, as through most of history, philosophy had proceeded on the basis that there is an objective truth to be found, this assumption was challenged by the Greek Sophists." In other words, there have been, and still are, many philosophers who hold that there is no such thing as objective truth, no absolute standard by which everything else is to be measured.

This is one of the principal tenets of the secular humanist religion. Nothing exists or can exist outside of man and his known and knowable universe. For there to be a God, He would, of necessity, exist outside of the universe He created. And since we have already determined that nothing exists outside of the universe, then, by definition, there can be no God.

Additionally, according to secular humanism, since we know that everything within our universe is relative, then all of reality is relative. If all reality is relative, then there can be no absolutes within it. And since nothing can exist outside of our real universe, then neither can there be any absolutes outside our reality.

The conclusion, then, is that since there is no God and there are no absolutes, then there is nothing or no one to whom we are ultimately responsible or accountable.

We are now entering the third generation of children who have been raised in a godless educational system. They are prohibited from praying in school or from viewing the Ten Commandments or any other representation of God's absolutes. They are no longer exposed to the study of the founding documents of this country, because the distinctly Christian content of those documents would violate the imaginary "wall of separation between church and state."

Even history is being rewritten to remove all suggestion of Christian influence on our society. For example, a few years ago Christopher Columbus' diary of the events leading up to his voyage to the New World was published. In it, we find that he was a devout believer in Yeshua and of Jewish descent—that is, a Messianic Jew! Apparently, when he was about 15 or 16, he came to Newfoundland as a cabin boy on a Norse ship. In his diary, he makes several specific references to his desire to provide for how the natives of that new land could be evangelized for Yeshua HaMashiach [the Hebrew name and title that has been translated into English as "Jesus Christ"], and that evangelism was his primary goal in 1492. His diary entries frequently reference his faith and his belief that Ruach HaKodesh [the Holy Spirit] was leading him in his quest. His ship was apparently blown off course and landed much farther south than he had intended. But the history textbooks are being rewritten to instruct America's children that Columbus's motives were purely financial and that his discovery of North America was simply a freak accident.

Being deprived of nearly all exposure to the concept of God or to any form of moral absolutes, it is little wonder that we are raising the third generation of Americans who simply do not know right from wrong. Not only are moral standards being removed from their experience, but the altered history to which they are being exposed also studiously avoids any reference to the sociological benefits provided by those who have believed in our accountability to God and His absolute standards.

As Dr. Francis Schaeffer puts it, "What is taught is that there is no final truth, no meaning, no absolutes; that it is not only that we have not found truth and meaning, but that they do not exist."

If there is no truth, no meaning, and no absolutes to our existence, then there is no point to any of this. This philosophy eventually drove Nietzsche insane. Remember that Nietzsche was the modern philosopher who screamed to the world that "God is dead." But he understood the result of his philosophy: if God is dead, then everything is gone. If God is dead, there are no answers to anything, and insanity is the only end.

We must understand that without a personal Creator God, without any external, objective truth, we are eventually left with a universe that is the product of nothing but impersonal time plus chance.

Even Charles Darwin, the father of the evolution heresy, recognized the difficulty in explaining the universe in terms of time and chance: “With my mind I cannot believe that these things come by chance,” he wrote in his autobiography. And in other places he wrote of his own theories, “I know in my mind this can’t be true, but my mind is only a monkey’s mind, and who can trust a mind like that?”

Is it any wonder that despair is epidemic and that suicide is the third leading cause of death among American adolescents?

The most recent U.S. mortality data for adolescents comes from the CDC National Vital Statistics System (2024).¹⁷⁶ According to that dataset, the leading causes of death among American adolescents ages 15–19 are

1. Accidents (Unintentional Injuries)
2. Homicide
3. Suicide

The CDC FastStats page lists only the top three for adolescents 15–19. What a terrible diagnosis of our sick society it is that the murder of adolescents is even more common than their suicide!

Truth Is “That Which Is”

But the good news is that, in spite of all the vain philosophies, there is a truth: an objective, knowable truth. You may recall that the correspondence theory of truth states “that which corresponds to reality is true.”

Aristotle has provided the definitive expression of the correspondence theory. He said, “To say of what is that it is not, or of what is not that it is, is false, while to say of what is that it is, and of what is not that it is not, is true.” Thus, truth is defined by reality, not by what we think or feel about that reality.

Francis Schaeffer summarizes Aristotle’s definition quite effectively: “Truth is that which is.” And Shakespeare adds the logical corollary: “Truth is truth to the end of reckoning.”

But we must also remember to add another corollary: the corollary of antithesis. That is, “If a statement is true, its opposite is not true. If there is that which is true (and there is), then the opposite of truth is not true.”

If I were to hold up a bright, shiny, ripe apple and say that it is red, and if it is true that the apple is, in fact, red, then it must follow that if I then say that the apple is not red, then that statement must be “not true;” that is, it must be false.

So, then, it is abundantly clear that in spite of the incoherent babbling to the contrary by many philosophers, both ancient and modern, there in fact exists within our universe an absolute, objective truth, an absolute standard by which everything else is to be measured; and that objective truth corresponds to reality—truth is that which is! And the opposite of that truth is false.

¹⁷⁶ FastStats - Adolescent Health. <https://www.cdc.gov/nchs/fastats/adolescent-health.htm>

The Truth Is Knowable

Now that we have established the fact that truth is, we next need to determine whether it is possible for us to know the truth, or if, as the “semantic theory” of truth would have us believe, that truth cannot even be intelligently expressed in real language.

The Bible has much to say about truth, with nearly 3,000 direct references to truth and related terms like “to know” or “to believe” something to be true. The Greek word translated as “truth” in the Apostolic Writings (the so-called “New Testament”) primarily signifies “the reality lying at the basis of an appearance.” That is, “the manifested, veritable essence of a matter.”

The words themselves show that this manifested reality can be known: “manifested” means that which is readily perceived by the physical senses and easily understood or recognized by the mind. So when the Bible, particularly in the precise language of the Greek version of the Apostolic Writings, speaks of “truth,” it is referring to “the reality of a matter which can be readily perceived by the physical senses and understood by the mind.” If language has any meaning at all, we can be sure, on the authority of the Word of God, that not only is there an objective truth at work in the universe, but also that the nature of that truth is such that it can be readily perceived by our physical senses and understood by our minds.

God Wants Us to Know the Truth

Not only is it possible to perceive and understand objective truth, but it is evident from the Scriptures that God wants us to know that truth, not just as an intellectual concept, but as an experiential reality.

Through the ages, theologians have identified “truth” as one of God’s primary attributes. Most standard theology textbooks state the doctrine of God as “the Godhead consists of God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit, one in essence and attributes, yet three in distinct Person, work, and purpose; each of Whom is infinite, eternal, unchangeable, omnipresent, omnipotent, omniscient, personal, and perfect in wisdom, power, holiness, righteousness, justice, goodness, truth, mercy, and love.”

As truth is one of God’s primary attributes, all truth then has God as its source. And conversely, since the very nature of God is truth, then all that comes from God is truth.

The language of the Bible is couched in terms that stress our Creator’s concern with our knowing and appropriating the truth. For example, 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that “God our Savior ... wants all humanity to be delivered and come to full knowledge of the truth.”

General references to truth and knowledge in the Bible

I had my computer do a word search of the Bible for terms referring to truth and knowledge, and I found nearly 2,700 references (in the NASB).

Forms of the verb “to know”

know	893
know[s, -ing]	88

The Model for the Messianic Community

known	215
knew	48
nowledge	<u>136</u>
Total “to know”	1,380

Forms of the word “believe”

believe	152
believe[d, -s, -ing]	<u>140</u>
Total “believe”	292

Forms of the word “true”

true	87
truly	141
truth	206
truthful	<u>4</u>
Total “true”	438

Forms of the word “sure”

sure	22
surely	343
assure	7
assuredly	<u>6</u>
Total “sure”	378

Related words

“amen”	59
“amen, amen”	
(“verily, verily”)	<u>127</u>
Total “amen”	186

Grand Total **2,674**

For example, the literal meaning of the Hebrew word אָמֵן (*’ā·mên*) is “truth, verily, truly, *amein*, so be it.” “*Amein*” is used 28 times in the Tanakh and 31 times in the Apostolic Writings. On 127 different occasions, Yeshua uses the phrase, “*Amein*, *amein*, I say to you ...” In Hebrew (or Aramaic), the language Yeshua almost certainly spoke most often, a word is repeated for emphasis. Thus, when Yeshua said, *Amein*, *amein*, I say to you ...” that was about the strongest possible way of expressing that what follows is absolute truth.

“You shall know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

In John 8:31-32, Yeshua said, “If you obey what I say, then you are really my talmidim [disciples, students]; you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”

In this one simple sentence, Yeshua makes three important statements about truth. He tells us that:

- First: The truth is knowable

- Second: Those who abide in His word shall know the truth, and
- Finally: The truth found in His word shall set men free

Looking at that statement a little differently, Yeshua said we know the truth by whether a statement or idea agrees with His word. For example:

“The main thing about your word is that it’s true; and all your just rulings last forever.” (Psalm 119:160)

“Set them apart for holiness by means of the truth—your word is truth.” (John 17:17)

So, if we stay within the boundaries Yeshua defined as truth, we will be set free from all falsehood. Yeshua made statements many times that show He accepted the entire Hebrew Scriptures as true and reliable. He also said that after He had returned to the Father, He would send us the Spirit of Truth, one of Whose functions it would be to lead us into all truth. If we can believe what Yeshua said about Ruach HaKodesh, then we can be sure that those men who recorded the Apostolic Writings under the direction of Ruach HaKodesh produced a set of documents every bit as true and reliable as the Scriptures in which Yeshua placed His confidence.

And if what Yeshua said about Ruach HaKodesh is true, then the Sacred Scriptures form the absolute standard by which we are to judge—and then accept or reject—all other knowledge and teaching.

“That you may know ... that you may believe ... that you may understand.”

Not only does God want us to know the truth, but He also wants us to believe and understand:

“You are My witnesses,” says ADONAI, “and My servant whom I have chosen, so that you can know and trust [most translations say “believe”] Me and understand that I AM—no god was produced before me, nor will any be after me.” (Isaiah 43:10)

As used in the Scriptures, the word “believe” is not simply acquiescence to historical facts, but rather it means to rely on, to trust. The difference between these two ideas is eternally significant.

The word “understand” means to perceive with the mind, not just with the feelings. To understand is to grasp with the whole intellect.

So God wants us to know Him with our experiential knowledge, to believe Him in such a way that we place our entire trust and confidence in Him, and to understand Him with our entire mind, our whole intellect.

First John ... “that you may know.”

If there remains the slightest doubt in your mind that God wants His children to know the truth, turn with me to the little book of First John. Here is every word in this short letter that refers to our ability to know about God’s truth.

The Word, which gives life! He existed from the beginning. We have heard Him, we have seen Him with our eyes, we have contemplated Him, we have touched Him with our hands! (1 John 1:1)

Verse 2: The life appeared, and we have seen it. We are testifying to it and announcing it to you—eternal life! He was with the Father, and He appeared to us...

Verse 3: What we have seen and heard ...

Chapter 2, verse 3: The way we can be sure we know Him ...

Verse 4: “I know Him” ...

Verse 5: This is how we are sure that we are united with him ...

Verse 13: I am writing you because you have known him... You children, I have written you because you have known the Father.

Verse 14: You fathers, I have written you because you have known him who has existed from the beginning ...

Verses 20-21: But you have received the Messiah’s anointing from *HaKadosh*, and you know all this. It is not because you don’t know the truth that I have written to you, but because you do know it, and because no lie has its origin in the truth.

Chapter 4, verse 1: ... test the spirits to see whether they are from God; ...

Verse 2: Here is how you recognize the Spirit of God: ...

Verse 6: We are from God. Whoever knows God listens to us; ... This is how we distinguish the Spirit of truth from the spirit of error..

Chapter 5, verse 13: I have written you these things so that you may know that you have eternal life.

Verse 19: We know that we are from God ...

Verse 20: And we know that the Son of God has come ...

Messiah Yeshua Is the Truth

I think that by now we have adequately demonstrated that:

First: There is an objective truth.

Second: It is possible for us to know that truth.

Third: God wants us very much to know that truth.

Now let’s look for just a few brief moments at Yeshua HaMashiach’s claim to be the ultimate truth.

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

We need to understand that Yeshua is not *a* way; He is *the* way!

Sha’ul (Paul), Sila (Silas), Timotheos (Timothy), and Dr. Loukas (Luke) had just crossed over from Troas into Philippi in Macedonia. Lydia and her household had just become Messianic believers, and they were establishing a new community centered in her home.

¹⁶Once, when we were going to the place where the minyan gathered, we were met by a slave girl who had in her a snake-spirit that enabled her to predict the future. She earned a lot of money for her owners by telling fortunes. ¹⁷This girl followed behind Sha'ul and the rest of us and kept screaming, "These men are servants of God Ha'Elyon! They're telling you how to be saved!" ¹⁸She kept this up day after day, until Sha'ul, greatly disturbed, turned and said to the spirit, "In the name of Yeshua the Messiah, I order you to come out of her!" And the spirit did come out, at that very moment. Acts 16:16-18

We might wonder why Sha'ul became upset at this young woman telling everyone that the Apostles were proclaiming the way of salvation. After all, wasn't she kind of doing the work of an evangelist?

We need to be very careful here. The definite article "the" does not appear in the original Greek text. What the girl—rather the demon speaking through the girl—was saying, in effect, was, "These servants of the Most High God are simply proclaiming one of any number of ways of salvation, all of which are as good as any other."

That's the danger with most of Satan's lies; they sound so good! But remember, if it does not agree with the truth, then it is not truth. If it is not truth, it is false, a lie.

Yeshua said, "I am the way" ... the one and only way.

Yeshua is not **a** life. He is **the** life.

The eternal life that we immediately inherit at the moment of salvation is His life that becomes part of us.

1 John 1: ¹What was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we beheld and our hands handled, concerning the Word of Life — ²and the life was manifested, and we have seen and bear witness and proclaim to you the eternal life, which was with the Father and was manifested to us ...

5 ²⁰And we know that the Son of God has come, and has given us understanding, in order that we might know Him Who is true, and we are in Him Who is true, in His Son Yeshua Ha-Mashiach. This is the true God and eternal life.

Yeshua is not **a** truth. He is **the** Truth.

And the Word [Logos] became flesh, and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, glory as of the only begotten from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:14)

The Greek word Logos (Λόγος) literally means "word" and is translated as such here. However, the meaning of the word goes much deeper, in that Logos is not only the name by which a thing is called, but it is also the very essence, or truth, of that thing. In this case, the Logos who became flesh embodies God's truth.

John 1:17 For the Torah was given through Moshe; grace and truth were realized through Yeshua HaMashiach.

The Apostolic Writings often refer to Ruach HaKodesh as the Spirit of Truth. He is also called the Spirit of Messiah. We find this discussed in these passages: John 14:16, 17; John 15:26, 27; John 16:13; 1 John 4:6; 1 John 5:6

The Word of God Is Truth

One of the things that the Bible claims for itself is that it is the inerrant and true word of God.

The God Who is—that is, the God Who exists—is the God of Truth. He sent the living Word, the Logos, to earth in real time and space so that we might know the Truth of God, that is, Him Who Truth is.

He has also sent us the written word, the Scriptures, which are also called His revealed, propositional truth. They are revealed because men did not write them but recorded them as God revealed them to men. They are propositional in that they are verbally inspired and composed, consisting of real sentences in a real human language, which can be easily understood by all who read them.

God has called his Scriptures “Truth.” Therefore, we must be diligent to remember that whatever is in agreement with God’s revealed propositional truth is true, and, conversely, that whatever is contrary to God’s revealed propositional truth is not true. That is, the Scriptures are the one absolute, objective, and propositional truth by which all other knowledge is to be judged.

God has given us the test by which to measure that which we hear in the world:

1 John 4 ¹Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. ²By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Yeshua HaMashiach has come in the flesh is from God; ³and every spirit that does not confess Yeshua is not from God; and this is the spirit of the antichrist, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. ⁴You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. ⁵They are from the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. ⁶We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error.

We are being bombarded from all sides by lies: lies from the secular press, radio, and television; lies from a corrupt and morally bankrupt government; and lies from a secular humanistic educational system.

And the Body of Messiah is by no means immune from the lies. In fact, there is an entire television network that calls itself “Christian,” but if you carefully compare what is being taught on most of that network’s programming against what God says in the pages of the Bible, you will find that most of that programming ranges from false and corrupt teaching to downright open heresy! And those corrupt teachers and preachers publicly and in the name of Yeshua announce that any man of God who tries in love to correct their error is to be eternally damned and condemned to hell!¹⁷⁷

But God says that it’s going to get worse! In his second letter to Timothy, Rebbe Sha’ul warns of the false teachers that are to come, but he also provides our defense against them and their lies:

¹⁷⁷ That certainly sounds unnecessarily harsh. But I have actually heard that being said by several prominent televangelists on that TV network.

2 Timothy 3 ¹But realize this, that in the last days difficult times will come. ²For men will be lovers of self, lovers of money, boastful, arrogant, revilers, disobedient to parents, ungrateful, unholy, ³unloving, irreconcilable, malicious gossips, without self control, brutal, haters of good, ⁴treacherous, reckless, conceited, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God; ⁵holding to a form of Godliness, although they have denied its power; and avoid such men as these. ⁶For among them are those who enter into households and captivate weak women weighed down with sins, led on by various impulses, ⁷always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

⁸And just as Jannes and Jambres opposed Moses, so these men also oppose the truth, men of depraved mind, rejected as regards the faith. ⁹But they will not make further progress; for their folly will be obvious to all, as also that of those two came to be....

¹³But evil men and impostors will proceed from bad to worse, deceiving and being deceived. ...

⁴ ³For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; ⁴and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.

But here is what Sha'ul says we are to do to preserve the truth:

³ ¹⁴You, however, continue in the things you have learned and become convinced of, knowing from whom you have learned them; ¹⁵and that from childhood you have known the sacred writings which are able to give you the wisdom that leads to salvation through faith which is in Messiah Yeshua.

¹⁶All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness; ¹⁷that the man of God may be adequate, equipped for every good work.

⁴ ¹I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Messiah Yeshua, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: ²preach the word; be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. ...

Yes, there is an objective, absolute truth at work in our universe. We can know that truth, and God wants us to know that truth. That Truth is Yeshua HaMashiach, the eternal Son of God.

The lie of the devil is that there is no truth, no objective standard by which the world will be judged. Satan would have us believe that there are many ways to approach God. But Yeshua said that no one may come to the Father except they come through Him.

Who are you going to believe, Satan or Yeshua? Remember that the opposite of the truth cannot also be truth. Yeshua said that unless you believe that He is God in the flesh, you will die in your sins. And the Scripture says that it is given to man once to die, and then the judgment.

And what is the criterion by which we will all be judged when we stand before the Messiah? We will not be judged by whether we led a good life. We will not be judged by how well we obeyed the Ten Commandments, the Sermon on the Mount, and the

Golden Rule, or even whether we kept the whole Torah. There is only one criterion by which we will be judged concerning our eternal destiny, and that is whether we believe in the Truth that Yeshua is the Messiah, the Son of the Living God.

It is not enough to acknowledge the historical fact that, 2,000 years ago, a man named Yeshua of Nazareth lived. It is not enough for us to acknowledge that He was crucified, died, arose from the tomb, and ascended into heaven. It is not even enough to acknowledge that He is the Son of God or even that He is God come in the flesh. The Bible tells us that even the demons believe all that, and it makes them shudder to think what will happen when they are called to stand before Him at the final judgment.

Simply acknowledging the mere historical facts about Yeshua HaMashiach accomplishes nothing.

The Letter to the Messianic Community at Rome tells us “that if you acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Yeshua is ADONAI”¹⁷⁸ [that is, that Yeshua is HaShem in the flesh] and trust in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you will be delivered.” For with the heart one goes on trusting and thus continues toward righteousness, while with the mouth one keeps on making public acknowledgment and thus continues toward deliverance.” (Rom. 19:9-10)

What does it mean to “acknowledge publicly with your mouth that Yeshua is ADONAI?” The word “Adonai,” or “Lord,” means “master” and “ruler,” but more than that, Adonai means the benevolent slave owner who has total control and authority over the life of the slave and who abundantly provides for every need in that slave’s life, including life itself.

What does it mean to “believe in your heart?” It means to put your full and absolute trust and confidence in Yeshua HaMashiach and in Him alone to ensure that He has gone to prepare a place for you and that He will come, just as He promised, to take you to be with Him in that place for all eternity.

You cannot receive Yeshua HaMashiach as Savior unless you first receive Him as Lord of your life. Yeshua is the Way, the Truth, and the Life, and there is no other Name under heaven that has been given among men by which we must be saved.

And that, my friends, is “The Truth!”

Selah! Meditate on this!

¹⁷⁸ If the Apostolic Writings were, in fact, as I believe, originally written in Hebrew, then what the Apostle originally wrote was “if you confess with your mouth Yeshua is יהוה (YHVH)” — יהוה (YHVH, Yehovah) is the Covenant Name of God that is considered by Jews to be too sacred to pronounce. If this is correct, then for one’s salvation it is necessary to “acknowledge publicly with your mouth” that Yeshua HaMashiach is the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the One Who wrote the Commandments in stone with His own finger and gave them to Moshe at Sinai.

Index

- Abba*, 11, 46, 47
 abomination of desolation, 79
 abomination(s), 16, 42, 45
 about the author, 1
 Abraham, 3, 5, 48, 71, 86, *See also* Avraham
 acharit ha-yamim, 66, *See also* End of Days; Last Days
 adoption, 3, 46, 47, 54, 59, 92, 100
 adultery, 44, 45, 99, 100
 Aelia Capitolina, 79, 90, 91
 Agrippa, King, 52
 Akiva, 55, 91
 amidah, 54, 55
 Anti-Christ. *See* Anti-Messiah
 Anti-Messiah, 28, 79
 Antioch, 23, 29, 39, 40, 41
 Antiochus Epiphanes, 13, 39, 79
Antiquities of the Jews, 15
 anti-Semitism, 85
 Apostamos, 79
 Apostle(s), 5, 7, 22, 61, 67, *See also* Shliach(im)
 Apostolic Scriptures, 9, 32, 55, 81, 82, 83, 84, 87, *See also*
 B'rit Hadasha
 Arabia, 21, 38
 Aramaic language, 8, 55, 64, 82, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89
 archaeology, 19
 Aristas, 8, 64
 Asia, 21, 88, 95
 atrocity (-ies), 3, 105
 Avraham, 3, 47, 48, 62, 71, 103, 104, 105, *See also* Abraham
 children of, 103
 family of, 46, 47
 seed of, 4, 5, 47, 103
 B'rit Hadasha, 8, 9, 11, 34, 55, 63, 64, 70, 71, 75, 76, 81, 88
 b'rit-milah, 41, 51
 b'samim box, 32
 Babylon, 28, 30, 56, 60, 61
Babylon Mystery Religion, 56
 Babylonian Mystery Religion, 56, 60, 61, 92, 105
 baptism, 1, 11, 73, *See also* immersion; mikvah
 Bar Abba, 15
 Bar Kochba rebellion, 55, 78, 79, 90
 Bar Kochba, Simon, 54, 55, 65, 91
 Bar Nabba, 39, 40, 41
 Barabbas. *See* Bar Abba
 bar-mitzvah, 48
 Barnabas. *See* Bar Nabba
 Be'er-Sheva, 103
 behavior, 8, 64, 85
Beit Shalom, 81
 Ben Adam, 17, 84
 Ben Kosiba, 55
 benediction(s), 54
 benefits, 47
 Beth Messiah, 11
Bible in Basic English, The, 46
 Birkat ha Minim, 54, 55, 65
 birkatha-mazon, 31
 birthright, 105
 bishop(s), 56, 61, 95, 98, 105
 Biven, David, 82
 blasphemy, 44, 45
 blessing(s), 31, 32, 45, 47, 54, 71, 100
 blood, eating, 3, 16, 42, 45, 49, 73, 79, 86
 bloodshed, 44, 45
 Body of Messiah, 5, 72
 breaking bread, 23, 25, 33
 Britain, 80, 90, 95
 burning of books and scrolls, 2, 53, 79
 Bush, George W., 57
 Caesar, 52, 61
 Caesarea, 39, 52, 83
 calendar, 31, 32, 65, 71, 92
 Hebrew. *See* Jewish calendar
 candle, 32
 Catholic, Roman, 60, 92, 93, 95, 98, 99
 Cerinthus, 41
 Chaimberlin, Rick Aharon, 56
 challah, 31
 Chanukah, 13, *See also* Hanukkah
 Charan, 103
 Chernoff, David., 10
 Chernoff, Martin, 10
 Chernoff, Yohanna, 10
 Christ, 4, 5, 6, 11, 92, *See also* HaMashiach; Meshiach;
 Yeshua
 Christ-consciousness, 41
Christian History Magazine, 85
 Christian(s), 1, 7, 11, 13, 23, 25, 26, 31, 32, 51, 52, 57, 64, 67,
 73, 85, 86, 89, 91, 92, 93, 94, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101
 Church, 11, *See also* Church
 conversion to Hebraism, 101
 etymology of, 23

The Model for the Messianic Community

- theology, 58
- Christianity, 2, 3, 6, 11, 14, 56, 59, 61, 65, 88, 96, 97, 104
 - Hebraicized, 11
- Christmas, 65
- Church, 2, 4, 5, 7, 23, 42, 48, 53, 56, 58, 59, 60, 62, 66, 67, 72, 73, 85, 94, 99, 100
 - Age, 28, 30
 - Fathers, 9, 41, 64, 82, 83, 86
 - planting, 40, 53
- circumcision, 15, 16, 41, 43, 49, 51, 64, 91, 97, 104
- Clark, Michael, 11
- commandments, 44, 45, 49, 70
- Complete Jewish Bible*, 5, 19, 23, 33, 34
- concentration camp(s), 80
- conduct, rule of, 44
- Constantine, 56, 61, 65, 92, 96, 97, 102, 104, 105
- Constitution, 70
- conversion, 15, 16, 49, 65, 94, 96, 101
- convert(s), 16, 48, 49, 65
- Cornelius, 16, 41
- Cornelius of Caesarea, 16
- Council of Nicea, 56, 57, 61, 65, 105
- courts, 11, 33, 44, 45, 91, 101
- covenant(s), 26, 27, 45, 48, 49, 70, 77, 86, 87, 103, 104
 - everlasting, 103
 - unconditional, 103
- Crusades, 80
- Dam, Julio, 81
- Damascus, 38
- Damascus Road experience, 39
- Dani'el, 28, 79
- Dates
 - 100 CE, 55
 - 1095 CE, 80
 - 1239, 80
 - 1272-1307, 3
 - 1290, 80
 - 1290, July 18, 3
 - 1290, November 1, 3
 - 1312 BCE, 79
 - 132-135 CE, 55
 - 135 CE, 65, 78, 79
 - 1391 CE, 80
 - 1448, 3
 - 1492 CE, 80
 - 1559 CE, 80
 - 165 BCE, 13
 - 167 BCE, 13
 - 168 BCE, 79
 - 17 Tammuz, 3, 77, 79, 80
 - 1776 CE, 80
 - 185-160 BCE, 13
 - 1914 CE, 80
 - 1915, 10
 - 1917, 10
 - 1942 CE, 80
 - 1944 CE, 80
 - 1965-1967, 1
 - 1970 CE, 72, 80
 - 1978, 10, 89, 102
 - 1989 CE, 80, 91
 - 1990s, 10
 - 1994 CE, 80
 - 19th century, 10
 - 25 Kislev, 13
 - 311, 61
 - 311 CE, 56, 104
 - 325 CE, 6, 56, 65, 105
 - 33-325 CE, 56
 - 587 BCE, 77, 78, 79
 - 64-67 CE, 53
 - 70 CE, 12, 15, 40, 54, 77, 78, 79
 - 70-90 CE, 54
 - 71 CE, 79
 - 89-90 CE, 65
 - 9 Av. *See* Tisha b' Av
 - 96 CE, 55
 - December 25, 65, 92
 - first century, 2, 5, 7, 10, 13, 42, 48, 60, 67, 70
 - Second Temple Period, 64
 - Tisha b' Av, 3, 77
- David, King, 5, 10, 12, 15, 16, 27, 28, 29, 30
- Day of ADONAI, 22, *See also* Day of the LORD
- Day of the Lord*, 34, 56, *See also* Lord's Day
- Dead Sea Scrolls, 14, 82, 83, 85
- death penalty, 26, 30
- deportation. *See* exile
- derashim (preachers), 42
- Derbe, 40
- Diaspora, 9, 38, 51, 64, 102
- disciple(s), 17, 83, *See also* talmid(im)
- Easter, 65, 85, 93, 94, 95, 100, *See also* Ishtar, feast of
- Ebionism, 41
- Edward I, 3
- Egypt, 8, 21, 26, 64, 75, 91, 95
- El Shaddai, 104
- Emissary to the Goyim, 38
- emissary, (-ies), 7, 18, 22, 23, 33, 58
- emperor, 6, 52, 56, 61, 86, 92, 94
- Emperor Constantine. *See* Constantine
- End of Days, 12, 79
- End Times. *See* End of Days
- England, 3, 78, 80
- Epiphanius, 41, 88
- Eretz Yisra'el, 9, 64, 71, 75, 79, 103, 104
- Essenes, 13, 14, 15, 23
- Eusebius, 83, 86, 88, 94
- exile, 34, 79, 80, 85
- expulsion. *See* exile
- Ezra, 15, 42
- Felix, Governor, 52
- fellowship, 2, 23, 25, 30, 33, 42, 48, 49, 65
- Ferdinand, King, 80
- Festival of Lights, 13
- Festus, governor, 52
- final solution, 105
- first century, 7, 19, 31, 32, 61, 64, 67, *See* Dates: first century
- first day of the week, 25, 32, 33, 34, 61, 65
- First Fruits, feast of, 61, 65, 76

- flesh cut from a living animal, 44, 45
 foreigner(s), 25, 26, 104
 fornication, 42, 45
 France, 75, 80, 82
 Gaebelein, Arno C., 10
 Galilee, 17, 21, 38
 Gamli'el, 37
 Gamli'el II of Yavne, 54
 Gentile(s), 4, 10, 15, 16, 17, 23, 25, 26, 27, 30, 31, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 61, 62, 64, 65, 72, 73, 86, 103, 104, 105, *See also* Goy(im)
 Believer(s), 23, 42, 43, 44, 45, 47, 48, 49
 Christian(s), 4, 10, 27, 31, 43, 62
 Church. *See* Church
 convert(s), 15, 64, 65
 Germany, 80
 ghetto(s), 80
 Gill, John, 42
 Gnosticism, 41
 God
 of Avraham, 103
 of Avraham, Yitzchak, and Ya'akov, 48
 of Israel, 87
 of Ya'akov, 66
 of Yitzchak, 103
 the Father, 11
 God's divine instruction. *See* Torah
 God-Fearer(s), 16, 23, 39, 40, 42, 45, 48, 49, 65
 golden calf, 77, 79
 Gospel, 9, 15, 29, 38, 40, 46, 64, 82, 83, 88, 89
 rejected by the Jews, 40
 Gospels, Synoptic, 64
 Goy(im), 7, 9, 16, 21, 38, 40, 42, 43, 51, 64, 75, *See also* Gentile(s)
 Greece, 8, 64, 88
 Greek
 language, 9, 19, 23, 34, 54, 56, 58, 59, 73, 82, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88
 Koine, 8, 64, 84
 rule, 13
 Gregory IX, Pope, 80
 halakah, 15, 48, 65, 104
 HaMashiach, 11, 71
 Havdalah, 24, 32, 33, 65, 71
 HCAA, 10, *See also* Hebrew Christian Alliance of America
 Hebrew
 Bible, 17, 58, 62, 63, 70, 75, 76, 82, *See* Tanakh
 Masoretic text, 54
 Christian(s), 10
 language, 2, 4, 7, 8, 9, 11, 18, 23, 25, 29, 38, 54, 58, 64, 75, 81, 82, 83, 84, 86, 87, 88, 89, 90
 Hebrew Christian Alliance of America, 10
 Hebrew name, 75
 Hebrew Names Version, 46
 Hebrew Scriptures, 17
 heir(s), 4, 5, 46, 47, 98
 Hellenized, 14
 heresy, heretic(s) (-al), 2, 12, 41, 54, 86, 97, 99, 100, 101, 103
 Herod, King, 39
 Hill of Hananiah, 67
 Hitler, Adolf, 57, 105
 Hocken, Peter, 10
 Holocaust, 80, 85
Holy Bible from the Peshitta, 88
 Holy Community, 104, 105
holy convocation(s), 26
 Holy Land Hotel, 20, 21
 Holy of Holies, 67
 Holy Spirit, 2, 11, 74, *See also* Ruach HaKodesh
 Hoshea, 47, *See also* Hosea
 House, the, 19, 86
 Hungary, 80
 Iberian Peninsula, 80
 Iconium, 40
 identity, 10, 11
 idioms, 81, 82, 83, 84, 85, 88
 idol(s) (-atry), 16, 42, 44, 45, 49, 104
 immersion, 15, 22, 41, 47, 73
 incest, 16, 42, 44, 45
 Inquisition, 80, 85, 105
 Iraq, 80, 103
 Isaac, 3, 48, 71, 89, *See also* Yitzchak
 Isaiah, 19, 27, 30
 Ishtar, feast of, 61, 65, 85, 93
 Israel, 1, 2, 3, 7, 8, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 18, 25, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31, 49, 53, 54, 57, 58, 63, 64, 67, 71, 73, 75, 76, 79, 84, 86, 90, 91, 102, *See also* Yisra'el
 Israel, Land of. *See* Eretz Yisra'el
 Jabneh. *See* Yavne
 Jacob, 3, 38, 48, 71, 86, 102, *See* Ya'akov
 James the Just, Apostle. *See* Ya'akov
 Jamnia, 54
 Javne. *See* Yavne
 Jerusalem, 12, 13, 15, 17, 20, 21, 27, 28, 30, 37, 38, 39, 41, 51, 54, 64, 66, 67, 73, 77, 78, 79, 90, 91, 96, *See also* Yerushalayim
 Jerusalem Council, 39, 41, 42, 48, 64
 Jesus, 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11, 22, 64, 76, 82, 84, 86, 88, 89, *See also* Yeshua
 Jew(s), 3, 4, 5, 7, 9, 10, 11, 13, 15, 16, 17, 21, 22, 23, 25, 27, 29, 30, 31, 32, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 43, 44, 45, 46, 47, 48, 49, 51, 52, 53, 54, 57, 63, 64, 65, 66, 71, 73, 75, 78, 79, 80, 85, 86, 88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, 102, 104, 105, 106, 107, 108
 non-Messianic, 22, 71
 who is a Jew?, 3
 Jewish
 ancestry, 3
 belief(s), 11, 73
 believers, 5, 9, 44, 47, 67
 calendar, 3, 31, 33, 78
 children, 48, 49
 Church, 10
 community, 11, 52, 54, 74
 culture, 5, 67, *See also* halakah, *See also* halakah
 customs, 15, 52, 99, *See also* minhag
 identity, 10, 11
 law. *See* halakah
 leaders, 53
 lifestyle, 4, 104, *See also* halacha

The Model for the Messianic Community

life-style, 52
 liturgy, 31, 54, 65
 music, 31
 name, 15, *See also* shem kodesh
 person, people, 8, 10, 11, 13, 17, 42, 64, 66, 79, 105
 perspective, 3, 6, 25, 31
 poetry, 31
 religious life, 8, 64
 roots, 4
 Scriptures. *See* Tanakh, *See* Tanakh
 tradition, 45, 61
 traditions, 11, 41, 51, 52, 58, 92
 Jewishness, 7, 42, 52
 Johanan ben Zakkai, 54
 Joppa, 38
 Josephus, Flavius, 13, 15, 39, 87
 Judah, 13, 14, 21, 27, 28, 66, 73, 86, *See also* Yehudah
 Judah Maccabee, 13
 Judaism
 Biblical, 2, 10
 Chasidic, 13
 divisions of, 13
 Messianic. *See* Messianic Judaism
 Rabbinical, 55
 Reform, 10
 traditional, 10, 11, 32, 44, 73, 76, 78, *See also* Judaism, Rabbinical
 Judaizing, 41
 Judas Iscariot, 15
 Judas Maccabaeus, 54, *See also* Maccabees, Maccabean
 Judea, 13, 17, 38, 41, 53, 86, 90, 91
 Kefa, 16, 20, 21, 22, 23, 38, 39, 41, 46, *See also* Peter
 Keshet, *A Journal of Messianic Judaism*, 11
 Kiddush, 24, 31, 32, 71
 King James Version, 32, 33, 38, 73
 Kingdom
 Age, 66, 67
 Messianic, 66
 Millennial, 2
 of God, 17, 67, 70
 of Heaven, 29, 43, 50, 70
 southern, 79
 Kohanim, 14, 71, 79, *See also* Priests
 Kohen Gadol, 52, 54, 71
 Kohenim, 14, 71
 Koine Greek. *See* Greek language, Koine
 Kovno, 80
 Kuwait, 80
 Lamsa, George, 88
 language(s), 19, 21, 66, 81, 87
 Latin, 14, 65, 83, 96, 102
 leavened bread, 16, 42, 45
 Levy, Mark, 10
 Libya, 21, 80, 95
 life-style, 7, 10, 13, 48, 52, 53, 63, 67
 Lord's Day, 25, 28, 30, 33, 65, *See also* Day of the Lord
 Luke, Apostle, 8, 9, 15, 16, 41, 63, 64, 83, 84
 Lystra, 40
 Maccabean revolt, 13
 Maimonides, 11, 74

Matthew, Apostle. *See* Mattityahu
 Mattityahu (Matthew), 64
 McGee, James Vernon, 48
 Messiah, 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 16, 17, 22, 23, 27, 34, 38, 40, 41, 46, 47, 51, 53, 55, 56, 57, 61, 63, 64, 65, 66, 67, 70, 71, 72, 73, 74, 76, 87, *See also* HaMashiach, Mashiach
 rejection of, 2
 Messianic
 Believers, 9, 38, 39, 48, 55, 61, 64, 65
 Community, 5, 6, 7, 9, 32, 37, 38, 39, 41, 51, 56, 66, 67, 72, 76, 104
 Jewish
 believers, 53, 62
 community, 66
 congregation(s), 16, 32
 leaders, 40
 Rabbis, 70, 104
 Jews, 10, 11, 31, 33, 38, 53, 55, 56, 65, *See also* Messianic Judaism
 Judaism, 10, 11, 42, 53, 55, 56, 65, 100, *See also* Messianic Jews
 Kingdom, 66, 67, 73, 77
 synagogue, 39, 65
 Zakenim, 40
 Messianic Jewish Alliance of America, 10
 Messianics, 23
 midrash(im), 8, 55, 72
 mikvah, 11, 15, 73
 Millennium, 66, *See also* Messianic Kingdom, Olam Haba
 minhag, 78, *See also* Jewish customs
 minim, 54, *See also* heretic(s)
 minimum requirements, 11, 42, 49, 65, 73
 miracles, 14
 Mishna, 79
 missionary journey, 39
 mitzvot, 25, 29, 43, 44, 49, 50, 70
 613, 49
 monastic communities, 14
 monotheism, 49
 moral principles, 44
 Moses, 11, 14, 41, 42, 74, 75, 77, 104, *See also* Moshe
 Moses ben Maimon, 11
 Moshe, 14, 26, 41, 42, 48, 49, 51, 74, 75, 77, 79, *See also* Moses
 Moshiach, 11, 12, *See also* HaMashiach; Mashiach
 motza'ei Shabbat, 32, 33
 Mount of Olives, 67
 murderers of our Lord, 93, 95, 105
 myriads, 52
 Nebuchadnezzar, 79
 Nero, 53
 New American Standard Bible, 4, 5, 28, 32, 33, 46, 56, 84
 New King James Version, 46
 New Testament, 2, 7, 11, 25, 70, 81, 87, 88, 89, *See also* B'rit Hadasha
 New-Age cults, 41
 Nicean and Post-Nicean Fathers, *The*, 105
 Noahide Law, 44, 45
 non-Jewish, 8, 16, 26, 71, *See also* Goyim
 non-Jews, 8, 40, 44, 64, *See also* Goyim

- not My people, 47
- obedience, 45, 48, 49, 51, 76
- obligations, 45, 48
- Olam Haba, 44, 66, 67, 73
- Olam Hazeh, 67
- Old Testament, 2, 54, 58, 70, 76, 82, 83
- Oneg, 32
- Oral Tradition, 104
- oral traditions, 104
- ordinance(s), 104
- P' rushim, 13, 50, 52, *See also* Pharisees
- Paddan-Aram, 103
- pagan influence, 8, 64
- pagan(s), (-ism), 4, 8, 15, 40, 48, 59, 61, 62, 64, 65, 72, 73, 79, 85, 91, 92, 99, 100
- Palestine, 86, 90, 91
- Paschal Lamb, 67, 92
- Passover, 61, 65, 73, 76, 85, 86, 92, 93, 104
- Patmos, 34
- Paul, the Apostle. *See* Sha'ul
- Pentecost, 2, 19, 20, 48, 58, 59, 63, 75, 76, 100, 104, *See also* Shavu'ot
- persecution, 37, 38, 39, 57, 74, 91
- Pesach, 16, 42, 45, 73, *See also* Passover
- Pharisaic Judaism, 54
- Pharisee(s), 13, 14, 15, 23, 29, 37, 52, 104, *See also* P' rushim
- Phariseeism, 54
- pogroms, 80
- Poland, 80
- political activists, 14
- polytheism, 49
- pontifex maximus, 56, 61, 105
- Pope. *See* pontifex maximus
- Portugal, 80
- Prague, 80
- prayer, 8, 11, 15, 22, 23, 24, 27, 31, 32, 42, 54, 64, 67, 75, 99
- priest(s), 14
 - pagan, 56, 59, 61
- priesthood, 14
- promise, 4, 5, 22, 47
- Prophet(s), 17, 29, 50, 52, 64, 75, 76
- proselyte(s), 15, 21, 23, 39, 41, 49, 65, 96
- proselytize (-ing), 39
- purification ritual, 51
- Qumran, 14, 83
- rabbinical, 55, 58
- Rabbis, 5, 14, 37, 55, 67, 75, 85
- Rambam, 11, 73, 74
- Rambam's 13 Principles of Faith, 11
- Rausch, David, 10
- Renewed Covenant, 25, 26, 58, 71, 86
- Replacement Theology, 103
- responsibility (-ies), 47, *See also* obligations
- resurrection, 2, 6, 7, 14, 17, 19, 22, 25, 38, 39, 40, 41, 52, 53, 55, 56, 59, 64, 65, 66, 73, 74, 92
- Rhineland, 80
- Rich, Tracy R., 8
- righteous(ness), 12, 27, 29, 43, 46, 48, 50, 51, 52, 58, 73
 - standard of, 43, 44, 46
- Roadmap for Peace, 57
- robbery, 44, 45
- Roman, 14, 16, 37, 53, 54, 56, 57, 61, 62, 65, 78, 79, 89, 90, 92, 96, 98
- Roman Catholic. *See* Catholic, Roman
- Roman Empire, 6, 14, 65, 79, 96, 105
- Rome, 14, 15, 21, 52, 53, 55, 61, 88, 92, 95, 105
 - burning of, 53
- Rosenfarb, Rabbi Joseph, 11
- Ruach HaKodesh, 2, 8, 11, 19, 20, 22, 23, 37, 39, 47, 48, 59, 63, 74, 75, 104
- Russia, 80
- Ruth, 15, 21
- Sabbath. *See* Shabbat
- sacrifice(s), 13, 15, 27, 28, 49, 52, 54, 60, 65, 67, 77, 79
- sacrificial system, 14
- Sadducees, 13, 14, 15, 23, 38, *See also* Tzedukim
- salvation, 2, 4, 26, 27, 58, 104
- Samaria, 17, 38
- Sanhedrin, 14, 37, 38, 52, 54, 91
 - Great, 54
- Schoenberg, Shira, 55
- Scribes, 14
- Scripture Citations
 - 1 Corinthians 10:32, 33, 5
 - 1 Corinthians 15:9, 37
 - 1 Corinthians 16:2, 33
 - 1 John 2:22-26, 41
 - 1 Timothy, 53
 - 1 Timothy 1:5-11, 2
 - 2 Chronicles 36:20,21, 28
 - 2 Corinthians 6:16-17, 47
 - 2 Peter 2:1-4, 2
 - 2 Timothy, 53
 - 2 Timothy 4:1-5, 2
 - Acts 1:7-8, 17
 - Acts 10, 38
 - Acts 10:1, 16
 - Acts 10:34,35, 46, 69
 - Acts 11:19-26, 39
 - Acts 11:26, 23
 - Acts 12, 39
 - Acts 13, 39
 - Acts 13:43, 16
 - Acts 13:48, 40
 - Acts 14, 40
 - Acts 14:27, 40
 - Acts 15:1-29, 104
 - Acts 15:19-20, 42
 - Acts 15:21, 42
 - Acts 15:28-29, 42
 - Acts 15:29, 49
 - Acts 15:5, 52
 - Acts 15:7, 38
 - Acts 17:18, 38
 - Acts 17:21, 53
 - Acts 18:4, 29
 - Acts 2:12-21, 22
 - Acts 2:1-4, 19
 - Acts 2:2, 21
 - Acts 2:22, 21

The Model for the Messianic Community

Acts 2:46-47, 33
 Acts 2:5-11, 21
 Acts 20:7, 33
 Acts 21:20, 51
 Acts 21:21, 51
 Acts 21:24, 51
 Acts 23:6, 38
 Acts 24:14-18, 52
 Acts 24:21, 38
 Acts 24:5, 52
 Acts 25:8, 52
 Acts 26:23, 38
 Acts 26:3, 52
 Acts 28:17, 52
 Acts 28:22, 53
 Acts 4:1-4, 38
 Acts 4:33, 38
 Acts 5:12-14, 33
 Acts 5:17, 52
 Acts 6:8-7:60, 38
 Acts 8, 38
 Acts 9, 38
 Acts 9:19-22, 38
 Acts 9:23-31, 38
 Book of the Revelation, 34, 55
 Deuteronomy 13:1-5, 2
 Deuteronomy 18:20-22, 2
 Deuteronomy 4:2, 14
 Deuteronomy 5:12-15, 26
 Deuteronomy 6:4-7, 1
 Ephesians 2:14, 4
 Exodus 12:43-49, 104
 Exodus 20:1,8-11, 25
 Exodus 20:10, 16, 42
 Exodus 23:12, 16
 Exodus 24:3-5, 14
 Exodus 31:12-18, 26
 Exodus 32:25-29, 79
 Exodus 35:1-2, 26
 Ezekiel 13: 2-9, 2
 Ezekiel 14:7, 16, 42
 Galatians 1:15-2:1, 38
 Galatians 3:26, 47
 Galatians 3:26-29, 47
 Galatians 3:28, 29, 4
 Galatians 4:6-7, 47
 Genesis 12:1-7, 103
 Genesis 22:15-18, 103
 Genesis 28:10-15, 103
 Genesis 35:9-12, 104
 Genesis 8:9, 79
 Hebrews 10:25, 56
 Hebrews 4:4-10, 29
 Hosea (all), 105
 Isaiah 2:2-4, 66
 Isaiah 49:18, 105
 Isaiah 56: 1-2,7-6, 27
 Isaiah 56:7, 19
 Isaiah 58:13-14, 27
 Isaiah 61:10, 105

Isaiah 62:5, 105
 James 3:1, 2
 Jeremiah 14:14-15, 2
 Jeremiah 17:19-27, 28
 Jeremiah 23:1-40, 2
 Jeremiah 27:9-16, 2
 Jeremiah 28:16-17, 2
 Jeremiah 39:2, 77
 John 1:45, 8
 John 14:15, 49
 John 15:10, 49
 John 5:29, 38
 Leviticus 17:10, 16, 42
 Leviticus 18:26, 16, 42
 Leviticus 20:2, 16, 42
 Leviticus 23:1-3, 26
 Luke 19:46, 19
 Luke 20:27, 38
 Luke 24:25-27, 8
 Luke 24:44-47, 8
 Luke 4:16, 28
 Luke 6:5, 28, 34, 65
 Mark 11:17, 19
 Mark 12:18, 38
 Mark 2:28, 34, 65
 Mark 7:5-13, 65
 Matthew 12:8, 28, 34, 65
 Matthew 21:13, 19
 Matthew 22:23, 38
 Matthew 24:15-19, 29
 Matthew 24:9, 57
 Matthew 27:11-25, 15
 Matthew 27:53, 38
 Matthew 28:19-20, 17
 Matthew 4:21, 39
 Matthew 5:17-20, 29, 50
 Matthew 5:19, 43
 Messianic Jews, Epistle to, 29, 30, 50
 Micah 4:1-4,7, 66
 Numbers 13, 79
 Numbers 22:17, 55
 Psalm 108:6, 105
 Psalm 127:2, 105
 Psalm 60:5, 105
 Revelation 1:10, 33
 Romans 12:4,5, 4
 Romans 15:24, 53
 Romans 8:15-17, 46
 Romans 9:22-26, 47
 Titus, 53
 Zechariah 8:19-23, 66
 Scripture versions
 Bible in Basic English, The, 46
 Hebrew Names Version, 46
 New American Standard Bible, 46
 New King James Version, 46
 Young's Literal Translation, 46
 Scripture versions
 Complete Jewish Bible, 46

- Scriptures, 1, 2, 3, 6, 7, 8, 13, 14, 25, 33, 40, 47, 62, 63, 69, 72, 73, 76, 82
 Second Temple Period, 12
 Seleucid Greeks, 13
 Septuagint, 54
 servant(s), 104
 seventh day, 25, *See also* Shabbat
 sexual immorality, 45, 49
 Sha'ul, 7, 15, 29, 30, 33, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 51, 52, 53, 75, 86
 Shabbat, 7, 16, 24, 25, 26, 27, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 33, 34, 39, 42, 45, 48, 61, 65, 70, 71, 74, 76, 78, 91, 92
 Shavu'ot, 19, 73, 75, 76, 100, *See also* Pentecost
 shem kodesh, 15, 75
 Shemoneh Esrei, 11, 75
 Shliach(im), 7, 8, 9, 18, 40, 41, 48, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 63, 64, 74, 75, 104
 Sicarii, 14, 23
 Sicarius, 15
 Simeon Zealotes, 14
 Sinai, 26, 44, 45, 49, 65, 77, 79
 Six-Day War, 67
 slave(s), 4, 5, 25, 26, 47, 93, 96, 97, 98, 104
 sojourner(s), 104
 Solomon's Porch, 20, 21, 33
 Son of Man, 17, 28, 34
 Son of the Star, 55
 sorcery, 16, 42, 45
 Spain, 53, 74, 78, 80, 95
 spices, 32
 statute(s), 104
 Stephen, 38
 Stern, David, 5, 33, 34
 strangled animals, 42, 45, 49
 Sunday, 1, 7, 25, 31, 33, 92, 100
 Supreme Court, 14, 37
 synagogue(s), 4, 7, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 17, 23, 24, 28, 29, 32, 33, 38, 39, 40, 41, 42, 45, 48, 49, 54, 55, 56, 60, 62, 63, 65, 93, 98, 101, 102, 104
 Messianic. *See* Messianic Synagogue
 Syria, 39, 90, 91
 Ta'anit, 79
 Tabernacles, feast of, 61, 65, 75
 talmid(im), 7, 14, 15, 17, 18, 19, 21, 23, 33, 37, 38, 63, 75, 81, 92, *See also* disciple(s)
 Talmud, 64, 71, 73, 74, 75, 76, 80, 85, 100
 Tanakh, 8, 17, 29, 54, 55, 63, 70, 75, 76, 82, 84, 85, 104
 Tarsus, 7, 37, 38, 75
 Tel Aviv, 54
 Temple, 8, 12, 13, 14, 15, 17, 19, 20, 21, 24, 27, 28, 33, 40, 51, 52, 58, 63, 66, 77, 79, 83, 90
 destruction of, 79
 service, 12
 three-year reading cycle, 48
 Tisha B'Av, 3, 77, 78, 80
 Titus, 79
 Torah, 7, 8, 12, 14, 15, 16, 17, 25, 29, 30, 31, 32, 43, 44, 45, 46, 48, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 55, 58, 63, 64, 65, 66, 69, 70, 71, 73, 74, 75, 76, 77, 78, 79, 85, 91, 92, 104
 oral, 14, 16, 64
 written, 14
 Torah-observant, 7, 15, 48, 52, 53, 63, 73, 76, 104
 Torah-teachers, 29, 50
 translation, 4, 7, 46, 62, 81, 82, 86, 87, 88
 transliterate, 23
 Treblinka, 80
 Tribulation Age, 28, 30
 Turnus Rufus, 79
 Tzedukim, 14, 38, *See also* Sadducees
 Ukraine, 80
 United States, 70, 80
 upper room, 19, 22
 Urban II, Pope, 80
 veneration of saints, 61
Wars of the Jews, 13, 39
 Warsaw, 80
 Way, the, 52, 53
 website references
 reference.allrefer.com, 54
 www.baruchhashem.com, 10
 www.dictionary.com, 64
 www.familybible.org, 56, 65
 www.fordham.edu, 94, 96
 www.geocities.com, 81
 www.jewfaq.org, 8, 12, 31, 32, 44, 74
 www.jewishencyclopedia.com, 15, 16, 42, 45
 www.mjaa.org.au, 11
 www.nazareneisrael.org, 87
 www.templemountfaithful.org, 67
 www.us-israel.org, 55, 90
 www.yashanet.com, 56
 Wilson, Marvin R., 7
 wine, 22, 31, 32, 71, 78
 Woodrow, Ralph, 56, 61
 World to Come. *See* Olam Haba
 World War I, 80
 World War II, 80
 worship, 2, 8, 10, 13, 15, 16, 19, 22, 31, 33, 42, 45, 52, 54, 59, 60, 61, 63, 65, 66, 73, 87, 94, 97
 Writings, 17, 75, 76
 Ya'akov, 3, 27, 38, 39, 41, 42, 51, 55, 71, 86, 103, 105, *See also* Jacob
 seed of, 104
 Yavne, 54, 55
 Council of, 54
 Yehudah Sicarius, 14
 Yerushalayim, 21, 22, 27, 52, 66, *See also* Jerusalem
 Yerushalayim, 12
 Yeshua, 4, 7, 8, 9, 10, 11, 14, 15, 17, 19, 22, 23, 28, 29, 30, 33, 34, 37, 38, 39, 40, 41, 43, 47, 48, 49, 53, 55, 56, 57, 58, 62, 63, 64, 65, 67, 70, 75, 76, 81, 83, 84, 85, 86, 92
 Yeshua's trial, 38
 Y'hudah, 21, 27, 28, 41, 53, 66, *See also* Judah
 Yirmeyahu, 28, *See also* Jeremiah
 Yisra'el, 14, 21, 38, 55, 64, *See also* Israel
 Yitzchak, 3, 48, 71, 103, 104, 105, *See also* Isaac
 Yo'el, 22
 Yochanan, Apostle, 33, 34, 38, 39, 41, 55
 Yom ha-Kippurim, 16, 42, 76, *See also* Yom Kippur
 Yom Kippur, 16, 42, 45, 76, 78, *See also* Yom ha-Kippurim
 Young, Brad H., 7, 8, 64

The Model for the Messianic Community

Young's Literal Translation, 46

Zacker, John, 10

Zakenim, 41, 51, 53, *See also* Elders

Messianic, 40

Zealots, 14, 15, 23