

Torah, Covenant, Priesthood and Leadership

*A Handbook of
Procedure and Theology*

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by Michael Rudolph, D.Min., J.D.



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Published by:



Tikkun
International®

Tikkun International, Inc. • P.O. Box 2997
Montgomery Village, MD 20886

Library of Congress Control Number: 2019918454

ISBN: 978-1-7337112-7-2

Printed in the United States of America

Editor: Charles Jewell

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Dedication

*Marie, Marie, wife to me,
Without whose life I'd nowhere be.*

Life...

Wife...

Selflessly...

Gift from God enduringly.

Marie, Marie, wife to me,

Devoted helpmate lovingly.

Love...

Dove...

Faithfully...

I thank God for you endlessly.

November 8, 1997



*In honor of the marriage of
Caleb Faber to Lacie Rawlings
on November 3, 2019.*

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Introduction

This book is intended as a companion to my prior small book “Disputes, Discipline, and Reconciliation in the Body of Believers.” Together, they address many of the questions that leaders and others in Messianic Jewish congregations have regarding both theology and practice.

Chapter I herein is titled “Torah and Covenant.” The Mosaic *Torah* is important in all quarters of Judaism, but application of it is unique in Messianic Judaism because of our belief in the New Covenant and our conviction that Messiah Yeshua is the Living *Torah*. Rabbinical Judaism struggles with how it should comply with the *Torah* in view of there being no Levitical Priesthood or Holy Temple in which animal sacrifices can be conducted. We, on the other hand, have no such problem since we view Yeshua as our sacrificed lamb. Yet, questions regularly arise about the different covenants and how the Mosaic Law can be adapted to our New Covenant environment that is so different from that of the Israelites’ under Moses.

Chapter II titled “Paul’s Comments on the Law” is reprinted from “The Law of Messiah: Torah from a New Covenant Perspective” by Rudolph and Juster. Some of the Apostle Paul’s teachings as they appear in our English translations have given opponents of Messianic Judaism ammunition to say that we are wrong to be supportive of the *Torah* given under Moses. We know we are not wrong because the *Torah* is Scripture, and 2 Timothy 3:16-17 assures us that all Scripture is valuable. This Chapter provides corrective explanations for each of the most common erroneous assertions.

Chapter III is titled “Priesthood.” The *Torah* given to Moses. God proclaims that Israel is a “kingdom of priests” and the New Testament infers that all believers in Yeshua (both Jews

and Gentiles) are priests. If both are true, what is the difference in the priesthoods and how do they relate? This Chapter proposes a model of priesthood that reconciles the two.

Chapter IV is titled “Leadership.” Leadership is a theme throughout the Bible and is relevant in every sphere of our lives today. But what is godly leadership? Messianic Judaism has had a need for a manual on leadership, and we have an excellent one written by Dr. Daniel C. Juster titled “Relational Leadership.” This chapter endeavors to supplement what Dr. Juster wrote.

I am indebted to the *Ruach HaKodesh*, and to my congregational families of *Ohev Yisrael* (Springfield VA) and *Ahavat Yeshua* (Washington, DC) for their prayers and encouragement in making these teachings available.

I. Torah and Covenant

Definitions

First, “Covenant:” A covenant is a relationship between persons that includes one or more obligations. A covenant relationship can originate in several ways. Sometimes it is imposed on us such as our covenant as Jewish people if our ancestry is through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob. We call this the Abrahamic Covenant and, if we are in it, we are in it whether or not we want to be. As for its obligations, they include our serving as priests in a kingdom of priests and our being a light to the nations of the world. We call such covenants “unilateral covenants” because we had no say in it. Unilateral covenants are sometimes placed upon us by the intention of another and sometimes they are the subtle byproduct of a relationship we find ourselves in such as parenthood. Sometimes we unintentionally create a unilateral covenant when we voluntarily take upon ourselves an obligation, such as when we promise someone that we will do something for him with nothing expected in return. In such a case, the obligation is ours alone, but the covenant that is created belongs to the other person as well because he can expect us to be true to our word and can morally (albeit not legally) hold us to our promise. We typically don’t think of such a relationship as a covenant, but it is one, nevertheless.

A covenant can also be bilateral when, for example, each party to the covenant promises something in order to obtain a promise from, or action by, the other. An example of a bilateral covenant is found in Exodus 19:3b-6 in which God offers himself to the Israelites and says to Moses:

“Here is what you are to say to the household of Ya’akov, to tell the people of Isra’el: ‘You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on

eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and keep my covenant, then you will be my own treasure from among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you will be a kingdom of cohanim for me, a nation set apart. 'These are the words you are to speak to the people of Isra'el.'

And we read in Exodus 19:8:

"All the people answered as one, 'Everything ADONAI has said, we will do.'"

God's promise in exchange for the Israelites' promise created what we call the "Mosaic Covenant." It was bilateral.

Our next definition is of "Commandment:" A commandment, in our context, is an explicit command (or order) issued by God. It creates a covenant (i.e. a relationship of obligation to obey) but it is not itself a covenant. Commandments are statutory laws (i.e. laws that are decreed or legislated and usually committed to writing) which are to be distinguished from laws that are implied or created through communal practice or tradition. When we refer to the Mosaic Law, we are referring to God's Commandments (statutes and ordinances) spoken from Mount Sinai or given through Moses.

Our next definition is of "*Torah*:" There is "*Torah*" and "the *Torah*." "The *Torah*" is either the *Penteteuch* (i.e. the first five books of the Bible) or the "Mosaic Law," or just "the Law" (assuming Mosaic). The generic word "*Torah*" (without the article "the") means God's teaching broadly. It includes God's teachings in "the *Torah*" but generic "*Torah*" can be found in every part of the Bible either explicitly commanded or implied. I consider "*Torah*" synonymous with "the will of God."

Torah in the New Testament

Why then, are the first five books of the Bible traditionally classified as “*Torah*,” whereas the remaining Hebrew Scriptures are not? It cannot be their inspiration, for by definition, all Scripture is inspired. No, the uniqueness of the *Pentateuch* is that it contains God’s major covenants prior to Yeshua. The other books of the *Tanakh* (Old Testament) expound on these covenants, teach about them, prophesy about them, and present their history, but they do not themselves contain the covenants.

Consider the many similarities between the *Pentateuch* and the Gospels:

- (a) The *Pentateuch* contains the life of Moses who was used by God to deliver the Sinai Covenant to Israel (Exodus 34:27). The Gospels collectively contain the life of Yeshua, who was used by God to deliver the New Covenant to Israel (Hebrews 8:6).
- (b) The *Pentateuch* contains the event in which Moses proclaims the blood of the Sinai Covenant (Exodus 24:8). The Gospels collectively contain the event in which Yeshua proclaims his blood of the New Covenant (Matthew 26:28).
- (c) The *Pentateuch* contains the teachings and the commandments of the Sinai Covenant conveyed through Moses (Deuteronomy 4:13). The Gospels collectively contain the teachings and the commandments of the New Covenant conveyed through Yeshua (Matthew 5:1-7:29).
- (d) The *Pentateuch* contains the means by which men must atone for their sins through animal sacrifice. The Gospels collectively contain the means by which men must be forgiven for their sins through Yeshua’s sacrifice.

(e) The *Pentateuch* initiates a priesthood and the appointment of Aaron as High Priest (Exodus 28:1-3). The Gospels collectively initiate a new priesthood and the appointment of Yeshua as High Priest (described in Hebrews 7:20-28).

(f) The *Pentateuch* contains shadows of things to come. The Gospels collectively contain the prophetic fulfillment of those shadows.

(g) The *Pentateuch* ends with the death of Moses. The Gospels collectively end with the death, resurrection, and ascension of Yeshua.

Yeshua's life and blood are the substance of the New Covenant—its "*Torah*" (John 1:14, 14:6), and Yeshua's sacrificial death and resurrection mark both the New Covenant's beginning (John 19:30) and its fulfillment. It is in the Gospel books that we find this New Covenant substance, and therefore the New Covenant itself.

Early Torah

Now a little history: It is strongly suggested in the *Tanakh* and ancient Jewish writings, and is specifically stated in the New Covenant Scriptures, that the *Torah* existed before the creation of the world. Writing for *The Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Warren Harvey references Ben Sira and Proverbs 8:22 ff in order to make his point; he writes:

“‘Moses received the Torah from Sinai’ (Avot 1:1). Yet there is an ancient tradition that the Torah existed in heaven not only before God revealed it to Moses, but even before the world was created (Encyclopaedia Judaica, vol. 15, p. 1236 (Keter Publishing House: Jerusalem, 1971)).”

Harvey (in agreement with other Jewish writers) believes that Proverbs 8:22 ff, written as a personification of wisdom, is actually the personification of a pre-existent *Torah*:

Proverbs 8:22-31: "The LORD possessed me at the beginning of His way, Before His works of old. I have been established from everlasting, from the beginning, before there was ever an earth. When there were no depths I was brought forth, when there were no fountains abounding with water. Before the mountains were settled, before the hills, I was brought forth; while as yet He had not made the earth or the fields, or the primeval dust of the world. When He prepared the heavens, I was there, when He drew a circle on the face of the deep, when He established the clouds above, when He strengthened the fountains of the deep, when He assigned to the sea its limit, so that the waters would not transgress His command, when He marked out the foundations of the earth, then I was beside Him as a master craftsman; and I was daily His delight, rejoicing always before Him, rejoicing in His inhabited world, and my delight was with the sons of men." (NKJ)

Harvey's conclusion of a pre-existent *Torah* is heavily influenced by ancient writings in both *Talmud* and *Midrash*:

"Surely it was taught: Seven things were created before the world was created, and these are they: The Torah, repentance, the Garden of Eden, Gehenna the Throne of Glory, the Temple, and the name of Messiah. The Torah, for it is written, 'The Lord made me as the beginning of his way' (Pesachim 54a).

"Thus God consulted the Torah and created the world, while the Torah declares, 'In the beginning God creat-

ed’ (Gen. 1:1), ‘beginning’ referring to the Torah, as the verse, ‘The Lord made me in the beginning of His way (Prov 8:22)’ (Gen. R. 1:4).

John 1:1 refers to God as the spoken “Word” and one who embodies and speaks the “Word”:

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

And the verses that follow John 1:1 clearly identify Messiah Yeshua as being the Word:

John 1:2-14: *“He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made. In Him was life, and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. There was a man sent from God, whose name was John. This man came for a witness, to bear witness of the Light, that all through him might believe. He was not that Light, but was sent to bear witness of that Light. That was the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. He was in the world, and the world was made through Him, and the world did not know Him. He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name: who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God. And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.” (See also, John 14:6)*

When the *logos* spoke, the result was *nomos*, the same Greek word used in Hebrews 8:10 to mean *Torah* when the Book of

Hebrews quotes Jeremiah 31:32(33) in translation. Since the *logos* was pre-existent, it is logical that the *nomos* or *Torah* came into existence when the *logos* spoke it, and so *Torah* must have either pre-existed or at least come into existence during the creation.

Torah in Judaism

Adherence to the *Torah* and *Torah*-observance has been a characteristic of Judaism ever since Moses. So, when the Holy Temple was destroyed by the Romans in 70 AD and Jews fled from Jerusalem, Judaism was thrown into a crisis and, influential rabbis of the time (notably Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai), in an attempt to save the Pharisaic Judaism that they knew, led the Jewish people into changing their beliefs of what was required to satisfy God. Whereas animal sacrifices in the Temple used to be the basis for atonement of sin, good works and keeping the commandments of the *Torah* were now said to be acceptable substitutes and, although the Holy Spirit had already made himself available on the *Shavuot* following Yeshua's death, he was not received by the majority of the Jews of the day in the same way that Yeshua was not received. That is why the Judaism that resulted and that comes down to us today as Rabbinical Judaism relates to God in a way that is (for the most part) rule-keeping and not oriented to expecting and interacting with God's presence. In short, the Holy Spirit ceased to be on the radar screen of normative Jewish life and practice.

Now I said "normative." The Jews who believed in and followed Yeshua prior to this time were just beginning to organize, and when they (as all other Jews) fled from Jerusalem, they were less able to regroup. They continued in their faith individually (some probably secretly) but we have no record of a Yeshua-believing body of Jews coming together again until the late Nineteenth Century. Nevertheless, there is no record of any animosity between them and the rest of the Jewish commu-

nity until after the Bar Kokhba revolt of circa 132-135 AD. Simon Bar Kokhba was widely regarded by the Jewish community as Messiah so, when he led a military revolt against Rome, the majority of Jews followed him into battle. Those who believed in Yeshua as Messiah did not, however, so when the Jews were disastrously defeated with the loss of many of its young men, those who did not go to war due to their faith in Yeshua were viewed as traitors to the Jewish people, and thus began the animosity that exists (even until today) between rabbinical Judaism (in its various forms) and Yeshua-believing Judaism that we today call Messianic Judaism.

Attempts at Torah Codification

There have been several attempts among classical Jewish scholars to codify God's Word into numbered *mitzvot*. The earliest of these was *Hilchot Gedolot*, a work by Simon Kairo published sometime in the 8th Century. By that time, a principle had already been established in the *Talmud*, that the total number of *mitzvot* in the *Torah* was *Taryag* (six hundred thirteen); and of these, two hundred forty-eight (248) were positive (*mitzvot aseh*), and three hundred sixty-five (365) were negative (*mitzvot lo ta'aseh*).

Anyone who attempts to enumerate *mitzvot* in the *Torah* soon realizes that there are decisions to be made. What, for example, should one consider to be a *mitzvah*? What level of departure from the plain meaning of the biblical text is permissible? What level of inference is allowable? How does one count similar expressions of God's will that are stated differently at different places in the Scriptures? Do we count as two *mitzvot* those that are expressed both in the positive and negative in different verses of Scripture, or do we count them as one? It is not surprising that those who have attempted this work have sometimes come to different conclusions. To bring consensus, Judaism needed a scholar of such prestige that he could define

six hundred thirteen *mitzvot* that would be acceptable to a majority of the Jewish community.

The Classical Codifiers

Such a scholar emerged in the person of Moshe ben Maimon (Maimonides, aka “the RAMBAM”) who, sometime prior to 1170 AD wrote his compilation of *Torah* law in Arabic under the title *Kitab Al-Fara'id* (The Book of Divine Precepts). He subsequently revised his work, and by the end of his life there were two Arabic texts or versions of *Kitab Al-Fara'id* in existence. Unlike his predecessors, Maimonides was careful to follow fourteen defined principles to justify his conclusions. This made all the difference, and his work received almost universal acceptance.

Three contemporaries of Maimonides translated his texts into Hebrew, and these translations became known as *Sefer haMitzvot*. Abraham ibn Chasdai made his translation from Maimonides’ first version. Maimonides’ second text (translated into Hebrew by Solomon ibn Job of Granada and separately by Moses ibn Tibbon) is, however, considered the “standard Arabic text” today. More recently, Dr. Chaim Heller published a “corrected” Hebrew text in which he compared and reconciled Maimonides’ Arabic texts with that of ibn Job, and an even more recent translation called the “Jerusalem Hebrew Text” was made by Rabbi Joseph Kapach.

As an academic achievement, Maimonides’ enumeration of *mitzvot* was huge. However, it was too exhaustive to be a convenient tool in the post-Temple era when many of the *mitzvot* dealing with sacrifices and the Levitical priesthood could no longer be performed.

Enter Rabbi Yisrael Meir haKohen (aka the *Chafetz Chaim*). In 1931, Rabbi Meir published *Sefer haMitzvot haKatzar* (“The

Concise Book of *Mitvoth*”) in which he extracted from Maimonides’ list, Two Hundred Ninety Seven (297) *mitzvot*—Seventy-seven (77) positive, One Hundred Ninety-four (194) negative, and Twenty-six (26) applicable only in the Land of Israel. Rabbi Meir intended his book to be a compilation of *mitzvot* that could be observed by Jews in the post-Temple era and, particularly in the Diaspora.

Besides listing fewer *mitzvot* than Maimonides, Rabbi Meir differs from him in other ways as well. To begin with, the two compilers number their *mitzvot* differently and present them in a different order. As a consequence, it is not always easy to determine which one of Meir’s *mitzvot* corresponds to a given *mitzvah* of Maimonides. Second, while they usually agree on the Scriptures that define a given *mitzvah*, it is not always the case, nor is it the case with other commentators. It is also important to note that, while both Maimonides and Meir quote Hebrew Scripture as proof texts for their respective *mitzvot*, neither of their original writings give supportive chapter and verse numbers, and their quotations are not always of the entire verses as they appear in modern Hebrew Bibles. Translators and editors of both of their works added chapter and verse citations that did not appear in the originals and, in some cases, they quoted entire verses of Scripture where the original writings quoted only parts of verses.

Finally, Maimonides and Meir do not always agree on the statement of the *mitzvah* that they extract from a given Scripture. For example, in response to Exodus 12:18 which reads:

“From the evening of the fourteenth day of the first month until the evening of the twenty-first day, you are to eat matzah.”

...Maimonides' Positive *Mitzvah* #158 states that we are to eat unleavened bread on the evening of the 15th day of *Nisan*, while Meir's Positive *Mitzvah* #23 states that we are to eat unleavened bread on the evening of the 14th day of *Nisan*. Presumably, the interpretive difference is in whether "evening" is understood to be before or after sundown. Another example is presented by Deuteronomy 6:13 which reads:

"You are to fear ADONAI your God, serve him and swear by his name."

Notwithstanding that fearing God is the subject of the verse, Maimonides' Positive *Mitzvah* #5 interprets it as "worshipping" God, while Rabbi Meir's Positive *Mitzvah* #7 says it means to "pray" to God. Clearly, the ways the two commentators interpret the Scripture and write their respective *mitzvot* reflect both their judgment and their theology.

Codifications that were written after *Sefer haMitzvot* have added to our overall understanding of God's commandments, but no other codifier ever attained the prestige and influence of Maimonides. However, Yisrael Meir haKohen's work *Sefer haMitzvot haKatzar* provides a major comparison to Maimonides because he attempted to limit his list of commandments to those that he deemed performable in the Twentieth Century. Although a complete listing and in-depth discussion of other codes of law are beyond the scope of this teaching, several nevertheless deserve special mention:

- (a) *Mishneh Torah*, written by Maimonides, is a fourteen-book compilation of laws gleaned from both Scripture and Talmud. It is reputed to be complete but takes no account of a law's applicability in the post-Temple era. Maimonides built *Mishneh Torah*

around his *Sefer haMitzvot*, so he reiterated all the *mitzvot* in an introductory list.

- (b) *Sefer Mitzvot Gadol* (Big Book of Commandments), Moses of Coucy (1st half of the 13th Century).
- (c) *Sefer Mitzvot Katan* (Little Book of Commandments), Isaac ben Joseph of Corveil (2nd half of the 13th Century).
- (d) *Sefer HaChinuch* (The Book of Education) is attributed to Aaron haLevi of Barcelona (c. 1257) and is still in common use today. It was most probably based upon Abraham ibn Chasdai's translation of Maimonides' first Arabic edition and, although basically organized according to the chapter and verse sequence of the *Tanakh*, his first manuscript retained some positive and negative commandment groupings as part of its order. In contrast, the *Sefer HaChinuch* version that is in print today contains none of the positive and negative groupings, and so are listed from *Mitzvah* #1 to *Mitzvah* #613. This is the result (according to Charles Wengrov) of an early printer's decision to re-order the *mitzvot*, causing them to appear in exactly the same sequence as the verses in the *Tanakh*; and so it remains today.
- (e) Most other codifications of Jewish law such as the *Shulchan Aruch* and the *Kitzur Shulchan Aruch* combine Scriptural and rabbinical elements.

Torah Observance and Messianic Judaism

Enter now Twentieth Century Hebrew-Christianity—a Jewish rediscovery of Yeshua and the Holy Spirit in the New Covenant, but without an understanding of the Jewish call to a *Torah*-observant life. But it is understandable for, as I said earlier, many Jews had become part of a Christianity that did

not understand the Jewish calling to *Torah*—a Christianity that saw *Torah* law as in opposition to the grace and salvation of Yeshua and also in opposition to what it termed “New Covenant liberty”—a Christianity that, over the millennia, did all it could to distance itself from Jewish practices of the *Torah*, even to the extent of ignoring the Bible’s definition of the New Covenant which, according to Jeremiah 31:32(33), is that it would be written on Jewish hearts and imbedded in Jewish minds. But God would not be denied and so, through the leading of the Holy Spirit, Hebrew-Christianity gradually became Messianic Judaism and respect for *Torah*-observance was re-established among Yeshua-believing Jews.

Applying Mosaic Torah in the New Covenant

Now if I stop right here it might seem that this message is complete, but it is not. What do we mean by *Torah*-observance? We are acutely aware that because of the absence of the Holy Temple, the absence of an operating Levitical priesthood, and the sacrifice of our Messiah Yeshua, that literal obedience to the majority of Mosaic Commandments is either impossible or improper. Many of us (including yours truly) have considered the matter in prayer and have written papers on the subject. In my writings on the subject, I refer to the Commandments given under Moses as either “covenant-dependent” or “covenant-transcendent.” Some years ago, a young man (whom I shall call Thomas) was trying to understand what I meant by the terms, and I think it will be instructive that I share my correspondence with Thomas as a way of imparting the same understanding.

Thomas wrote this to me:

“I do not understand the basis for your argument that there are two types of law—“covenant-dependent,” and “covenant-transcendent.” I understand what you are

getting at, and almost agree, but you offer no reasoning for your argument.”

My statement to which Thomas referred is:

“There are two categories of statutes commanded by God under the Mosaic Covenant—those whose literal compliance depends upon the Covenant’s continued existence, and those whose literal compliance does not. We shall call the first of these, ‘covenant-dependent,’ and the second of these, ‘covenant-transcendent.’”

The two terms that Thomas questioned (“covenant-dependent” and “covenant-transcendent”) are expressions that are meant to explain Mosaic Commandments whose literal application depends upon whether the Mosaic Covenant is still alive and well. I wanted to help Thomas understand, so I wrote back:

“Commandments that I call “covenant-dependent” are the ones that could be obeyed to the letter of how they were written only so long as the conditions of the Mosaic Covenant continued to exist. The key conditions that have to exist to support covenant-dependent commandments are (1) a standing Jerusalem Temple in which animals are sacrificed, (2) a functioning Levitical Priesthood to conduct the sacrifices, and (3) a government (of Israel) that is led by a man of God’s choosing. The other commandments—those that do not need those conditions—those I call “covenant transcendent,” and they along with the commandments proclaimed by Yeshua and by his apostles in his behalf, I call “the Law of Messiah.”

I gave Thomas examples of both kinds of commandments. For a typical “covenant-dependent” commandment, I offered Leviticus 7:1-5, which reads:

“This is the law for the guilt offering: it is especially holy. They [meaning the cohanim (the priests) in behalf of individual Israelites] are to slaughter the guilt offering in the place where they slaughter the burnt offering, and its blood is to be splashed against all sides of the altar. He [meaning a priest] is to offer all its fat—the fat tail, the fat covering the inner organs, the two kidneys, the fat on them near the flanks, and the covering of the liver, which he will remove with the kidneys. The cohen will make them go up in smoke on the altar as an offering made by fire to ADONAI; it is a guilt offering.”

It is obvious that we cannot obey this commandment literally today. We have no functioning Levitical priests, nor a functioning Holy Temple or Altar. And even if we had those things, we wouldn't be burning up animals as guilt offerings because Yeshua's sacrifice has become our guilt offering. Clearly, this commandment is “covenant-dependent” because it depends on the existence of the Mosaic Covenant.

I then went on to give Thomas examples of commandments that are “covenant-transcendent,” and quoted Exodus 20:12-14:

“Honor your father and mother, so that you may live long in the land which ADONAI your God is giving you. Do not murder. Do not commit adultery. Do not steal. Do not give false evidence against your neighbor. You shall not covet your neighbor's house; you shall not covet your neighbor's wife, nor his male servant, nor his female servant, nor his ox, nor his donkey, nor anything that is your neighbor's.”

This passage of Scripture contains several commandments, each of which transcends the Mosaic Covenant because we can

obey every one of them today exactly as written. None of them need the Temple or the Levitical Priests or the Altar.

What Comprises the New Covenant?

Thomas then came back with an intriguing question; he asked:

“I don’t see anywhere in Scripture that tells us what is in the New Covenant. What, in your opinion, comprises the New Covenant?”

I told him that his question was a good one, and I gave him an answer. But why am I telling you all of this? It is because the kind of questions Thomas was asking touches what I believe God wants us all to know about *Torah* in the New Covenant.

The New Covenant is best described prophetically in Jeremiah 31:30(31)-33(34), that I will read to you from the New King James Version because it is expressed there so beautifully; it says:

“Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah—not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt, My covenant which they broke, though I was a husband to them, says the LORD. But this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. No more shall every man teach his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, ‘Know the LORD,’ for they all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them, says the LORD. For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more.” (NKJ)

During Mosaic Covenant times, all the commandments given to Moses that he passed on to the Israelites were doable in every detail exactly as stated. However, Jeremiah prophetically foresaw a change in covenant where God's law would continue to exist, but where we would receive and respond to it differently than before.

The prediction in Jeremiah 31:33(34), *“For I will forgive their iniquity, and their sin I will remember no more,”* can only be explained by Yeshua's sacrifice; there is no other event in history that can explain it. According to Hebrews 9:24-26, Yeshua's sacrifice resulted in so complete an eradication of our sins that, for those who receive him, our *“sins are remembered no more.”* The Hebrews passage that describes this reads as follows:

“For the Messiah has entered a Holiest Place which is not man-made and merely a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, in order to appear now on our behalf in the very presence of God. Further, he did not enter heaven to offer himself over and over again, like the cohen hagadol who enters the Holiest Place year after year with blood that is not his own; for then he would have had to suffer death many times—from the founding of the universe on. But as it is, he has appeared once at the end of the ages in order to do away with sin through the sacrifice of himself.”

Also, 1 John 2:2 informs us:

“Also, he is the kapparah [covering] for our sins—and not only for ours, but also for those of the whole world.”

And Romans 4:24-25 tells us:

“They were written also for us, who will certainly have our account credited too, because we have trusted in him who raised Yeshua our Lord from the dead—Yeshua, who was delivered over to death because of our offences, and raised to life in order to make us righteous.”

So, I believe that the first New Covenant element that God sent to us was none other than God himself (in the person of Yeshua), and it paved a way for the second—the Holy Spirit—also God himself. We read of this second element in John 16:5-7:

“But now I am going to the One who sent me. Not one of you is asking me, ‘Where are you going?’ Instead, because I have said these things to you, you are overcome with grief. But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I don’t go away, the comforting Counselor will not come to you. However, if I do go, I will send him to you.”

Also, in Acts 2:1-4:

“The festival of Shavu’ot 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 [the Holy Spirit] and began to talk in different languages, as the Spirit enabled them to speak.”

Now, jumping ahead to Acts 2:14-21 (refers to Joel 3:1 (2:28)-5(2:32)):

“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’el: ‘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 ADONAI will be saved.”’”

So, in response to the question, “What comprises the New Covenant?” My answer is that the New Covenant is a new way that God has provided for us to have a relationship with him—a closer relationship—a one-on-one relationship; Hebrews 8:6 explains it this way:

“But now the work Yeshua has been given to do, is far superior to theirs, just as the covenant he mediates is better. For this covenant has been given as Torah on the basis of better promises.”

What are those better promises? Well, instead of our having to communicate with God by way of consulting with prophets, we can now be cleansed of our sins by Yeshua’s sacrifice and can

communicate with God directly through the Holy Spirit who, because of the cleansing, is able to reside within us. We are told in 1 Corinthians 6:19-20:

“...don't you know that your body is a temple for the Ruach HaKodesh who lives inside you, whom you received from God? The fact is, you don't belong to yourselves; for you were bought at a price. So use your bodies to glorify God.”

The Mosaic and New Covenants Are Different

According to Hebrews, the two covenants—the Mosaic Covenant and the New Covenant are different. In the First Covenant, God spoke commandments to Moses from on high and, through Moses, told the Israelites in Exodus 19:5:

“Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and keep my covenant, then you will be my own treasure from among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine.”

Then in Exodus 19:8 we read:

“All the people [of Israel] answered as one, [and said] ‘Everything ADONAI has said, we will do..’”

But the Israelites didn't do what they promised, and they broke God's covenant.

God does not have different moral expectations of us in the New Covenant than in the previous covenant. That notwithstanding, the New Covenant is indeed “new” in the way that God communicates his will to us. In the Mosaic Covenant, God was more distant, and his will was conveyed through his commandments and through the prophets. In the New Covenant, by comparison, God has made himself near to us through

the Holy Spirit who lives within us, and He speaks to us individually. In those two ways, the two covenants are indeed different.

God's expectation of the way we respond to the two Covenants is different as well. In the Mosaic Covenant, our response was:

“Everything ADONAI has said, we will do.”

That is good for us as well but, in the New Covenant, our response should also be:

“Lord, we now know you intimately because the Holy Spirit lives within each of us, and you speak to each of us as a father speaks to his son. In this new close relationship, we know your desire for us, and we obey you—not because we fear punishment—but because we love you and want to please you.”

So, in our seeking to keep God's Commandments in the New Covenant, our approach should not be one of “rule-keeping,” but rather one of looking to his Commandments to guide us in knowing his will. The knowledge that we acquire through the Scriptures is then interpreted and explained to us by the Holy Spirit so we can understand God's will for us in each of our special circumstances. Although the statutes of the Mosaic Covenant are no longer enforced in the same way as they were under Moses, they are, however, exceedingly useful in helping us to know, understand, and appreciate God's law that has now (as Jeremiah prophesied) been put in our minds and hearts by the Holy Spirit.

The Law of Messiah Is Not Statutory

One final thought: “*Torah*” is too often thought of as consisting merely of the statutes and ordinances. Actually, “*Torah*” is much

broader than that. The literal meaning of “*Torah*” is “God’s teaching” and, from a New Covenant perspective, it includes everything in God’s written Word (i.e. the entire *Tanach* and New Testament), as well as everything He reveals to us by way of explanation and direction prophetically. A New Covenant believer in Yeshua cannot, therefore, separate the keeping of *Torah* from discerning the will of God through the Holy Spirit.

The “covenant-dependent” and “covenant-transcendent” commandments that I quoted earlier were clear and unambiguous, but that is not always the case. Consider (for example) Exodus 23:19:

“You are not to boil a young animal in its mother’s milk.”

Is it intended to be taken literally? The rabbis have broadened its meaning to not cooking or eating dairy and meat during the same meal or within hours of each other. I, on the other hand, think it was intended to be literal, in opposition to a perverted heathen practice. How do we decide? We consult the Holy Spirit.

Consider also Deuteronomy 6:6 and 6:8:

“These words, which I am ordering you today, are to be on your heart;” ... “Tie them on your hand as a sign, put them at the front of a headband around your forehead.”

Does this commandment mean that God wants us to pray while wearing *tefillin* (black boxes housing Scripture) on our arms and foreheads? That is the Orthodox interpretation. I, on the other hand, do not believe that the commandment is intended to be literal, but rather intended as an exhortation for us to think and do according to the Word of God! How do we decide? Once again: We consult the Holy Spirit.

There are many such commandments in the Bible that need interpretation from the Holy Spirit. We could simply adopt whatever practices we find convenient or embrace the practices of one authority or another, but I believe that God wants us to consult him directly. There may, in fact, be different applications according to the communities in which we live, and each of our particular circumstances. We cannot know unless God reveals it to us, and He normally will not reveal it to us unless we ask him.

That is the way I believe God wants us to keep *Torah* in the New Covenant. Relying on the Holy Spirit is the key. We cannot keep *Torah* in the New Covenant by following rules. We need the Holy Spirit for discernment and application.

Back to Abraham

Now earlier I said that the terms “covenant-dependent” and “covenant-transcendent” are expressions that are meant to explain Mosaic Commandments whose literal application in the New Covenant depends upon whether the Mosaic Covenant is still alive and well. It is a matter of some controversy within Messianic Judaism, but I contend that it is not alive and, if it is, it is not well. To completely explain my position on this, I must refer back to the covenant that preceded the Mosaic Covenant, the Abrahamic Covenant.

We read in [Genesis 15:17-21](#) how God made a covenant with Abraham in which He promised to give him and his descendants land—land that we now call Israel. On the one hand, it was unilateral because Abraham was not asked to agree:

“After the sun had set and there was thick darkness, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared, which passed between these animal parts. That day ADONAI made a covenant with Avram: “I have given this land to

your descendants—from the Vadi of Egypt to the great river; the Euphrates River—the territory of the Keni, the K'nizi, the Kadmoni, the Hitti, the P'rizi, the Refa'im, the Emori, the Kena'ani, the Girgashi and the Y'vusi.””

God then tested Abraham, and subsequently broadened the Covenant to include Abraham's descendants after him as parties. These descendants were later called “the children of Israel” and much later “the Jewish People.” God also made the Covenant everlasting and promised Abraham to be God to his descendants and that Abraham would be the “father of many nations.” Then God issued a Commandment connected to the Covenant that required Abraham and the males of his household and the descendants after him to be circumcised in the foreskins of their flesh; anyone who was not circumcised would be cut off from the Covenant and the covenant people. I previously said that the Covenant was unilateral, but it may also be considered bilateral since Abraham could have refused circumcision. We read in Genesis 17:4-14:

““As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations. Your name will no longer be Avram [exalted father], but your name will be Avraham [father of many], because I have made you the father of many nations. I will cause you to be very fruitful. I will make nations of you, kings will descend from you. I am establishing my covenant between me and you, along with your descendants after you, generation after generation, as an everlasting covenant, to be God for you and for your descendants after you. I will give you and your descendants after you the land in which you are now foreigners, all the land of Kena'an, as a permanent possession; and I will be their God.” God said to Avraham, “As for you, you are to keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you, generation after gener-

ation. Here is my covenant, which you are to keep, between me and you, along with your descendants after you: every male among you is to be circumcised. You are to be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; this will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. Generation after generation, every male among you who is eight days old is to be circumcised, including slaves born within your household and those bought from a foreigner not descended from you. The slave born in your house and the person bought with your money must be circumcised; thus my covenant will be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who will not let himself be circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin—that person will be cut off from his people, because he has broken my covenant.”

Onward to Moses

Notice that the Abrahamic Covenant was a step in the direction of redeeming mankind from the death that resulted from Adam’s disobedience. Why God chose to proceed in this way (i.e. redeem mankind through Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob—the Jewish people) I do not know, but many years later we come to another great covenant given through Moses at the foot of Mount Sinai that we call the Sinaitic or Mosaic Covenant. The Mosaic Covenant was most certainly bilateral in that God declared it with the expectation that the Israelites would accept and they did

As we already know, as part of the Mosaic Covenant God gave the Israelites commandments that are collectively known as the “Mosaic Law.” Eventually, the Mosaic Covenant was breached by the Israelites by their disobeying the commandments connected to it. We read of that in [Jeremiah 31](#) and we also read of it in [Hosea 6:7](#):

“But they, just like men, have broken the covenant, they have been faithless in dealing with me.”

Jeremiah prophesied that because the Mosaic Covenant had been violated by the Israelites, God would one day provide a New Covenant that would be different. And Hebrews 8:6 says:

“But now the work Yeshua has been given to do is far superior to theirs, just as the covenant he mediates is better. For this covenant has been given as Torah on the basis of better promises.”

The New Covenant Overtakes the Old

When Israel breached the Mosaic Covenant God could have ended it abruptly, but He did not. Instead, God decided to phase the Mosaic Covenant out but maintain it until such time as the New Covenant would come into existence and fully take its place. We read of how the Mosaic Covenant was on its way to vanishing in Hebrews 8:13 which says:

“By using the term, “new,” he has made the first [Mosaic] covenant “old”; and something being made old, something in the process of aging, is on its way to vanishing altogether.”

Well, the promised New Covenant did come, ushered in with the incarnation, sacrifice and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua, and with the Holy Spirit who now indwells all who are willing to receive him. That is what the prophecy in Jeremiah 31:32b(33b)-33a(34a) meant by:

“I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will any of them teach his fellow community

member or his brother, [saying] 'Know ADONAI'; for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest;''

Is the Mosaic Covenant now completely gone or is it still in the process of vanishing? When the Hebrews epistle was written, the Temple was still standing, and the animal sacrifices were still being performed by the Levitical Priests. Neither of those conditions exists today which (at the very least) supports the likelihood that the Mosaic Covenant is no longer fully operative. Whether the Mosaic Covenant is in a diminished state or is already fully gone, it is clear that the covenants that are strongest and most effective today are the New Covenant and the Abraham Covenant running alongside it. We can disagree as to whether or not the Mosaic Covenant has now fully ended or is still in the process of vanishing, but it is clear that most of what was commanded as part of the Mosaic Covenant cannot be complied with today literally because much of it relies on the Temple sacrifices and a God-led government of Israel—neither of which currently exist.

Because of Hebrews 8:13 and the subsequent destruction of the Temple, I contend (although some do not agree) that the Mosaic Covenant has already come to an end. The *Torah* (as distinguished from the Covenant) has not, however, because *Torah* is God's fundamental teaching—God's law (his will for man's morality, wisdom, and conduct) that transcends all covenants. As a matter of fact, according to Matthew 5:18, none of God's *Torah* will come to an end until "heaven and earth pass away.:"

"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."

Where Oh Where Has the Torah Gone?

So, if the Mosaic *Torah* has not passed away, where did it go? It is my opinion that it transcended the Mosaic Covenant, passed into the New Covenant, and became New Covenant *Torah* which needs now to be reinterpreted. How am I willing to make such a declaration? Partially because of Scriptures such as the following:

Proverbs 1:8-9: *“My son, heed the discipline of your father; and do not abandon the teaching [Torah] of your mother; they will be a garland to grace your head, a medal of honor for your neck.”*

Proverbs 3:1-4: *“My son, don’t forget my teaching [Torah], keep my commands in your heart; for they will add to you many days, years of life and peace. Do not let grace and truth leave you—bind them around your neck; write them on the tablet of your heart. Then you will win favor and esteem in the sight of God and of people.”*

Notice that the underlying Hebrew word translated as “teaching” in these two Scriptures is “*Torah*.”

Also, 2 Timothy 3:16-17 states:

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is valuable for teaching the truth, convicting of sin, correcting faults and training in right living; thus anyone who belongs to God may be fully equipped for every good work.”

What this tells me is that when there are Mosaic Commandments that no longer can (or no longer should) be complied with literally due to changes in covenant, because Mosaic Commandments are Scripture, we are assured that there are components derived from them that are continuously valu-

able—that transcend the Mosaic Covenant, pass into the New Covenant, and become New Covenant Law. Those components are *Torah*—God’s foundational teaching.

Consider the commandment prohibiting adultery that we spoke of earlier. If during the Mosaic Covenant period an Israelite committed adultery, his offense was that he violated the commandment of Exodus 20:13b(14):

“Do not commit adultery.”

In that case, Leviticus 20:10 would apply as the remedy:

“If a man commits adultery with another man’s wife, that is, with the wife of a fellow countryman, both the adulterer and the adulteress must be put to death.”

Now if a Jew (or non-Jew) in today’s western world were to commit adultery, his offense would not be that he violated Exodus 20:13b(14) because the capital punishment required by Leviticus 20:10 cannot be applied in today’s secular law. His biblical offense would be that he violated New Covenant *Torah*, and the Holy Spirit (not the secular authorities) would have to see to his punishment.

Applying the Mosaic *Mitzvot* in the New Covenant

It is not always easy to know what the underlying *Torah* of a Commandment is so, when I am unsure, I consult the Holy Spirit through prayer. An example of one I wrestled with is Numbers 15:38-40:

“Speak to the people of Isra’el, instructing them to make, through all their generations, tzitziyot on the corners of their garments, and to put with the tzitzit on

each corner a blue thread. It is to be a tzitzit for you to look at and thereby remember all of ADONAI's mitzvot and obey them, so that you won't go around wherever your own heart and eyes lead you to prostitute yourselves; but it will help you remember and obey all my mitzvot and be holy for your God."

I was practicing law at the time and was wearing *tzitziyot* (fringes) that showed from under my jacket and looked (I thought) unkempt when I appeared in court. I asked the Lord to allow me an alternative to wearing fringes that would accomplish the same thing; perhaps a Star of David on a chain around my neck. "No," said the Lord.¹ "*That may be acceptable for some, but I want you to stand out as a Jew who believes in Yeshua.*" I have worn fringes ever since.

Because God's instructions and will for man are expressed and often even clarified in the New Covenant Scriptures, I consider all *Torah* today to be "New Covenant *Torah*" even if its origin is Mosaic. As for the application of *Torah* to Gentiles, according to Numbers 15:14-16, there is one *Torah* for all who live together in a Jewish community:

"If a foreigner stays with you—or whoever may be with you, through all your generations—and he wants to bring an offering made by fire as a fragrant aroma for ADONAI, he is to do the same as you. For this community there will be the same law for you as for the foreigner living with you; this is a permanent regulation through all your generations; the foreigner is to be treated the same way before ADONAI as yourselves. The same Torah and standard of judgment will apply to both you and the foreigner living with you."

¹ I heard God's inaudible still small voice.

That applies to Gentile members of a Messianic Jewish community as well² but, lest one think that I am espousing “one law theology,” permit me to explain the difference. “One law theology” proclaims that there is only one *Torah*; that much is true. However, it also proclaims that all facets of the one *Torah* are applied the same to Jews and to all Gentiles—even those that have no connection to a Jewish community. That is the part that is not true. God’s *Torah* is (and always has been) a single body of law that has multiple components, each of which must be applied correctly according to the circumstance and the identity of the person(s) subject to it. So, for example, certain parts of God’s New Covenant *Torah* apply to men, certain parts to women, and most parts to both. Similarly, certain parts of God’s New Covenant *Torah* apply to Jews and *K’rovei Yisrael* Gentiles, certain parts to Gentiles of the Nations, and most parts to all three. So, for example, while Jews are required to circumcise the males among them throughout their generations, it is only optional for Gentiles.

Another example is keeping the Sabbath. According to Exodus 31:13-14, Jews are required to keep God’s Sabbaths, and a Jew may expect punishment if he does not. It is not the same for Gentiles, however. According to Isaiah 56:4-7, Gentiles are encouraged (not required) to keep God’s Sabbaths, and they are rewarded if they do but are not punished if they do not.

² We call such Gentiles *K’rovei Yisrael*.

II. Paul's Comments on the Law³

Seeking to Apply the Mosaic Torah

Messianic Judaism is similar to other “Judaisms” in seeking to apply the laws of *Torah* that God gave to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai. Since those early days, many changes have occurred that impact our ability to keep the *Torah* as our ancestors did. They include (1) a change in the Covenant, (2) Yeshua's birth, ministry on earth, death and resurrection, (3) universal accessibility to the Holy Spirit, (4) expansion of the Scriptures to include the New Testament, (5) lack of a functioning Levitical Priesthood, (6) absence of the Holy Temple and, most important of all, (7) salvation through faith in Yeshua. These are the New Covenant realities under which we now live. Consequently, the way we keep God's Law today cannot be literal obedience to the Mosaic statutes; rather, it must be guided by the Holy Spirit for both wisdom and application.

But as we seek the Holy Spirit for how to keep the *Torah*, we are sometimes confused by the well-known writings of Paul which seem to say that obeying the Mosaic Law is no longer profitable and may even result in spiritual harm. I have always known it was not so, but because I have had to rethink Paul's statements whenever they were pointed out to me, I decided to write this short essay in order to explain what I believe Paul really meant.

What follows is no doubt an over-simplistic treatment of Paul in a field where every year many scholarly books are written that seek to explain his writings. In no way do I mean to suggest that what I have presented here is complete, as I have not sought to address the myriad of the arguments and counter arguments that can be made. I therefore ask that the reader receive this as merely the author's opinion and nothing more.

3 Reprinted from “Elephants in the Room,” The Law of Messiah (Tikkun Int'l: Montgomery Village MD, 2017).

Each caption that follows is a statement that one often hears from opponents of observing Biblical Law. Then following each caption is the Scripture (translated in the New King James), that is often used to support the erroneous view of the Law, and after that comes my explanation. The New King James translation⁴ is used here because it and the NIV are among the most popular and egregious translations used in misrepresenting Paul.

Erroneous Conclusions Derived from Apostle Paul's Comments

(a) We are no longer required to obey the Law because we are now under grace.

Romans 6:14: *“For sin shall not have dominion over you, for you are not under law but under grace.”*

This sounds like Paul is saying that God's “grace” releases us to do anything we want and from having to obey any of God's laws. Why would the Apostle Paul, a confessed keeper of the Law (Acts 21:17-26), say such a thing? Did Yeshua's appearance on earth and subsequent sacrifice cause God to change into a permissive liberal? I knew that couldn't be the case, but still, what Paul said perplexed me, so I decided to pray and ask God about it.

What I believe I heard prophetically in reply is this: Being “under grace” is not automatically permissive as some would like it to be. Grace does sometimes imply permissive allowance or forgiveness but being under God's grace does not mean that He always grants it to us. Rather, it means that we are subject to the *operation* of God's grace and that He (and only He) decides when to extend it and when to withhold it.

4 “Messiah” replaces “Christ” and “Yeshua” replaces “Jesus.”

Theologians often define “grace” (*kharis*) as “God’s unmerited favor” (which is correct) but, in his writings, Paul uses it metaphorically to mean God himself, whose very person embodies grace. Romans 6:14 is therefore informing us that our accountability is no longer merely to the “statutes” of God’s written Word (His *Torah* or Law) but is now directly to God himself through the living Word, who is Yeshua (John 1:14). Our being “under grace” is Paul’s way of saying that, in this direct accountability to God, God may either extend his grace to us or withhold it, on a case by case basis, according to his supreme sense of mercy and justice. Our being “not under law,” (the Greek word here for “under” is *hupo*, meaning “underneath”) connotes that we are no longer “underneath” the Law’s enforcement; that is, we no longer automatically receive the Law’s penalties for disobedience, but there is no doubt that we continue to be (and are now directly) subject to God’s correction and punishment (as well as his praise and reward) when we are deserving of them. Meanwhile, the commandments of *Torah*, as interpreted by the Holy Spirit, retain their relevance in being a main source for our determining God’s Will, but our “obedience” relationship with God is now direct rather than indirect. That is why Paul says in Galatians 5:18:

“But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under [underneath] the law.”

And similarly, in Galatians 3:24-25:

“Therefore the law was our tutor to bring us to Messiah, that we might be justified by faith. But after faith [meaning “Messiah”] has come, we are no longer under a tutor.”

What I have said about “grace” thus far has been in response to Paul’s juxtaposing “grace” and “law.” I would, however, be

remiss were I not to mention another kind of grace that God never withholds. It is God's empowerment, through the Holy Spirit, to do as well and as much as God, in his sovereignty, is willing to release us to. So, it would seem, for example, that God always extends grace to a person who seeks his power for obedience, and to do good. We depend on God's grace to perform his will.

(b) We are justified by faith & not by the Law, so the deeds of the Law no longer have value.

In Romans 3:20 and 28, Paul says:

“Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. ... Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

And in Galatians 2:15-16 & 21:

“We who are Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Yeshua the Messiah, even we have believed in Messiah Yeshua, that we might be justified by faith in Messiah and not by the works of the law; for by the works of the law no flesh shall be justified. ... I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Messiah died in vain.”

These Scriptures and others like them are often quoted to deny the Law's continuing value in the New Covenant. After all (some think), if righteousness cannot be acquired from performing the deeds of the Law, then why do them? The answer is that, with the power and discernment that the Holy Spirit

allows us, we perform the deeds of the Law because they are God's will—not in order to become righteous and acquire salvation or anything else.

Paul is very clear that no one is justified (i.e. made righteous—saved) through merely obeying commandments. Justification comes only through our reliance on Yeshua's sacrifice that expunges our sins if we receive him as our savior and repent; that's why Galatians 2:16 states:

“...a man is not justified by the works of the law but by faith in Yeshua the Messiah..”

Romans 3:28 says the same thing but differently; it says:

“...a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law.”

None of this contradicts Paul's contention that God's Law continues to have value in the New Covenant. We can be certain of this because in Romans 3:31 Paul says:

“Do we then make void the law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law.”

(c) We are now dead to the law, having been delivered from It.

In Romans 7:4-6, Paul says:

“Therefore, my brethren, you also have become dead to the law through the body of Messiah, that you may be married to another—to Him who was raised from the dead, that we should bear fruit to God. For when

we were in the flesh, the sinful passions which were aroused by the law were at work in our members to bear fruit to death. But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.”

Also, in Galatians 2:19-20, Paul says:

“For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Messiah; it is no longer I who live, but Messiah lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me.”

The expressions “dead to the law,” “died to the law,” and “delivered from the law” have led many to believe that God’s Law no longer applies to us. That is not at all what Paul is saying.

In Romans 7:4-6, Paul is comparing our relationship with God to the intimate relationship of marriage. Prior to the New Covenant, our “marriage” relationship with God was mostly through our obedience to the statutes of *Torah* because we did not yet have Yeshua’s sacrifice or the Holy Spirit to draw us closer. It was a wonderfully gracious relationship, but God made it even better by sending Yeshua who sacrificed himself for us. This brought us into a “marriage” relationship with Yeshua that was more intimate than our “marriage” relationship through the Law. But because it is not God’s will that we be in two marriages at the same time, Paul explains that we died during our “marriage” to the Law in order to clear the way for our “marriage” to Yeshua. That is what Paul meant when he said:

Romans 7:4: *“you also have become dead to the law through the body of Messiah, that you may be married to another”*

And his other saying:

Galatians 2:19: *“I through the law died to the law that I might live to God”*

Paul's reference to being “delivered from the Law” and being “held” by the law is a continuation of his metaphor that we have moved from one marriage relationship to another. It is not as some believe—that Paul is saying that God's Law held us in bondage. I said “God's Law” instead of just “law” purposely, in order to illustrate how much easier it is to accept that some non-descript law held us in bondage, than to think that “God's Law” held us in bondage, which we know cannot be true. Also, Paul's reference to the “newness of the Spirit” and the “oldness of the letter” is completely consistent with the Scriptures and everything else Paul said because, in the New Covenant, our principal way of relating to God has changed. Paul recognizes our changed relationship to the “Law,” but at no time infers that the *Torah* has been done away with or has been rendered useless.

(d) The Mosaic Law is a curse, and those who seek to obey it are under its curse.

Galatians 3:10-13: *“For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them. But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.” Yet the law is not of faith, but “the man who does them shall live by them.” Messiah has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having*

become a curse for us (for it is written, “Cursed is everyone who hangs on a tree “)...”

Once again, the words that Paul uses are often misconstrued—in this case, the word “curse,” which some would have us believe means that God’s Law is a curse. No, the curse to which Paul is referring originates in Deuteronomy 30:19, which reads:

“I call heaven and earth as witnesses today against you, that I have set before you life and death, blessing and cursing; therefore choose life, that both you and your descendants may live;”

When these words were spoken by God to Moses, the context was ‘covering over sin’ through obedience to the Law and animal sacrifice. Israel’s choice to either obey the Law and live or disobey and not live was a reference to salvation that, unbeknown to the Israelites at Mt. Sinai, would be granted in the future as a result of Yeshua’s sacrifice. Paul’s words paralleling Deuteronomy were spoken many centuries after Sinai under the New Covenant, when our path to salvation had been transitioned from conducting animal sacrifices to having faith in Yeshua, the ultimate sacrifice. Paul was warning the Galatians not to seek to cover over their sins in the old way of obedience to the Law with animal sacrifices, but rather to seek salvation in the new way which was through Yeshua. Not only was the old way no longer authorized but, under it, even a single violation would have resulted in the cursing referred to in Deuteronomy 30:19 that led to death. Paul is clear in Galatians 3:11 (NKJ) that in the New Covenant:

“no one is justified by the law,”

and he quotes Habakkuk 2:4 (see also, Romans 1:7 and Hebrews 10:38):

“the just shall live by his faith.”

Bottom line: It is not a curse to seek to keep the Law; the curse comes from trying to keep it as a means of acquiring salvation.

(e) It no longer matters what we eat or drink, or whether we keep God's special days.

Colossians 2:16-17: *“So let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths, which are a shadow of things to come, but the substance is of Messiah.”*

This Scripture is sometimes used to assert that God's food laws, appointed times, and other special days commanded in Scripture are no longer in effect, and that those who adhere to them are putting themselves back under the “Law of sin and death,” and even denying Yeshua. Now that's a pretty ominous charge for merely resting on the Sabbath and abstaining from pork. To see what is actually being said here, let's widen our search to verses of Scripture that come both before and after:

Before: Colossians 2:8: *“Beware lest anyone cheat you through philosophy and empty deceit, according to the tradition of men, according to the basic principles of the world, and not according to Messiah.”*

After: Colossians 2:20-22: *“Therefore, if you died with Messiah from the basic principles of the world, why, as though living in the world, do you subject yourselves to regulations—“Do not touch, do not taste, do not handle,” which all concern things which perish with the using—according to the commandments and doctrines of men?”*

Notice that the words in verse 16,

“let no one judge you in food or in drink, or regarding a festival or a new moon or sabbaths,”

are sandwiched between verse 8 and verses 20-22 that warn against becoming captive to the traditions, commandments, and doctrines of men. But God’s *Torah* regarding permissible foods and how to keep his festivals, new moons, and Sabbaths, are not the traditions of men, so Paul was not, therefore, advocating disregard for the *Torah*. Rather, he was warning us against being in bondage to “fences” that some would place around the *Torah*—rules promulgated by men that are beyond and more stringent than those commanded by God.

(f) The Mosaic Law was defective & is now obsolete.

Hebrews 8:6-7 and 13: *“But now He has obtained a more excellent ministry, inasmuch as He is also Mediator of a better covenant, which was established on better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then no place would have been sought for a second.... In that He says, “A new covenant,” He has made the first obsolete. Now what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away.”*

These verses of Scripture are sometimes used, in conjunction with others, to assert the Mosaic Law’s inadequacy, defectiveness, and obsolescence. But if those making the assertion would look at the Scriptures carefully, they would see that what is being spoken of is the Mosaic Covenant—not the Mosaic Law. A covenant is a relationship—an agreement between parties. The Mosaic Covenant was the relationship that was consummated at Mt. Sinai between God and the Israelites, where God gave the Israelites his Laws (the *Torah*), and the Israelites promised to obey. Well, they didn’t obey, and they consequently breached the Covenant; the word “breach” and “fault” are

the same. The Covenant between God and the Israelites developed a fault that was not intrinsic to the covenant agreement, but rather one that was created by the Israelites' disobedience. We see this clearly in Hebrews 8:8 that says:

“Because finding fault with THEM, He says: “Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah...””

Notice how the Scripture says *“finding fault with THEM..”* The fault was with the Israelites—not in the design of the covenant. And we read in both Hebrews 8:8 and Jeremiah 31:30(31)-31(32) that, rather than God leaving Israel without a covenant (which He could have done and which they deserved), He graciously gave them a New and different covenant that was based on better promises. In the process of doing that, He allowed the First Covenant to gradually pass into oblivion; that is what Paul means by the First Covenant becoming obsolete.

So, do we need to obey the Mosaic Law? Well, yes and no! Part of the Mosaic Law can no longer be complied with because it has lost its covenantal infrastructure. We have no operative Levitical Priesthood, no Jerusalem Temple in which to conduct animal sacrifices, and no unified leadership of Israel. Yeshua should be recognized by everyone as the King of Israel, and his sacrifice as the reason why many commandments connected to the Temple no longer need be (in fact no longer can be performed. Still, there are many commandments that remain doable, but they have now come under New Covenant administration and are subject to New Covenant enforcement. When added to other mandates of the New Covenant, they collectively become what Galatians 6:2 calls “the Law of Messiah.”

(g) The Mosaic Law is a ministry of death, so literal observance of it kills.

2 Corinthians 3:5-8: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as being from ourselves, but our sufficiency is from God, who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious, so that the children of Israel could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of the glory of his countenance, which glory was passing away, how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious?"

Romans 7:6: "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter."

The 2 Corinthians Scripture refers to the written Law as a "Ministry of Death," and says that "the letter (presumably of the Law) kills." On the one hand it appears to support the view of those who would preach doing away with the Law, yet the Scripture also says that the written Law was glorious—an apparent contradiction. What then is Paul trying to say? Paul is reflecting about the Old Covenant, when the Holy Spirit was not accessible to the average Israelite, and when literal obedience to the Law was indeed the prescribed path to life. But it ceased to be the path to life in the New Covenant when Yeshua's sacrifice gave us direct access to God, and the Holy Spirit was given to us to be the Law's interpreter. So, Paul is warning us that today our approach to God's Law must be through the Holy Spirit and not through mere literal observance. He is warning us that although literal obedience to the Law led us to

life in the Old Covenant, by-passing the Holy Spirit to pursue literal obedience in the New Covenant will lead us to death. That is not to say that today the letter of the Law has no application. It does, but the Holy Spirit must give us application.

(h) The Mosaic Law was done away with by Messiah, so all we need to do now is to love our neighbor.

Romans 10:4: *“For Messiah is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes.”*

Galatians 5:14: *“For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: “You shall love your neighbor as yourself.””*

These Scriptures have occasionally been used to teach that, when Messiah came, he brought an end to God’s Law because all God ever wanted was for us to love our neighbor, which is the Law’s fulfillment.

Romans 10:4 is easy to explain. Put simply, the word “end” in the verse does not mean “termination of existence,” it means “purposeful destination” as in the expression “the end justifies the means.” It tells us that Messiah is to whom the Law brings us. As for Galatians 5:14, both the Law of Moses and the Gospel of Yeshua stand for selfless sacrifice as against self-interest. When we *“love ‘our’ neighbor as ‘ourselves,’”* we fulfill the ultimate of what the Law stands for, but we are not released from obeying God’s specific and detailed Commandments. If we were, He would have told us.

Conclusory Remarks

We can criticize Paul’s choice of words or the translations of his writings, but what we cannot do is believe that Paul would condone the myriad of anti-law statements that have been attributed to him.

2 Timothy 3:16-17 teaches us:

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

Let us keep in mind that the *Torah* (the Pentateuch that contains the Law of Moses) is Scripture and is therefore profitable for all that 2 Timothy says it is. And by the way—take note of who wrote 2 Timothy—IT WAS PAUL!

III. Priesthood

The Abrahamic Covenant

The people-nation that would eventually be called *Israel* and its citizens called the “children of Israel” was foretold to Abraham by God. In Genesis 12:1-2, we read that God told Abram (that was his name then):

“I will make of you a great nation, I will bless you, and I will make your name great; and you are to be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse anyone who curses you; and by you all the families of the earth will be blessed.””

We then read in Genesis 15:1-5 that God promised Abram an heir of his body and descendants after him:

“Some time later the word of ADONAI came to Avram in a vision: “Don’t be afraid, Avram. I am your protector; your reward will be very great.” Avram replied, “ADONAI, God, what good will your gifts be to me if I continue childless; and Eli’ezer from Dammesek inherits my possessions? You haven’t given me a child,” Avram continued, “so someone born in my house will be my heir.” But the word of ADONAI came to him: “This man will not be your heir. No, your heir will be a child from your own body.” Then he brought him outside and said, “Look up at the sky, and count the stars—if you can count them! Your descendants will be that many!””

And further on in verses 13 to 21 we read:

“ADONAI said to Avram, “Know this for certain: your descendants will be foreigners in a land that is not

theirs. They will be slaves and held in oppression there four hundred years. But I will also judge that nation, the one that makes them slaves. Afterwards, they will leave with many possessions. As for you, you will join your ancestors in peace and be buried at a good old age. Only in the fourth generation will your descendants come back here, because only then will the Emori be ripe for punishment.” After the sun had set and there was thick darkness, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch appeared, which passed between these animal parts. That day ADONAI made a covenant with Avram: “I have given this land to your descendants—from the Vadi of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates River—the territory of the Keni, the K’nizi, the Kadmoni, the Hitti, the P’rizi, the Refa’im, the Emori, the Kena’ani, the Girgashi and the Y’vusi.””

And later in Chapter 17 verses 1 to 16 we read:

“When Avram was 99 years old ADONAI appeared to Avram and said to him, “I am El Shaddai [God Almighty]. Walk in my presence and be pure-hearted. I will make my covenant between me and you, and I will increase your numbers greatly.” Avram fell on his face, and God continued speaking with him: “As for me, this is my covenant with you: you will be the father of many nations. Your name will no longer be Avram [exalted father], but your name will be Avraham [father of many], because I have made you the father of many nations. I will cause you to be very fruitful. I will make nations of you, kings will descend from you. I am establishing my covenant between me and you, along with your descendants after you, generation after generation, as an everlasting covenant, to be God for you and for your descendants after you. I will give

you and your descendants after you the land in which you are now foreigners, all the land of Kena'an, as a permanent possession; and I will be their God.” God said to Avraham, “As for you, you are to keep my covenant, you and your descendants after you, generation after generation. Here is my covenant, which you are to keep, between me and you, along with your descendants after you: every male among you is to be circumcised. You are to be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskin; this will be the sign of the covenant between me and you. Generation after generation, every male among you who is eight days old is to be circumcised, including slaves born within your household and those bought from a foreigner not descended from you. The slave born in your house and the person bought with your money must be circumcised; thus my covenant will be in your flesh as an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who will not let himself be circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin—that person will be cut off from his people, because he has broken my covenant.” God said to Avraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you are not to call her Sarai [mockery]; her name is to be Sarah [princess]. I will bless her; moreover, I will give you a son by her. Truly I will bless her: she will be a mother of nations; kings of peoples will come from her.””

We call this the “Abrahamic Covenant,” and we know through other Scriptures that it was eventually transmitted through his son Isaac and through Isaac’s son Jacob whose name was later changed to “Israel.” The name change is why the generations who came from him were known as “children of Israel,” and the nation formed from them upon their release from Egypt was called “Israel” and its citizens “Israelites.”

Israel a Kingdom of Priests

When the mixed multitude (Israelites and Gentiles) left Egypt and eventually gathered at Mount Sinai, God made a Covenant with Israel that we call the “Mosaic” or “Sinaitic” Covenant (Exodus 19 to 21). As part of the Covenant, God commanded Moses to tell the Israelites what we read in Exodus 19:4-6:

“You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I carried you on eagles’ wings and brought you to myself. Now if you will pay careful attention to what I say and keep my covenant, then you will be my own treasure from among all the peoples, for all the earth is mine; and you will be a kingdom of cohanim for me, a nation set apart.’ These are the words you are to speak to the people of Isra’el.” (see also, Isaiah 61:6).

So, as promised to Abraham, Israel became a Kingdom of Priests, and we read in Isaiah 49:5-6, a light to the Gentile nations (see also, Isaiah 42:6-7 and 60:3):

“So now ADONAI says—he formed me in the womb to be his servant, to bring Ya’akov back to him, to have Isra’el gathered to him, so that I will be honored in the sight of ADONAI, my God having become my strength—he has said, “It is not enough that you are merely my servant to raise up the tribes of Ya’akov and restore the offspring of Isra’el. I will also make you a light to the nations, so my salvation can spread to the ends of the earth.””

God ordered that a Tabernacle for priestly sacrifices be constructed and that the firstborn males of the Israelites serve as its caretakers and priests:

Numbers 3:13: “*All the firstborn males belong to me, because on the day that I killed all the firstborn males in the land of Egypt, I separated for myself all the firstborn males in Isra’el, both human and animal. They are mine; I am ADONAI.*”” (see also, Exodus 13:1-2, 22:28).

The Levites and Aaron Replace Firstborn Israelites as Priests

But, after the Israelites worshipped the golden calf and only the Levites returned to obey God (Exodus 32:26-29), God ordered that the firstborn Israelites be redeemed from their position as caretakers and priests of the Tabernacle (Exodus 13:13b) and that they be replaced by the Levites (Numbers 3:11-12, 45, 8:16-18; see also, Numbers 1:50-51 and 3:5-9). The Levites were ordained by the Israelites with the laying on of hands (Numbers 8:5-6, 10-11), and God ordered that Aaron and his sons be set in as priests, and that Aaron be set in as High Priest:

Numbers 3:10: “*You are to appoint Aharon and his sons to carry out the duties of cohanim; anyone else who involves himself is to be put to death.*”

Exodus 28:2: “*You are to make for your brother Aharon garments set apart for serving God, expressing dignity and splendor.*”

Well, as it happened, the “Kingdom of Priests” (Israel) violated its covenant and did not become a light to the nations, and we read in Jeremiah 31:30(31)-33(34):

“Here, the days are coming,” says ADONAI, “when I will make a new covenant with the house of Isra’el and with the house of Y’hudah. It will not be like the covenant I made with their fathers on the day I took them by

their hand and brought them out of the land of Egypt; because they, for their part, violated my covenant, even though I, for my part, was a husband to them,” says ADONAI. “For this is the covenant I will make with the house of Isra’el after those days,” says ADONAI: “I will put my Torah within them and write it on their hearts; I will be their God, and they will be my people. No longer will any of them teach his fellow community member or his brother, ‘Know ADONAI’; for all will know me, from the least of them to the greatest; because I will forgive their wickednesses and remember their sins no more.”

The Levitical Priesthood Ceases to Function

Years passed and what was prophesied eventually came to pass with the birth, ministry, sacrificial death, and resurrection of Messiah Yeshua, his return to his Father in Heaven, and the widened availability of the Holy Spirit to mankind. But since the Holy Temple (having been rebuilt) was still operating and animal sacrifices were still being conducted by the Levitical priesthood, it would be fair to say that the two covenants (the New Covenant and the Mosaic Covenant) were operating simultaneously. But God’s intention for the Covenants was for the Mosaic Covenant to decrease and eventually be replaced by the New Covenant, for we read in Hebrews 8:13:

“By using the term, “new,” he has made the first [Mosaic] covenant “old”; and something being made old, something in the process of aging, is on its way to vanishing altogether.”

Shortly thereafter in the year 70 A.D. something profound happened. The government of Rome that had previously tolerated (and even cooperated with) the Jews who lived in its Middle

East occupied territory attacked Jerusalem and burned the Holy Temple. Thus ending Israel's ability to conduct the sacrifices required by the Mosaic Covenant, the Levitical Priesthood fell into disuse, and the Judaism that depended on the Temple and the Levitical Priesthood ceased to exist.

Yeshua Replaces Aaron as High Priest

Although the Mosaic Covenant could not function, the New Covenant had no such problem because it relied on Yeshua's sacrifice and had its own priesthood in which Yeshua was High Priest. We read in Hebrews 2:15:

“This is why he [Yeshua] had to become like his brothers in every respect—so that he might become a merciful and faithful cohen gadol in the service of God, making a kapparah for the sins of the people.”

And also, in Hebrews 4:14-15 and 7:22-28:

“Therefore, since we have a great cohen gadol who has passed through to the highest heaven, Yeshua, the Son of God, let us hold firmly to what we acknowledge as true. For we do not have a cohen gadol unable to empathize with our weaknesses; since in every respect he was tempted just as we are, the only difference being that he did not sin.”

“Also this shows how much better is the covenant of which Yeshua has become guarantor. Moreover, the present cohanim are many in number, because they are prevented by death from continuing in office. But because he lives forever, his position as cohen does not pass on to someone else; and consequently, he is totally able to deliver those who approach God through him; since he is alive forever and thus forever able to intercede on their behalf. This is the kind of cohen gadol that meets our

need—holy, without evil, without stain, set apart from sinners and raised higher than the heavens; one who does not have the daily necessity, like the other cohanim g’dolim, of offering up sacrifices first for their own sins and only then for those of the people; because he offered one sacrifice, once and for all, by offering up himself. For the Torah appoints as cohanim g’dolim men who have weakness; but the text which speaks about the swearing of the oath, a text written later than the Torah, appoints a Son who has been brought to the goal forever.”

The Commonwealth of Israel—Priesthood of Believers in Yeshua

The transference of High Priest from Aaron’s descendants to Yeshua was not the only change that occurred. An entirely new and enlarged priesthood emerged in which the priests consisted of both Jewish and Gentile believers in Yeshua. This priesthood is referred to in the KJV and NKJ translations in Ephesians 2:12 as the “Commonwealth of Israel.”⁵

Ephesians 2:11-16: *“Therefore, remember your former state: you Gentiles by birth—called the Uncircumcised by those who, merely because of an operation on their flesh, are called the Circumcised—at that time had no Messiah. You were estranged from the national life of Isra’el [“Commonwealth of Israel”]. You were foreigners to the covenants embodying God’s promise. You were in this world without hope and without God. But now, you who were once far off have been brought near through the shedding of the Messiah’s blood. For he himself is our shalom—he has made us both one and has broken down the m’chitzah which divided us by destroying in his own body the enmity occasioned*

5 The Greek word translated “Commonwealth” is πολιτείας (*poletia*), which can also mean “citizenship” or “national life.”

by the Torah, with its commands set forth in the form of ordinances. He did this in order to create in union with himself from the two groups a single new humanity and thus make shalom, and in order to reconcile to God both in a single body by being executed on a stake as a criminal and thus in himself killing that enmity.” (See also, Ephesians 2:19-20).

We also read Peter’s address to Jewish (and most likely accompanying Gentile) believers in 1 Peter 2:4-5 and 9-10:

“As you come to him, the living stone, rejected by people but chosen by God and precious to him, you yourselves, as living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be cohanim set apart for God to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to him through Yeshua the Messiah.”

“But you are a chosen people, the King’s cohanim, a holy nation, a people for God to possess! Why? In order for you to declare the praises of the One who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are God’s people; before, you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy.”

These Scriptures are the basis for what has become known as the “Priesthood of all Believers” which originated as a Protestant doctrine in opposition to the Roman Catholic and Eastern Orthodox doctrine. Now the Protestant doctrine would seem to be correct and is, by the way, the usual position of Messianic Judaism, but the Church typically interprets it in a way that shows no connection to God’s Kingdom of Priests (Israel) and the Jewish people.

Grafting into the Romans 11 Olive Tree

I should like to propose otherwise by linking the Priesthood of Believers (“the Commonwealth of Israel”) of Ephesians 2:11-16 to the grafting of Gentiles into the “cultivated olive tree” described in Romans 11:16-24:

“Now if the hallah offered as firstfruits is holy, so is the whole loaf. And if the root is holy, so are the branches. But if some of the branches were broken off, and you—a wild olive—were grafted in among them and have become equal sharers in the rich root of the olive tree, then don’t boast as if you were better than the branches! However, if you do boast, remember that you are not supporting the root, the root is supporting you. So you will say, “Branches were broken off so that I might be grafted in.” True, but so what? They were broken off because of their lack of trust. However, you keep your place only because of your trust. So don’t be arrogant; on the contrary, be terrified! For if God did not spare the natural branches, he certainly won’t spare you! So take a good look at God’s kindness and his severity: on the one hand, severity toward those who fell off; but, on the other hand, God’s kindness toward you—provided you maintain yourself in that kindness! Otherwise, you too will be cut off! Moreover, the others, if they do not persist in their lack of trust, will be grafted in; because God is able to graft them back in. For if you were cut out of what is by nature a wild olive tree and grafted, contrary to nature, into a cultivated olive tree, how much more will these natural branches be grafted back into their own olive tree!”

Let us consider the parts of the Romans 11 tree(s) that are referred to as symbols of the process of being “born again”—i.e.

becoming a believer in Yeshua. [1] According to verse 24, the cultivated olive tree belongs to Israel, and [2] the wild olive branches (verse 17) are Gentile unbelievers that are grafted into the cultivated olive tree when they become believers. That is also the case with [3] natural branches (presumably Jews) that are broken off due to unbelief and then grafted back in (verse 23). So, we see that being “born again” for both the Jew and the Gentile is connected to being attached to the cultivated olive tree and, since the tree belongs to Israel, becoming a believer in Yeshua connects one to Israel. But what is that connection? According to Romans 11, [4] the cultivated tree is not itself Israel; it is only owned by Israel. Thus, the Jew who is broken off the tree does not cease to be a Jew, and a Gentile that is grafted on to the tree does not become a Jew.

I propose that [5] the cultivated olive tree that belongs to Israel is actually the “Commonwealth of Israel” referred to in Ephesians 2:11-16, which is also [6] the “Priesthood of Believers.” [7] The ground into which the cultivated olive tree is affixed is the Kingdom of Priests (Israel) referred to in Exodus 19:4-6 and Isaiah 61:6. [8] The root of the tree is Yeshua who was born a Jew (implanted in Israel), and therefore both Israel (the ground) and Yeshua (the root) support and nourish the tree that includes [9] the Jewish and Gentile branches (believers in Yeshua) that are on the tree. Hence, the believer’s connection to Israel is to Israel’s New Covenant (Yeshuic) Priesthood. As for the Gentile believer, it does not make him a Jew, but it does make him a priest and an equal citizen in the Commonwealth according to Ephesians 2:19:

*“So then, you are no longer foreigners and strangers.
On the contrary, you are fellow-citizens with God’s
people and members of God’s family.”*

IV. Leadership

Standing astride the traditions of Judaism and Christianity, Messianic Jewish congregations are often laboratories for testing competing views of government and leadership. Some congregations are ruled by elders, others by pastors, and still others by the democratic vote of their members. “Pastor,” “rabbi,” “spiritual leader,” “*shamash*,” and “zakein” (elder), are but a few of the terms commonly used to refer to the leaders within Messianic Jewish congregations. There are several definitions of leadership, but I should like to give you mine:

Leadership is the art of influencing and motivating the actions and behaviors of individuals (and groups of individuals) toward the achievement of defined goals.

Were only nomenclature the issue, the subject of leadership would be trivial for it would matter little which title or leadership model were embraced. The fact is, however, that each model of congregational government and leadership title makes a statement of biblical importance. It is the author’s hope that this small book will clarify the Bible’s position as well as Judaism’s tradition regarding leadership and will be a help to those who wish to conform more closely to those Jewish practices that are consistent with biblical precepts.

The Local Congregation: History, Organization and Function

In the years before exile, life for an Israelite centered around his tribal community and the Temple. Beginning with the Babylonian exile and the Temple’s destruction in 70 A.D., the focus of Jewish community life shifted to two newly-formed

institutions—academies (*y'shiyvot*),⁶ and synagogues.^{7, 8, 9} Academies were schools for study of the oral law, and eventually became centers for authoritative opinions concerning community *halachah*. Although we know little of these early academies, the later academies generally included a court (*beit din*),¹⁰ and it is not unlikely that the Jewish judicial council of Yeshua's time (the *Sanhedrin*) could trace its beginnings to the Babylonian academies. Synagogues were institutions developed solely for prayer and study.^{11, 12} Although overseen by elders,¹³ their prayer services functioned through the general participation of all its male members, with coordination and administration by a specially appointed elder known as the *ρχισυνωγος* (*Archisynagogus*) or *Rosh haK'nesset*.¹⁴ Every educated man in the congregation was deemed qualified to serve and lead in every capacity, and was expected to do so.¹⁵

6 Some authorities date the *y'shiyvah* earlier

7 Hayim H. Donin, *To Pray As A Jew*, p. 12 (New York: Basic Books, Inc., 1980)

8 Abraham Millgram, *Jewish Worship*, p. 67 (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1971)

9 "Synagogue," *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, vol. 15, p. 580 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971), expresses the view that the synagogue originated during the Babylonian exile, but notes that Talmudic sources attribute the synagogue's origin to Moses

10 "Academies in Babylonia and Erez Israel," *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Moshe Beer, vol. 2, pp. 201-202 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971)

11 Hayim H. Donin, p. 12

12 Abraham Millgram, p. 67

13 Emil Schurer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ*, vol. 2, pp. 434-5, T & T Clark, Ltd. (Edinburgh: 1986)

14 In Acts 13:15, Paul and Barnabas are addressed by the Archisynagogus.

15 Emil Schurer, vol. 2, pp. 434-5.

After Yeshua's death and resurrection, his apostles formed local congregations that had greater authority than the synagogue, for they were the places from which New Covenant elders governed the community of believers and judged the controversies of its members. The following Scriptures exemplify the judicial function of the New Covenant congregations:

Matthew 18:15-20: *“Moreover, if your brother commits a sin against you, go and show him his fault—but privately, just between the two of you. If he listens to you, you have won back your brother. If he doesn't listen, take one or two others with you so that every accusation can be supported by the testimony of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to hear them, tell the congregation; and if he refuses to listen even to the congregation, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax-collector. Yes! I tell you people that whatever you prohibit on earth will be prohibited in heaven, and whatever you permit on earth will be permitted in heaven. To repeat, I tell you that if two of you here on earth agree about anything people ask, it will be for them from my Father in heaven. For wherever two or three are assembled in my name, I am there with them.”*

1 Corinthians 6:1: *“How dare one of you with a complaint against another go to court before pagan judges and not before God's people? Don't you know that God's people are going to judge the universe? If you are going to judge the universe, are you incompetent to judge these minor matters?”*

The Gospel Scriptures use the Greek word ἐκκλησία “*ekklesia*” for when Yeshua taught about New Covenant congregations. This Greek word for “congregation” appears several times in the Gospel Scriptures (Matthew 16:18, 18:17), and Strong's Greek Dictionary defines it as:

“a calling out, ie. a popular meeting, espec. a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue, or Chr. community of members on earth or saints in heaven or both)—assembly, church.”

Yeshua’s words in Matthew 18:15-20 were spoken prior to the establishment of the first New Covenant congregation, and prior to anything that could be considered culturally “Christian.” Therefore, the only part of the foregoing definition of “*ekkle-sia*” which can possibly apply to Yeshua’s teachings about his congregation is:

“...a calling out, ie. a popular meeting, espec. a religious congregation (Jewish synagogue); assembly.”

Considering this definition along with the previously mentioned characteristics of the New Covenant congregation, one can make a strong case that Yeshua modeled his congregation after the existing synagogue and incorporated the judicial function of the *Sanhedrin*. If this is so, two historically extra biblical institutions may have become biblical through combining them, and by Yeshua’s endorsement.¹⁶

The part of Judaism that rejected Yeshua as Messiah continued along a different path. After 70 A.D., the destruction of the temple and the displacement of the Sanhedrin^{17, 18} left Judaism in crisis with the synagogue as the only surviving Jewish institution. Soon, new courts (*batei din*) and academies (*y’shivot*) arose to provide foci for theological and philosophical debates and training, but the synagogue continued to develop as the communal center for prayer and Jewish life.

16 The believers’ “meeting” or “assembly” is referred to as a synagogue (James 2:2).

17 Emil Schurer, vol. 2, p. 209.

18 “Sanhedrin,” Encyclopedia Judaica, Hugo Mantel, vol. 14, p. 836 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971).

By the Fourteenth Century, institutional Judaism had progressed to where certain rabbis were placed in charge of congregations, and some were even elevated to preside over towns, cities, and other geopolitical entities.¹⁹ The *Chasidim* of middle Europe carried the idea of a Head Rabbi or *tzadik* even further by creating the concept of “*Rebbe*,”²⁰ a rabbi elevated to be in charge of the community because he supposedly had special revelation, powers, and authority from God.²¹

Leadership in the Synagogue

Synagogue headship evolved from the administrative oversight of a *Rosh HaK'nesset* (head of the assembly) to the spiritual leadership of a Head Rabbi. Modern synagogues are generally governed by Boards of Directors led by a President, and there is generally a clear demarcation between spiritual and business matters. On the spiritual side, the Head Rabbi is sometimes assisted by other rabbis and a cantor, and the entire leadership cadre is set in office by vote of the membership. While the Head Rabbi's opinions are influential within his congregation, authoritative decisions on Jewish law (*halachah*) and writs of divorce are generally carried out by a regional Jewish court (*beit din*). Spiritual discipline of congregational members and adjudication of conflicts between individuals is rare, if it exists at all, and discipline of disorderly members is generally carried out by the synagogue Board. Programmatic leadership is usually accomplished through committees, with input from the Rabbi, and approval of the Board.

19 “Rabbi, Rabbinate,” *Encyclopedia Judaica*, Ed., vol. 13, p. 1447, Jerusalem, 1971.

20 A Yiddish word

21 Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Literacy*, pp. 216-217, William Morrow and Company, Inc. (New York: 1991).

New Covenant congregations developed differently. Most Messianic Jewish congregations recognize a head leader and refer to him as the Rabbi, Congregational Leader, Pastor, or a similar term. In most congregations, this head leader is accountable to elders, to the general membership, to apostolic oversight, or to all three.

The New Covenant biblical example emphasizes leadership by a plurality of elders who are the governing authorities in their congregations:²²

1 Timothy 5:17: “The leaders [elders] who lead well should be considered worthy of double honor, especially those working hard at communicating the Word and at teaching.”

Hebrews 13:17: “Obey those who rule over you, and be submissive, for they watch out for your souls, as those who must give account. Let them do so with joy and not with grief, for that would be unprofitable for you.” (NKJ)

Except for congregations in their formative stages, no one elder is identified in the New Covenant Scriptures as a congregation’s titular head.²³ An exception is seen in the case of relative-

22 See “Governmental Leadership,” supra.

23 Some believe that the “angels of the seven churches” (Revelation 1:20-3:22) is a reference to elders, pastors or other officials who are the authoritative titular heads of their local congregations (John Wesley, Explanatory Notes Upon the New Testament, vol. II (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House Company, 1983)). More recent commentaries set forth other views which characterize the “angels” as heavenly guardians or the prevailing spirit of the churches (Leon Morris, The Book of Revelation, Tyndale New Testament Commentaries, revised edition, pp. 56-57 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1988)). See also, Robert H. Mounce, The Book of Revelation, The New International Commentary on the New Testament, p. 82 (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1984); R. H. Charles, A Critical and Exegetical

ly new congregations which were led by their founding apostle until the time that elders were recognized and ordained. When that was accomplished, the apostle generally moved on, but continued to have a fatherly relationship with the congregation and authority to return to teach, advise, and correct. This is not to say that all the ordained elders fulfilled the same functions, and that one of the elders did not rise to prominence. It is natural and healthy for elders to recognize each other's giftings and to defer to those who are clearly anointed in specific areas of service. It is also natural for one to take the lead. According to Ephesians 4:11 et seq., some elders can be expected to have an apostolic calling, and these should be released to serve in that way. Other elders can be expected to be primarily teachers, and these should be encouraged to pray for understanding so that they can equip the body with biblical truth through their teaching. It is the same for the other gift ministers.

The pastoral gift needs special mention because of the frequency with which pastors or rabbis are the titular heads of their congregations. Not only is there no biblical example this but, except for the Ephesians 4 reference, there is no further mention of the term "pastor" (shepherd) in all of the New Covenant Scriptures. This would hardly seem to be sufficient biblical authority to justify elevating those who have the pastoral gift to a position superior to other elders and other gift ministers. Yet, ironically, the gift which is spoken of least in New Covenant Scripture is the one which receives the most attention in today's ecclesiastical world.

Who then are the pastors that have been given to us, and what is their biblically authorized function? The following Scriptures

Continued from Preceding Page:

Commentary on the Revelation of St. John, The International Critical Commentary, p. 34 (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1985). The author's view is that each of these angels or messengers is an apostle with spiritual responsibility for all the congregations of a designated city or region.

offer strong evidence that a congregation's elders are its pastors, and that the authorized role of a pastor is to lead by example and to feed God's flock with knowledge and understanding:

Acts 20:28: "Watch out for yourselves, and for all the flock in which the Ruach HaKodesh has placed you as leaders, to shepherd God's Messianic community, which he won for himself at the cost of his own Son's blood."

1 Peter 5:1-3: "*The elders who are among you I exhort, I who am a fellow elder and a witness of the sufferings of Messiah, and also a partaker of the glory that will be revealed. Shepherd the flock of God which is among you, serving as overseers, not by constraint but willingly, not for dishonest gain but eagerly; nor as being lords over those entrusted to you, but being examples to the flock.*" (NKJ)

Jeremiah 3:15: "*I will give you shepherds after my own heart, and they will feed you with knowledge and understanding.*"²⁴

Historically, pastors who fell into sin have brought spiritual ruin to many a new believer who followed and trusted. This is warned against in Jeremiah 23:1-2, and one cannot help but surmise that the prominence which has been given to pastors in modern times has been a contributing factor.

Leadership in the Bible

We hear a lot about leadership in Messianic Jewish circles. Why is this? It is because the history of mankind, ever since the Garden of Eden, has been the history of God's attempted leadership of man, of man's struggle against it, and against the human leaders that God put in charge. When you think about

²⁴ See also, Jeremiah 23:4, Ezekiel 34:23 and John 21:17.

it, the Bible is a continuous story of God's leadership of men, applied directly (e.g. God giving Moses the tablets of Law at Mt. Sinai), through the Messiah, through the Holy Spirit, and through the patriarchs, the kings, the prophets, the judges, elders, apostles, and others. The principle of leadership even carried down to family units as we read about the birthright of firstborn sons being the leaders of their families. Yes, from beginning to end, a significant theme of the Bible is leadership.

I think the Bible would contain fewer pages had men acquiesced to God's leadership but, regrettably, the opposite occurred. God told Adam not to eat of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil; he did, and the fall of man resulted. God gave men principles of morality by which they were to live; they ignored God's instructions, and the worldwide flood resulted. We read in Ezekiel 20:8:

"But they [i.e. the Israelites] rebelled against me [i.e. God] and wouldn't listen to me; they did not, each of them, throw away the detestable things that drew their eyes; and they did not abandon the idols of Egypt. Then I said I would pour out my fury on them and spend my anger on them there in the land of Egypt."

The Israelites resisted God's attempt to lead them in Egypt and perhaps that is why four hundred years of slavery resulted. And when God assigned Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt, a goodly number of them rebelled against his leadership and the golden calf resulted. Later, God gave the Israelites the *Torah* to which they first agreed, but then disobeyed and, in doing so, violated God's covenant with them. I wonder whether perhaps only half of the Mosaic commandments would have been needed had man's nature been to receive God's leadership without the threat of punishment.

Centuries passed, during which God appointed leaders such as Samuel, David, Solomon and others, and all was well—right? Not right! The Israelites consistently fell into sin by disobeying God’s commandments and violating their covenant with him so often that God declared the covenant breached and graciously gave them what ([Jeremiah 31:30\(31\)-33\(34\)](#)) tells us is a “new and better covenant based on better promises.” This “New Covenant” centered around Messiah Yeshua whom God caused to be sacrificed for the forgiveness of our sins, and also around the Holy Spirit who came to connect us to God closer and more relationally than ever before. Finally, because of the New Covenant, God’s leadership and the leadership of those he set over us was finally received—right? Not right again! Yeshua was not recognized as Messiah by the majority of the Jewish establishment of his day. He was disrespected in his hometown, scorned by the Sadducees and Pharisees, and was executed by the Romans with the complicity of the Sanhedrin.

Command Leadership

The first style of leadership I will mention is command leadership, best known for its association with the military. It is hierarchical in that the leader gives orders to persons beneath him and receives orders from persons above him. In the military, the orders are expected to be obeyed and there are consequences for not doing so. [Matthew 8:5-10](#) describes this kind of leadership:

“As Yeshua entered K’far-Nachum, a Roman army officer came up and pleaded for help. “Sir, my orderly is lying at home paralyzed and suffering terribly!” Yeshua said, “I will go and heal him.” But the officer answered, “Sir, I am unfit to have you come into my home. Rather, if you will only give the command, my orderly will recover. For I too am a man under authority. I have soldiers under me, and I say to this one, ‘Go!’ and he

goes; to another, 'Come!' and he comes; to my slave, 'Do this!' and he does it." On hearing this Yeshua was amazed and said to the people following him, "Yes! I tell you, I have not found anyone in Isra'el with such trust!"

In the civilian sector of society, command leadership is the one commonly found in the workplace. There, the commanders are usually referred to as bosses or supervisors, and employees are expected to follow their bosses' explicit directions. Command leadership works because the commander or boss possesses power over those he or she commands. In the military, the power is the threat of court-martial if an order is disobeyed. In the workplace, power is the threat of demotion or firing and consequent loss of income. Command leadership is legitimate when it is backed up by legitimate authority. When it is backed up by power only, we call it bullying. In any case, I think it is realistic to say that the command style of leadership is largely coercive, and only works if there is enforcement power behind it.

Notwithstanding the apparent absolute nature of command leadership, it does not exist in democratic and enlightened societies without there also being exceptions and avenues of recourse. In the United States there is a Code of Military Justice that defines command leadership, places limits on its implementation, and provides avenues of appeal with "due process." Moses regularly exercised command leadership, but there is a notable case where he backed down when facts that were brought to him justified it. We read of it in Leviticus 10:1-20 where we are told that two of Aaron's sons, Nadav and Avihu, sinned against God and died by fire. Then, while Aaron and his remaining sons were in shock and mourning, Moses exercised command leadership by instructing them in a detailed way to do an important sacrifice that God had previously commanded. Moses went away fully expecting them to do it but when he checked back, they had not. We pick up the reading at verse 16:

“He became angry with El’azar and Itamar, the remaining sons of Aharon, and asked, “Why didn’t you eat the sin offering in the area of the sanctuary, since it is especially holy? He gave it to you to take away the guilt of the community, to make atonement for them before ADONAI. Look! Its blood wasn’t brought into the sanctuary! You should have eaten it there in the sanctuary, as I ordered.””

It appears that Aaron and his remaining sons are in big trouble with “Commander Moses,” but as we read further, we see that Moses acknowledged the legitimacy of Aaron and his sons’ disobedience, and beginning at verse 19, we read:

“Aharon answered Moshe, “Even though they offered their sin offering and burnt offering today, things like these have happened to me! If I had eaten the sin offering today, would it have pleased ADONAI?””

I am sure that Moses was taken aback by Aaron’s reply, but he considered it and in verse 20 we read:

“On hearing this reply, Moshe was satisfied.”

We do not read that God said anything to the contrary, so we must assume that He was satisfied as well. Command leadership has its place as we have plainly seen, but it is important that it have limitations and recourse.

Servant Leadership

Throughout history, God chose men and women to serve him, and empowered them for their special tasks. Most often, these tasks involved ministering to the needs of others, so that those

others also might come to the place of serving God.²⁵ When one considers God's New Covenant servants of old, one realizes that no matter how empowered of the Spirit, the servant possessed nothing which was not also freely available to those whom he served. Yeshua illustrated this when he said to his disciples:

Matthew 21:21: "Yes! I tell you, if you have trust and don't doubt, you will not only do what was done to this fig tree; but even if you say to this mountain, 'Go and throw yourself into the sea!' it will be done."

John 14:12: "Yes, indeed! I tell you that whoever trusts in me will also do the works I do! Indeed, he will do greater ones, because I am going to the Father."

Some servant leaders work in ministry full time and are financially supported therefrom, while others pursue economically productive occupations and serve God around and within the constraints of those occupations. The most striking example of a secularly-employed leader of great renown is the apostle Paul who made tents to support himself (Acts 18:3) so as to not be a burden to others (1 Thessalonians 2:9; 2 Thessalonians 3:8). Clearly, whether or not one's ministry provides one with financial sustenance is not an indicator of its importance.

Servant leadership is the one that Yeshua most epitomized: We read in Mark 10:45:

"For the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve—and to give his life as a ransom for many."

25 Examples of divine appointments to serve others: John 15:16; Acts 9:15, 20:35; 2 Corinthians 3:6, 5:18; Ephesians 3:7-9; 1 Timothy 1:12.

And in Philippians 2:6-8:

“Though he was in the form of God, he did not regard equality with God something to be possessed by force. On the contrary, he emptied himself, in that he took the form of a slave [or servant] by becoming like human beings are. And when he appeared as a human being, he humbled himself still more by becoming obedient even to death—death on a stake as a criminal!”

Yeshua exercised command leadership on occasion, but he did not call for us to be commanders; he called us to be servants, and he said to his disciples in Matthew 20:25-27:

“You know that among the Goyim, those who are supposed to rule them become tyrants, and their superiors become dictators. Among you, it must not be like that. On the contrary, whoever among you wants to be a leader must become your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave!”

In a way, servant leadership is the opposite of command leadership. Whereas command leadership utilizes the authority of position, servant leadership utilizes the power of humility and most often leads by example. “Power of humility? What is that,” you ask? It is a biblical concept that defies the world’s understanding and ways of doing things. The world understands humility as being nice but weak, whereas humility is actually a God-given virtue that has the power to influence. Yeshua exemplified servant leadership, for we read in 1 Peter 2:21:

“Indeed, this is what you were called to; because the Messiah too suffered, on your behalf, leaving an example so that you should follow in his steps.”

The apostle Paul followed in Yeshua's steps and passed Yeshua's way of leadership on to his disciples who, in turn, followed in *his* steps; Paul spoke this in his first epistle to the Corinthians when he wrote:

1 Corinthians 11:1: “...try to imitate me, even as I myself try to imitate the Messiah.”

And to the Philippians he wrote in Philippians 4:9:

“Keep doing what you have learned and received from me, what you have heard and seen me doing; then the God who gives shalom will be with you.”

Servant leadership is especially powerful when a person who has the authority and platform to command withholds his or her command prerogative and instead models servanthood by beginning to move in the direction that is the correct one. Those with pure hearts observe the leader and do likewise, and those who would have acted otherwise are often stunned into recognizing their faults and repenting. Be cautious though, because the approach does not work with persons that have impure hearts, so a leader has to know with whom he or she is dealing.

Relational Leadership

In relational leadership the leader does not command, but rather suggests, or may not even have to suggest because the follower already knows the leader's will and wants to comply both because of their relationship and also because it is right. The quintessential example of relational leadership is the way a father ideally influences his son. Proverbs 22:6 says:

“Train a child in the way he [should] go; and, even when old, he will not swerve from it.”

Ideally, a son who has been brought up relationally by his father and/or mother conducts himself as he has been taught, both because he knows it is right and also because he loves his father and mother and desires to honor them and please them. This of course presumes two important things. First, that the son loves and respects his parents and second, that which his parents have taught is perceived by their son to be right. If the son's character is not what it should be, Scripture provides for that as well; in Proverbs 13:24 we read:

“He who fails to use a stick hates his son, but he who loves him is careful to discipline him.”

Relational leadership goes hand-in-hand with servant leadership because the person who leads relationally exhibits the humility and mindset of a servant.

Priestly Leadership

Priestly leadership is that which furthers the communication and reconciliation between man and God. Abraham can be said to have performed a priestly role because he fathered the nation that was appointed by God to be a light to the rest of the world (Genesis 12:1, 17:1-4). God planned that his Covenant with Abraham would eventually be the vehicle for reconciling mankind to himself through covenant bonding with Messiah Yeshua.

Under the Sinai Covenant, Aaron and his sons served as God's appointed priests to the Israelites (Exodus 28:1). They consulted with *Urim* and *Thummim*, judged, taught, and ministered to the community in a variety of ways—especially through the sacrificial system of the Tabernacle and later the Temple.²⁶ And just as Aaron and his sons served as priests to the Israelites, so

26 Priests and Priesthood,” Encyclopedia Judaica, Menahem Haran, vol. 13, pp. 1076-1080 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971).

also, God made Israel a kingdom of priests to the rest of the world (Exodus 19:6).²⁷

Under the New Covenant, responsibility for the priesthood was transferred to Yeshua who was made High Priest (Hebrews 4:14), and we who are his spiritual offspring and disciples made priests under him (1 Peter 2:5; Revelation 1:5-6). Under Yeshua, the former priesthood was broadened to include both Jew and non-Jew (1 Peter 2:9-10), and the recipients of priestly ministry were also expanded to include both Israelites and Gentiles (Acts 10:44-45). When Yeshua sent his disciples out to “the ends of the earth” to preach, witness, and exhibit the power of God (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:14-18), it was a priestly commission that was imparted. And in the same way that Aaron (the High Priest of the Levitical priesthood) sacrificed unblemished animals for the atonement of Israel, so also did Yeshua, the High Priest of the Melchizedek priesthood (Hebrews 7:15-17), sacrifice himself—the ultimate unblemished lamb—for the atonement of the world (John 1:29).

Governmental Leadership

At every stage of history, God repeated his same basic plan of government—either himself (directly), or his chosen anointed²⁸ at its helm.

The family is the most foundational governmental entity, both in it being the smallest, and also in it being the unit upon which larger governmental units are modeled. As with all governments, the family has a defined leadership, and rules for conducting its affairs. God placed the man (husband) in charge of

²⁷ See also, Isaiah 49:6, 60:3, 61:6; Romans 15:7-13.

²⁸ When God anointed a person for leadership, it was always with the expectation that the anointed person was to act under God’s direction. For Yeshua expressing this principle in regard to his own mission, see John 5:19 and 12:49.

the family (Ephesians 5:22-24, 6:4), and gave him a woman (wife) for a helper (Genesis 2:18-25) so that together they could govern their children. God continued patriarchal rule through Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Jacob's sons, and then their sons as heads of the twelve tribes.

With the appointment of Moses, there also came a new group of leaders to assist him.²⁹ This assistance was first advised by Moses' father-in-law Jethro (Exodus 18:13-27), and then commanded by God in Numbers 11:16-17:³⁰

Exodus 18:13-27: *“The following day Moshe sat to settle disputes for the people, while the people stood around Moshe from morning till evening. When Moshe’s father-in-law saw all that he was doing to the people, he said, “What is this that you are doing to the people? Why do you sit there alone, with all the people standing around you from morning till evening?” Moshe answered his father-in-law, “It’s because the people come to me seeking God’s guidance. Whenever they have a dispute, it comes to me; I judge between one person and another, and I explain to them God’s laws and teachings.” Moshe’s father-in-law said to him, “What you are doing isn’t good. You will certainly wear yourself out—and not only yourself, but these people here with you as well. It’s too much for you—you can’t do it alone, by yourself. So listen now to what I have to say. I will give you some advice, and God will be with you. You should represent the people before God, and you should bring their cases to God. You should also teach them the laws and the teachings, and show them how to live their lives and what work they should do. But you should choose*

29 *zaqen*, Hebrew singular; πρεσβτερος, Greek.

30 For examples of elder rule in Deuteronomy, see verses 19:12; 21:3, 6, 19; 22:15 and 25:9.

from among all the people competent men who are God-fearing, honest and incorruptible to be their leaders, in charge of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. Normally, they will settle the people's disputes. They should bring you the difficult cases; but ordinary matters they should decide themselves. In this way, they will make it easier for you and share the load with you. If you do this—and God is directing you to do it—you will be able to endure; and all these people too will arrive at their destination peacefully.” Moshe paid attention to his father-in-law's counsel and did everything he said. Moshe chose competent men from all Isra'el and made them heads over the people, in charge of thousands, hundreds, fifties and tens. As a general rule, they settled the people's disputes—the difficult cases they brought to Moshe, but every simple matter they decided themselves. Then Moshe let his father-in-law leave, and he went off to his own country.”

Numbers 11:16-17: “ADONAI said to Moshe, “Bring me seventy of the leaders of Isra'el [elders], people you recognize as leaders of the people and officers of theirs. Bring them to the tent of meeting, and have them stand there with you. I will come down and speak with you there, and I will take some of the Spirit which rests on you and put it on them. Then they will carry the burden of the people along with you, so that you won't carry it yourself alone.”

Notice that one of the responsibilities that Moses delegated to the elders and the other leaders was settling disputes among the Israelites which is “judicial” (see also, Deuteronomy 1:9-17). The judicial responsibility of elders and priests has passed down to us today and while the judicial function is not limited only to them, the need for a governmental judiciary (ecclesiastical court; *beit din*) in our communities is as needed today as

it was during the time of Moses (Matthew 18:15-20); Ezekiel 44:24; 1 Corinthians 6:1-5).³¹

From that event and throughout Old Covenant history, elder rule under an anointed head-of-government was God's best for Israel. Joshua followed Moses,³² and then came a succession of judges, kings, members of tribunals and others.^{33, 34} All of these leaders worked with and received counsel from local elders³⁵ who reportedly were ordained by the laying-on of hands in an unbroken chain from the original seventy.^{36, 37} The New Covenant continued the pattern of elder rule (1 Timothy 5:17)^{38, 39} under an anointed head-of-government, the very large difference being that the head-of-government was now the Messiah himself (Isaiah 9:5(6)).⁴⁰

31 The last chapter in this book presents rules for conducting a *beit din*.

32 For Moses imparting a portion of his Spirit to Joshua by the laying on of hands, see Numbers 27:22-23, read along with Deuteronomy 34:9

33 *Pir 'key A 'vot* 1:1

34 The establishment of judicial bodies (such as the Great Sanhedrin and smaller tribunals) is commanded in Scripture (Deuteronomy 16:18). See also, Maimonides, Yad, Sanhedrin 1:1-3.

35 "Elder," Encyclopedia Judaica, Moshe Weinfeld, vol. 6, p. 578 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971).

36 Maimonides, Yad, Sanhedrin 4:2

37 See also, "Mantle of Leadership" and *s'miychah*, *infra*

38 See also, Titus 1:5; Hebrews 13:17

39 For examples of elders serving in New Covenant functions, see Acts 15:2; James 5:14.

40 See also, Jeremiah 23:5; Daniel 7:14; John 1:49, 18:37; Revelation 7:14, 19:16.

Equipping Leadership

Equipping means imparting to another something that enables or assists in fulfilling a task. Scripture reveals that throughout history, God himself has been our principal equipper, and has provided for us both through the natural phenomena of his creation, as well as through selective sovereign acts. The earth, which produces food when worked and planted, is an example of sustenance provided through the creation (Genesis 1:29), while the manna (Exodus 16:4) and water (Exodus 17:6) which God gave to the Israelites during their travels in the desert, exemplify the many sovereign acts of provision that God brought about contrary to the natural expectation of his creation.

God not only equips his people physically and materially, but also spiritually. Some examples of God's spiritual equipping include the "Glory of the Lord" that filled the Tabernacle and led Israel through the desert (Exodus 40:34-35); God's recorded Word (his Scriptures) that teaches us about him, commands us according to his law, and guides us in his wisdom (Exodus 32:15-16); the Messiah who became flesh to walk among us, teach us and then die for us (John 1:14, 3:16); the Holy Spirit who indwelt prophets of old and now indwells all disciples of Yeshua, giving comfort, counsel and spiritual gifts (Acts 1:4-5);⁴¹ and finally, God's unfailing love for us, for which reason He provided all of the aforementioned and more (1 John 4:9-11).

In addition to being our provider, God is also our example of an equipping leader. After equipping us, God nurtures us to maturity and then exhorts us to likewise equip others

(Leviticus 10:8-11).⁴² His plan is to achieve world redemption through regenerated mankind—his original creation.

41 See also, Ezekiel 36:27; John 14:17; 1 Corinthians 3:16.

42 See also, Ezekiel 44:23; John 21:15-17; 2 Timothy 2:24.

Once again, the family unit is the principal place where leadership originates:

Proverbs 22:6: *“Train a child in the way he [should] go; and, even when old, he will not swerve from it.”*

Deuteronomy 6:4-9: *“Sh’ma, Yisra’el! ADONAI Eloheinu, ADONAI echad [Hear, Isra’el! ADONAI our God, ADONAI is one]; and you are to love ADONAI your God with all your heart, all your being and all your resources. These words, which I am ordering you today, are to be on your heart; and you are to teach them carefully to your children. You are to talk about them when you sit at home, when you are traveling on the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them on your hand as a sign, put them at the front of a headband around your forehead, and write them on the door-frames of your house and on your gates.”*

Scripture reveals the kinds of equipping leaders that God has given us:

Ephesians 4:11-12: *“Furthermore, he gave some people as emissaries, some as prophets, some as proclaimers of the Good News, and some as shepherds and teachers. Their task is to equip God’s people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah...”*

The continuing verses of Scripture explain that these gifted leaders are needed by the body of believers until it matures to the place that it is no longer susceptible to false doctrine and deception, and until all the members of the body carry their share of ministry and the body grows and becomes edified in love (Ephesians 4:13-16).

The five Ephesians 4 ministries fall into three categories—pastoral, prophetic, and evangelistic. The prophetic ministries are prophet and teacher,^{43, 44} the pastoral ministries are pastor and apostle, and the remaining ministry is evangelist.⁴⁵ Before Yeshua, apostles and evangelists were not identified as ministry categories per se, however, Israel was well-known for its dissemination of knowledge about God, and for proselytizing the Gentile nations.⁴⁶ The prophetic gift the teaching gift and the pastoral gift, were, however, in obvious operation; Moses, for example, possessed all three.

Standards for Leadership

In the military, leaders are chosen for command and are taught how to be relational and lead by example as a secondary means. In congregations, leaders are chosen who are strongly relational and prone to lead by example—a very different emphasis to meet a very different need.

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- 43 The prophet receives revelational messages from God and delivers them to whom they are intended. The gift teacher receives revelational understanding of Scripture and transmits that understanding to others.
- 44 The prophet receives revelational messages from God and delivers them to whom they are intended. The gift teacher receives revelational understanding of Scripture and transmits that understanding to others.
- 45 Pastors are shepherds—caretakers of sheep; the word “pastor” also refers to congregational leaders who care for persons within the congregation. Evangelists care for persons by preaching the Word of God to the world outside of the congregation in the hope that those who hear may come to believe. Apostles establish new congregations of those who have come to faith and they may temporarily act as a congregation’s only leader until other leaders are raised up. After that, they often continue to oversee the congregation apostolically.
- 46 Joseph R. Rosenbloom, Conversion to Judaism: From the Biblical Period to the Present, pp. 3-31 (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1978).

(a) Character

Good character is a primary standard for spiritual leadership because congregational members will not want to follow or receive influence from a person whose character is less than exemplary. The Bible is replete with examples of both godly and evil traits but, to begin somewhere, let's take a look at the Bible's character requirements for an elder; 1 Timothy 3:2-7 states:

“A congregation leader must be above reproach, he must be faithful to his wife, temperate, self-controlled, orderly, hospitable and able to teach. He must not drink excessively or get into fights; rather, he must be kind and gentle. He must not be a lover of money. He must manage his own household well, having children who obey him with all proper respect; for if a man can't manage his own household, how will he be able to care for God's Messianic Community? He must not be a new believer, because he might become puffed up with pride and thus fall under the same judgment as did the Adversary. Furthermore, he must be well regarded by outsiders, so that he won't fall into disgrace and into the Adversary's trap.

Similarly regarding *shamashim*, we read in verses 8-12:⁴⁷

Likewise, the shamashim must be of good character, people whose word can be trusted. They must not give themselves to excessive drinking or be greedy for dishonest gain. They must possess the formerly hidden truth of the faith with a clean conscience. And first, let them be tested; then, if they prove themselves blameless, let them be appointed shamashim. Similarly, the wives must be of good character; not gossips, but temperate, faithful in

⁴⁷ See also, Titus 1:6-9.

everything. Let the shamashim each be faithful to his wife, managing his children and household well.”

The Scripture mostly speaks for itself, but the apparent completeness of the list should not be taken to mean that there are no other traits to consider. Also, testing is mentioned only for *shamashim*, but I think wisdom dictates that testing should be applied to elders as well. *Ohev Yisrael* has interpreted such testing as inviting a *shamash* or elder candidate and his wife (if married) to participate and serve alongside the *shamashim* for a year and then evaluate his eligibility. If all is well after that, he is ordained.

You have no doubt noticed that the 1 Timothy 3:2-12 Scripture is written in a way that seems to say that elders and *shamashim* are men only. Messianic Judaism almost uniformly assumes this as to elders, but it is controversial as to *shamashot*. My own opinion is that Scripture does provide for *Shamashot*, and I think that Ahavat Yeshua approaches it in the best way. Ahavat Yeshua ordains *shamashot*, but they do not participate with the *shamashim* in matters that are governmental.

(b) Biblical & Doctrinal Knowledge

Another standard for leadership is biblical and doctrinal knowledge. Both 1 Timothy and Titus refer to a leader's ability to teach, but Titus emphasizes that the teaching must be sound and “*hold firmly to the trustworthy Message that agrees with the doctrine.*” The distinction between biblical knowledge and doctrinal knowledge is very important, for one can know precisely all the words of the Bible, but not understand aspects of their true meaning. Arguments over what certain words of the Bible mean are common and are what often separate Christian churches and denominations. Thank God that Messianic Judaism is mostly together on the major doctrinal issues, but it is not entirely so even among us.

Biblical Education is recommended for everyone in Messianic Judaism, but it is especially emphasized for leaders. Some years ago, our *shaliach* Dan Juster wrote a paper entitled “Levels of Training: A Guide for Tikkun Congregations,” in which he recommends courses that should be taken at various stages of a person’s discipleship training. The levels he mentions are (1) Covenant Member, *Shamash 1*: (2) Discipled Servant, *Shamash 2*: (3) Major Service Area Coordinator, *Shamash 3*: (4) Small Group Leader, then (5) Elder and (6) Five-fold Minister.

(c) Spiritual Gifts

One cannot lead in spiritual matters without being gifted by God. Ephesians 4:11-16 refers to there being five gift ministries or offices; it reads:

“Furthermore, he gave some people as emissaries [i.e. apostles], some as prophets, some as proclaimers of the Good News, and some as shepherds and teachers. Their task is to equip God’s people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah, until we all arrive at the unity implied by trusting and knowing the Son of God, at full manhood, at the standard of maturity set by the Messiah’s perfection.”

Notice that those gifted for one of the five-fold gift offices are to use their gifts to equip others. While one expects a person in the office of prophet to prophesy, he or she is not to neglect equipping others to prophesy. While a person who is gifted as an evangelist is expected to proclaim the Good News himself, he or she is not to neglect equipping others to do similarly. And it is the same for the other gift ministers.

So, the uniqueness of these five offices is equipping, and that is only possible because the Holy Spirit enables the others of us to prophesy, evangelize, shepherd (i.e. pastor) and teach. The apostle is somewhat different though because the broad oversight of his office is only available to multiply gifted persons.

Scripture also mentions other spiritual gifts apparently given for individual use in serving others. Although leadership is not specifically mentioned, it is logically obvious that all of the gifts are immensely important for leaders at all levels and should be diligently sought through prayer. 1 Corinthians 12:4-11 lists them; beginning at verse 4:

“Now there are different kinds of gifts, but the same Spirit gives them. Also there are different ways of serving, but it is the same Lord being served. And there are different modes of working, but it is the same God working them all in everyone. Moreover, to each person is given the particular manifestation of the Spirit that will be for the common good. To one, through the Spirit, is given a word of wisdom; to another, a word of knowledge, in accordance with the same Spirit; to another, faith, by the same Spirit; and to another, gifts of healing, by the one Spirit; to another, the working of miracles; to another, prophecy; to another, the ability to judge between spirits; to another, the ability to speak in different kinds of tongues; and to yet another, the ability to interpret tongues. One and the same Spirit is at work in all these things, distributing to each person as he chooses.”

These are commonly known as the “nine gifts of the Spirit,” but there are other gifts as well such as the gift of helps and administration mentioned in 1 Corinthians 12:28, and we read in Romans 12:6-8:

“But we have gifts that differ and which are meant to be used according to the grace that has been given to us. If your gift is prophecy, use it to the extent of your trust; if it is serving, use it to serve; if you are a teacher, use your gift in teaching; if you are a counselor, use your gift to comfort and exhort; if you are someone who gives, do it simply and generously; if you are in a position of leadership, lead with diligence and zeal; if you are one who does acts of mercy, do them cheerfully.”

All of these are to be used in serving others, for we read in 1 Peter 4:10:

“As each one has received some spiritual gift, he should use it to serve others, like good managers of God’s many-sided grace-“

(d) Experience

We have heard the saying: “There is no substitute for experience.” Well, yes there is, and that is when the Holy Spirit imparts to us supernaturally. Still, experience is valuable and that is why 1 Timothy refers to managing one’s household and to not being a new believer as prerequisites for eldership. We must not raise a person into leadership prematurely, but what is premature depends on the nature of the proposed leadership. For example, I would have no difficulty appointing an unmarried man or woman to lead worship, but I would not appoint them to counsel a married couple or a person whose children are material to the counseling.

(e) Holy Living

The requirement that a leader exemplify holy living is as obvious as it is practical. It matters not the nature of or the level of leadership; all leaders must live in a way that is transparent to

those he or she serves. We clearly see why that is necessary for leaders such as elders, *shamashim*, *chavurah* leaders, teachers, and the like, but what about leaders who are not so much in the public's view such as *oneg* captains and administrators? It is necessary to apply the requirement of holy living to them as well because if we do not, an imperceptible spiritual fault will fester that will stain the congregation, and the leaders who allow it will lose the trust of the members.

Leadership Skills

Skills are similar to spiritual gifts in that they add to our ability to function and lead in specified areas. The difference, as I see it, is that gifts are given, whereas skills are acquired (albeit allowed by God). There are some skills that are general and impact every kind of leadership—skills such as our ability with language. Leading others requires that we communicate accurately and concisely, so our ability to communicate both verbally and in writing (in English and when needed other languages) is crucial. But language skills are not only for conveying ideas and instructions accurately; they are also crucial for speaking judiciously, wisely, and with the right timing, and for building and maintaining relationships. In that regard, skill with language overlaps and connects with attributes such as judgment and understanding social amenities. You will receive a very different response if, in your leadership, you say to someone: *“Your idea is plain awful,”* and you say instead: *“Thank you for your idea. I may use aspects of it on another occasion, but perhaps not now.”*

There are three related skills that I think deserve special mention; they are pastoring, discipling, and counseling; all three are leadership functions and are also skills. Pastoring is the congregational equivalent of parenting. Parenting is a skill that is natural but is also developed through training. The training of

parents ideally begins in their youth by observing and experiencing their own parents which one hopes were good role models. We know that that is not always the case, and that God often has to provide a workaround. It is astonishing how similar parenting is to pastoring and anyone who aspires to pastoral leadership must be prepared to parent numbers of people. How many? That depends on the size of the group that one leads. In a small *chavurah* it may be a dozen or less. In a typical congregation, it may be from one hundred to three hundred. In a “megachurch” it may be thousands.

Pastoring in a congregation is as broad and as responsible a function as parenting in one’s nuclear family. While the analogy breaks down at some point, pastoring includes loving, teaching, exhorting, praising, scolding, counseling, and disciplining. The level of authority to do these things is not quite the same for each, but it is close enough to use parenting as a model for pastoring.

Not all who pastor have the title “pastor.” 1 Peter 5:1-3 exhorts us:

“Therefore, I urge the congregation leaders among you, as a fellow-leader and witness to the Messiah’s sufferings, as well as a sharer in the glory to be revealed: shepherd [pastor] the flock of God that is in your care, exercising oversight not out of constraint, but willingly, as God wants; and not out of a desire for those in your care, but as people who become examples to the flock.”

The Complete Jewish Bible uses the word “shepherding,” but “shepherding” is the same as “pastoring.” Elders have pastoral responsibilities, but an individual elder may not be pastorally gifted and must rely on others who are. It is the same with small

group or *chavurah* leaders; they may or may not be Ephesians 4 “gift” pastors but still have pastoral responsibilities.

Counseling and discipling are part of pastoring. They are similar in that both assist persons in growing spiritually to be Yeshua-like, but counseling has the added feature in that there exist one or more current problems that need solving. When the counsel needed is brief, congregational leaders and under-shepherds can and should be competent to do it. Sometimes, however, counseling needs exceed a leader’s time availability or competence and require referral to persons called “counselors” who are specially trained in the skill. It therefore behooves every pastoral leader on every level to receive at least some training in counseling and to encourage others who are gifted to receive advanced counselor training and even certification. Now to be clear, the counseling of which I am speaking is “biblical counseling”—the kind that relies on and teaches biblical precepts—not the kind that utilizes secular theories and techniques. When making referrals outside of one’s congregation, one should be aware that most professionals that call themselves “Christian counselors” are Christians in their personal lives but their counseling is secular. One more thing. If you, as a person’s pastor, refer him or her to another for biblical counseling, you remain the primary counselor responsible, and the counselor to whom you make the referral must recognize and honor your pastoral authority. What that means is that the person being counseled and the counselor must agree that you are within the sphere of pastoral privileged communication and will receive regular confidential updates from the counselor. If that is not agreed to, you should not make the referral and you should inform the counselee that you will pray for him but that he is on his own from that point forward insofar as counseling is concerned.

One more thing. If you choose to counsel a person or refer him or her to another counselor, be sure that you, the counselee, and

the referred counselor are of the same gender. It is outright dangerous for men to counsel women and women to counsel men for obvious reasons of attraction. It is not enough that the counseling be done with an open door because words that are spoken close proximity can be as much of a problem as physical touching. Men should therefore counsel men, women counsel women, and teams of men and women counsel couples. Brief isolated conferences between men and women are unavoidable in the real world, but the nature of what is discussed in such conferences must be carefully managed.

Leading via Silence

Dr. Dan Juster will probably not remember this incident, but years ago Beth Messiah had a small *chavurah* that met at a member's home. I was a relatively new believer at the time and was part of that group when one day Dr. Juster attended. At some point in the evening, a debate sprung up about a biblical issue the nature of which I have long forgotten. What I did not forget, however, was that the discussion became heated and most everyone in the room was injecting his and her opinions except Dr. Juster and me. I was not injecting because I did not know enough about the subject, but why was Dr. Juster remaining silent and not injecting? I was baffled as to why everyone was arguing about a subject to which I was sure that Dr. Juster knew the answer, but no one was bothering to ask him and were just going on and on about it among themselves. The effect on me of Dr. Juster's silent self-restraint was profound. If I were him, I would probably have jumped to my feet and shouted:

“Idiots! Don't you know that I, your pastor, am here for you to ask? I know ten times more about that which you are arguing, and you aren't even interested in asking my opinion!”

But that is why I wasn't the pastor. Dr. Juster did not do that; he just listened and remained silent. I do not know what he was thinking at the time, but his silence taught me a lesson in humility that I never forgot. Thank you, Dr. Juster for your leadership of silence.

One of *Ohev Yisrael's* members, Jill Melton, published a book titled "The Power of the Zip." The "zip" is our closed lips, and while the book is directed toward a secular readership, the concept that silence has power is completely biblical and mirrors the testimony I just gave. I cannot help but recall Isaiah 53:7's description of Yeshua during the ordeal of his crucifixion:

"Though mistreated, he was submissive—he did not open his mouth. Like a lamb led to be slaughtered, like a sheep silent before its shearers, he did not open his mouth."

Mantle of Leadership

Ordination to leadership is often understood as merely "installing or elevating a special officer of the congregation."⁴⁸ Biblical ordination, however, is always accompanied by anointing and a transference of God's mantle of the Holy Spirit who not only identifies the leader God has chosen, but also gives him authority and power to serve effectively.⁴⁹

48 "Ordain," The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible, W. White, Jr., vol. 4, p. 543 (Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House, 1977).

49 There is no single word in Scripture for "ordination" that would convey a certainty of its official existence. The word $\chi\epsilon\delta\omicron\tau\omicron\nu\epsilon\zeta\upsilon$ translated "appointed" in Acts 14:23 has been understood to mean "ordained." Reference: "ordination," Dictionary of the Apostolic Church, Arthur John MacLean, vol. II, p. 114, Ed.: James Hastings (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1973).

This anointing, or impartation of Holy Spirit power comes about in various ways. On occasion, God himself cloaks an individual with his Spirit; other times, He ordains with man's participation. Priests, for example, were ordained with oil (Leviticus 8:30), while the Levites were ordained by *s'michah*,⁵⁰ the laying on of hands (Numbers 8:10-12).⁵¹ Kings and prophets too were anointed—probably with oil (1 Kings 19:15-16), while Elisha was ordained by being covered with Elijah's cloak (1 Kings 19:19-21).⁵² After the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai, God sovereignly transferred a portion of Moses' spirit to seventy elders (Numbers 11:16-26). After that, transfers of spirit and authority continued from elder to elder by *s'michah*:

“The elders ordained by Moses ordained their successors, who in turn ordained others, so that there existed an unbroken chain of ordination from Moses down to the time of the Second Temple” (Maim Yad, Sanh 4:2).^{53, 54}

Ordination under the New Covenant has some similarities and some differences from ordinations under the Mosaic. One similarity is the variability of how God's anointing can be acquired. Disciples of Yeshua are given a new spirit and are immersed by the Holy Spirit into the New Covenant priesthood. Ordination of

50 Literal meaning: “leaning of the hands.”

51 For uses of *s'michah* other than in ordinations, see Leviticus 1:4; Acts 8:14-17, 28:8.

52 A play on words. The Hebrew word for “cloak” is “*aderet*,” also translated “mantle.”

53 “*Semikhah*,” Encyclopedia Judaica, Aaron Rothkoff, vol. 14, p. 1140 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971).

54 See also, Pirke Avoth 1.1 for alleged similar transmission of the oral law.

New Covenant prophets is not specifically mentioned in Scripture, nor is ordination mentioned for any of the other Ephesians 4 ministries.⁵⁵ In one case, spiritual gifts were imparted through prophecy and the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 6:7; 2 Timothy 1:6); therefore, one may justifiably conclude that men may, on occasion, participate in the impartation of spiritual gifts. There is, however, no New Covenant Scriptural precedent for men ordaining individuals into Ephesians 4 gift ministries.⁵⁶ As for the ordination of kings, it is now un-needed since Yeshua has become our only king.

The manner of appointing New Covenant elders and deacons is in marked contrast to the previously mentioned ministries. Every example in Scripture depicts elders installing other elders (or deacons) (Acts 6:3-7, 14:23; Titus 1:5), and almost certainly with the laying on of hands (1 Timothy 5:17-22).⁵⁷ So central is human participation in the appointment of elders, that elders who ordain others are warned that they are accountable for the sins of the men they place in office (1 Timothy 5:22).

Leadership Titles

The first thing that must be said of leadership titles and designations is that if their use causes men to stumble—to be lifted up in pride or to be the object of adulation by others—then they must be avoided. In the Bible, men of God are seldom observed using titles; they most often are referred to just by name.

55 The sending out of Saul and Barnabus with fasting, prayer and the laying on of hands, was for their mission—not for initiation into office (Acts 13:1-3).

56 One may reach an opposite conclusion if one considers analogous Old Covenant examples, eg., Joshua, Elisha, David, etc.

57 The subject of 1 Timothy 5:17-22 is eldership. Verse 22, therefore, contemplates the appointment of elders by laying on of hands.

So it was, for example, that Moses is referred to as “Moses,” David as “David,” Saul as “Saul,” and so forth. Occasionally, it was (and still is) an optional practice to add a title ahead of a person’s name; thus we find in Scripture titles such as “King David” (1 Kings 1:31) and “King Saul” (1 Samuel 18:6). Similarly, in the modern Jewish community we hear of “Moshe *Rabenu*,” and the title Rabbi is in common usage. The Apostle Paul sometimes referred to his offices descriptively as well:

Colossians 1:1: “From: Sha’ul, by God’s will an emissary [apostle] of the Messiah Yeshua, and brother Timothy”

2 Timothy 1:11: “It was for this Good News that I was appointed a proclaimer, [emissary] and teacher of the Goyim;”

Although Paul does not refer to himself as “Preacher Paul,” “Apostle Paul,” or “Rabbi Paul,” others may have addressed him in such a manner.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, there appears to be no biblical basis to either promote or preclude the use of titles and descriptive designations for congregational leaders.

The titles “*Rav*” and “Rabbi”⁵⁹ need special mention. They are universally used by all denominations of Judaism and, for that reason, a growing number of Messianic Jewish leaders have adopted it as a positive statement of cultural identification. Those who oppose such usage usually give one or more of the following reasons: (1) the titles imply special training prior to ordination; (2) the titles imply an adherence to rabbinic authority; (3) the titles can mislead by inferring that those who hold

58 Similar to John’s disciples addressing Yeshua as “Rabbi” (meaning teacher) in John 1:38

59 Transliterated spelling.

them are non-messianic; (4) Matthew 23:6-8 seems to instruct against their use.

As to the first objection, if “*rav*” and “*rabbi*” are limited to congregational elders, specialized training (or its equivalent) and ordination should have already occurred. The content and length of rabbinic training is far from being uniform among the various denominations of Judaism, and there is therefore no existing standard for us to adhere to. As to the second objection, rabbinical authority has nothing to do with the term “*rabbi*”; it has to do with how one interprets Deuteronomy 17:8-11.⁶⁰ As to the third objection, if “*rav*” and “*rabbi*” become widely used among Messianic Jewish leaders, everyone will eventually become aware of this use.

Answering the fourth objection requires additional perspective. “*Rabiy*” derives from “*rav*” which, in biblical Hebrew, literally means “great.”⁶¹ By the generation after Hillel, the meaning of “*rav*” had become “master” as distinguished from “slave,”⁶² and so “*rabiy*” literally meant “my master.” The titles “*rav*” and “*rabiy*” were used similarly, except that “*rabiy*” inferred ordination (*s’ michah*), whereas “*rav*” did not.⁶³

When the literal meaning of a word is not the meaning intended, the word is said to be an idiom. Such is the case for the

60 Deuteronomy 17:8-11 is the basis of rabbinic authority in interpreting Scripture. See Joel Roth, The Halakhic Process: A Systematic Analysis, pp. 115-116 (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1986).

61 “*Rabbi, Rabbinate*,” Encyclopedia Judaica, Louis Isaac Rabinowitz, vol. 13, pp. 1445-6 (Jerusalem: Keter, 1971).

62 *ibid.*

63 *ibid.* *Rabi* was used in the land of Israel, whereas *rav* was used by the sages in Babylonia.

word *ραββι*, the Greek transliteration of the Hebrew word *rabiy* and the English word “rabbi”:

John 1:38: *“Yeshua turned and saw them following him, and he asked them, “What are you looking for?” They said to him, “Rabbi!” (which means “Teacher!”) “Where are you staying?””*

In this verse of Scripture, the title “Rabbi,” whose literal meaning has been shown to be “my master,” is used idiomatically to mean “teacher.”⁶⁴ Yeshua knew of this dual meaning of “Rabbi” and that its use was perfectly proper, so he chose to teach a lesson through the irony of seeming to forbid it.⁶⁵ Referring to the scribes and the Pharisees, Yeshua exclaimed:

Matthew 23:6-8: *“...they love the place of honor at banquets and the best seats in the synagogues, and they love being greeted deferentially in the marketplaces and being called ‘Rabbi.’ “But you are not to let yourselves be called ‘Rabbi’; because you have one Rabbi, and you are all each other’s brothers.”*

We get a further indication of Yeshua’s irony from the next verses:

Matthew 23:9-10: *“And do not call anyone on earth ‘Father.’ because you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to let yourselves be called ‘leaders,’ because you have one Leader, and he is the Messiah!”*

The Greek words for “father” and “teacher” in the foregoing Matthew 23:6-10 verses are derived from *πατρ* and *καθηγητης* respectively. Although translated “teacher” in the New King

64 The Greek word is a derivative of *διδσκαλος*.

65 This is not the prevalent opinion of most commentators.

James Version,⁶⁶ neither *καθηγητης* nor any of its possible derivatives appear elsewhere in the New Covenant Greek text. Most of the other occurrences of “teacher” (including the parenthetical definition for “Rabbi” in John 1:38) are translated from derivatives of *διδσκαλος*:

1 Timothy 2:7: *“This is why I myself was appointed a proclaimer, even an emissary—I am telling the truth, not lying!—a trustworthy and truthful teacher of the Goyim. (1Ti 2:7 CJB)”*

2 Timothy 1:11: *“It was for this Good News that I was appointed a proclaimer, emissary and teacher of the Goyim;”*

Also, as expected from the ironic use of these verses, there are several instances in Scripture where “father” (*πατρ*) is clearly a proper descriptive term:

John 8:56: *“Avraham, your father, was glad that he would see my day; then he saw it and was overjoyed.”*

Ephesians 6:2-3: *“‘Honor your father and mother’—this is the first commandment that embodies a promise—so that it may go well with you, and you may live long in the Land.”*

James 2:21: *“Wasn’t Avraham avinu declared righteous because of actions when he offered up his son Yitz’chak on the altar?”*

1 John 2:13-14: *“You fathers, I am writing”... “You fathers, I have written”*

66 The King James Version translates *καθηγητης* as “master.”

Finally, Yeshua explained the point he was making:

Matthew 23:11-12: “The greatest among you must be your servant, for whoever promotes himself will be humbled, and whoever humbles himself will be promoted.”

Clearly then, Yeshua was not forbidding the use of the term “Rabbi,” but was using the term to teach against self-exaltation.

Passing the Baton of Leadership

I want to conclude with the subject of passing the baton of leadership. I apologize to some readers who have heard this before at *Ohev Yisrael* when the baton of congregational leadership was passed from me to Rabbi Aaron, but it is too important a subject to not deal with today.

Passing the baton of leadership is a recurring theme of the Bible. In early times, family leadership (i.e. birthright) was passed from father to firstborn son with occasional exceptions. God himself caused Abraham’s leadership to pass through Isaac, and we no doubt remember the tumultuous way in which Jacob received his birthright from Isaac despite his brother Esau being his first-born fraternal twin.

I am also reminded of how the leadership of Israel passed from Moses to Joshua; we read in Deuteronomy 34:7-9:

“Moshe was 120 years old when he died, with eyes undimmed and vigor undiminished. The people of Isra’el mourned Moshe on the plains of Mo’av for thirty days; after this, the days of crying and mourning for Moshe ended. Y’hoshua the son of Nun was full of the Spirit of wisdom, for Moshe had laid his hands on him, and the people of Isra’el heeded him and did what ADONAI had ordered Moshe.”

There were also occasions when leadership passed, not because of the leader's advanced age, but due to his having committed sin. Such was the case when God transferred Saul's leadership of Israel to David; we read in 1 Samuel 16:1:

“ADONAI said to Sh'mu'el, “How much longer are you going to go on grieving for Sha'ul, now that I have rejected him as king over Isra'el? Fill your horn with oil, and set out; I will send you to Yishai the Beit-Lachmi, because I have chosen myself a king from among his sons.”

Continuing with verses 10-12:

“Yishai presented seven of his sons to Sh'mu'el; but Sh'mu'el told Yishai, “ADONAI has not chosen these. Are all your sons here?” Sh'mu'el asked Yishai. He replied, “There is still the youngest; he's out there tending the sheep.” Sh'mu'el said to Yishai, “Send and bring him back, because we won't sit down to eat until he gets here.” He sent and brought him in. With ruddy cheeks, red hair and bright eyes, he was a good-looking fellow. ADONAI said, “Stand up and anoint him; he's the one.””

So, David received Saul's mantle of leadership, but his initially ruddy cheeks, red hair, and bright eyes eventually gave way to age, and in 1 Kings 2:1-3 we read:

“The time came near for David to die; so he commissioned Shlomo his son as follows: “I am going the way of all the earth. Therefore, be strong; show yourself a man. Observe the charge of ADONAI your God to go in his ways and keep his regulations, mitzvot, rulings and instructions in accordance with what is written in the

Torah of Moshe; so that you will succeed in all you do and wherever you go.”

Concluding with verses 10-12:

“Then David slept with his ancestors and was buried in the City of David. David had ruled Isra’el for forty years—seven years in Hevron and thirty-three years in Yerushalayim. Shlomo sat on the throne of David his father; and his rule had become firmly established...”

We also read in 1 Kings 19:16 how God told Elijah that Elisha, the son of Shafat, would become Elijah’s successor, and we read in 2 Kings 2:9-15:

“After they had crossed, Eliyahu said to Elisha, “Tell me what I can do for you before I am taken away from you.” Elisha said, “Please! Let a double share of your spirit be on me!” He replied, “You have requested a hard thing. Nevertheless, if you see me when I am taken from you, you will get what you asked for; but if not, you won’t.” Suddenly, as they were walking on and talking, there appeared a fiery chariot with horses of fire; and as it separated the two of them from each other, Eliyahu went up into heaven in a whirlwind. Elisha saw it and cried out, “My father! My father! The chariots and horsemen of Isra’el!” Then he lost sight of him. Seizing his clothes, he tore them in half. Then he picked up Eliyahu’s cloak, which had fallen off him. Standing on the bank of the Yarden, he took the cloak that had fallen off Eliyahu, struck the water and said, “Where is ADONAI, the God of Eliyahu?” But when he actually did strike the water, it divided itself to the left and to the right; then Elisha crossed over. When the guild prophets of Yericho saw him in the distance, they said, “The spirit of Eliyahu does rest on Elisha.” Advancing

to meet him, they prostrated themselves on the ground before him ...”

There are other examples of leadership succession, but I will jump forward to the most prominent of them all, the one where Yeshua was preparing to return to his Father in Heaven and told his disciples in John 14:26:

“But the Counselor, the Ruach HaKodesh, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you everything; that is, he will remind you of everything I have said to you.”

So, the *Ru'ach HaKodesh* succeeded Yeshua, but he was not the only one—Yeshua’s disciples succeeded him too, for he told his disciples in John 14:12:

“Yes, indeed! I tell you that whoever trusts in me will also do the works I do! Indeed, he will do greater ones, because I am going to the Father.”

Similar to how Elisha succeeded Elijah in his prophetic ministry by receiving his spirit when he was taken to Heaven, Yeshua’s disciples succeeded Yeshua in his ministry by receiving the Holy Spirit whom he sent back after he was taken up. And we who are Yeshua’s present-day disciples are successors to his early disciples in that we have inherited their ministry of succession—making new disciples of those who will, in turn, succeed us by making other new disciples, and on and on. To summarize, we ought not hold on to our positions of leadership beyond when God says: “It is time to move on.”

Leading a Peer Bible Study

I have noticed, over time, that some of us are reluctant to lead Bible studies among our peers either because we think we don’t know enough or because we think we do not have enough

time to prepare. Even seasoned *chavurah* leaders sometimes become overburdened in preparing their Bible studies and come to a place where they want a break! The truth is that such “burn-out” can be avoided if leading the Bible study is approached in the right way. Of course, careful time-consuming preparation is necessary if your way of leading a Bible study is to be its teacher—to deliver polished discourses on biblical subjects, present flawless analyses of portions of Scripture, and be looked to as an authority for answers. Some of you are gifted as teachers as spoken of in Ephesians 4:11-12:

“Furthermore, he gave some people as emissaries, some as prophets, some as proclaimers of the Good News, and some as shepherds and teachers. Their task is to equip God’s people for the work of service that builds the body of the Messiah...”

But you who are Ephesians 4 gift teachers are not the main ones to whom I am speaking today. The title of this message is “Leading a “Peer” Bible Study,” but it might also be called: “Leading an ‘Iron Sharpens Iron’ Bible Study” or perhaps even “Leading a Berean Style Bible Study,” inspired by the following Scriptures:

Acts 17:10-11: *“But as soon as night fell, the brothers sent Sha’ul and Sila off to Berea. As soon as they arrived, they went to the synagogue. Now the people here were of nobler character than the ones in Thessalonica; they eagerly welcomed the message, checking the Tanakh every day to see if the things Sha’ul was saying were true.”*

Proverbs 27:17: *“Just as iron sharpens iron, a person sharpens the character of his friend.”*

I have a theory that any Bible-believer with minimal knowledge and little or no preparation can lead a Bible study so long as (1) there is sufficient cumulative biblical knowledge among the Bible study participants, and (2) you the leader do not present yourself as an expert. The trick in leading this kind of Bible study is to ask questions, let the answers come from the participants, and let the diversity of comments from the participants rub against each other to produce the desired “iron sharpening iron” result. But just as one who uses a sharpening iron must hold it at a correct angle to the knife or tool in order to sharpen it, you as the Bible study leader must evaluate the comments being made in your study and direct the discussion in a way that will be profitable.

But there are risks in this approach. One of them is that if your group is lethargic that day and does not feel like participating, you may ask questions and get silence in return. “NOT GOOD!” And if that is the case, your “studiers” will probably snooze through any other approach as well. Another risk is that if the members of your group are not adequately schooled in biblical truth they may not recognize unbiblical comments or analyses when they hear them. If you don’t either —“ALSO NOT GOOD!” But I am talking about leading a Bible study among Messianic Jewish and Christian believers where there is usually an abundance of biblical knowledge and experience from which to draw.

In the past, I believe I was over-restrictive about who I would allow to lead a Bible study because I worried that false biblical doctrines might go unnoticed and unchecked. I still have that concern if the study is of the kind where information flows mainly from the teacher to the student. But that is what I now call a “*Bible teaching*” as distinguished from a “*Bible study*,” and is not what I am discussing with you right now. The apostle Paul taught the Bereans and, after he taught them, the Bereans

studied to confirm his teaching. I am talking to you now about something similar—a peer leading his peers in studying the Bible as the Bereans probably did, sharpening each other’s understanding in the process. Hopefully, this message will exhort some of you to move into the ministry of Bible study leadership, not necessarily as Ephesians 4 “gift” teachers, but as “peer” leaders.

The opportunities for leading Bible studies are many—at home with our families; with co-workers during lunch breaks; with gatherings of neighbors and friends; and I may as well also put in a plug for our jail ministry where a crew of us lead Bible studies every Monday morning. I am a teacher, but I use the “peer” model of leading wherever possible because it is much more motivating than listening to a teacher lecture. If, after prayerful consideration, any of you want to try your hand at leading a Bible study, I have a few suggestions that will help you to get started.

1. Select a portion of Scripture to study rather than a topic. Topical studies require more biblical knowledge and prep time than Scripture studies, and this message is directed more toward those who are new at this and have busy schedules.
2. Select a portion of Scripture that has some interesting issues in it to discuss. Studying genealogies may stir the juices of scholars but are not usually motivating in Bible studies.
3. Announce to your group the portion of Scripture to be studied, explain how you intend to go about leading the study, and what you expect of the participants. Explain that it will be a discussion, and that everyone’s participation in presenting material, asking questions and offering opinions is very important.

4. If there is time, you can let your group know the Scripture portion to be studied ahead of time, but do not be naive, believing that most people will prepare for the study, and then be upset when you find that they have not.
5. This seems like a “no brainer” but be sure to tell everyone to bring a Bible of a reputable translation, a pencil, and a pad of paper. Paraphrases (such as the Living Bible) should only be used as commentaries, but there is one exception; although David Stern says that the *Tanakh* of his Complete Jewish Bible is a paraphrase, it is so good in its interpretations, that I allow its use as a translation.
6. Set an approximate time for the study and keep to it. Open with prayer, begin on time, and end on time. If you consistently wait for late arrivers, you will train your group in being consistently late.
7. Do not assume that anyone has read the study portion ahead of time. If you do, you are likely to be disappointed.
8. Do all the out-loud reading yourself while asking everyone else to follow in their Bibles. I know that it is common to ask others to read, but unless you have people in your group who can read fluently and project their voice with interest, allowing people to read who stumble in reading publicly will diminish everyone’s oral comprehension. There is another reason as well; participants in your study will own different translations of the Bible, and listening to sequential readings from different versions can be confusing.
9. Within the portion of Scripture under study, if verses you want to discuss are widely separated by text that, in your opinion, does not contribute (e.g. a genealogical list), feel free to

skip over the “inbetween” portions or summarize them rather than read them.

10. Do not read long passages. Read only enough to acquire the context and until something perks your interest to discuss. Then stop and ask a probative question about what you have just read. If you cannot come up with a question, ask: “What do you think about what I just read?”

11. When a participant in your study contributes something that you think is correct and valuable, tell them so and thank them for it.

12. If a participant in your study says something that surprises you because you have not thought of it before and you do not know how to answer, thank him (or her) for raising the point and say that you will study the matter, pray (if appropriate), and bring it up again at the next study session. You can also confess that you do not know the answer and ask: “Does anyone here think they have an answer to this?”

13. If a participant in your study suggests that you are wrong about something, do not be defensive. Consider carefully what the person has to say, and either clarify what you have said or admit that you are wrong and thank him or her for pointing out your error.

14. If a participant in your study asks a question that is valid but would take too much of the Bible study’s time to answer, ask the questioner if he can narrow the question. Alternatively, explain that you do not have the time now to answer such a broad question, but that you will be happy to discuss it with him afterward. Do not be seduced into taking a great amount of the Bible study’s time by attempting to answer too broad a question.

15. When a participant in your study says something that is not correct or is incomplete, your skill in communicating it without offending is crucial. Knowing the person and his or her sensitivities will certainly help, but you have to play it by ear. Saying “Wrong as usual!” is probably not going to be received well, but it can occasionally be said in jest to someone with whom you are in a good relationship. Here are some responses I make to comments that I believe are wrong or incomplete:

- “What you said is interesting. What do you others think?”
- “What you said is interesting. Do others here think he (she) is right?”
- “I can understand why you think that, but consider this as an alternative, etc.”
- “A very interesting point of view. How do you think that fits with “ABC” Scripture?”
- “Okay, but what about”
- “That’s a possibility, but there may be more. Anyone else?”

And in the right circumstance and with the right person, I have been known to say something like:

- “Bzzz! Wrong answer! Go directly to jail! Do not collect \$200.”

16. If you notice that a certain member of your Bible study participates very little, you might try drawing him out by directing a question to him. However, make sure that the question is the kind for which knowledge is not needed since you don’t want

to embarrass an already withdrawn person by their having to admit that they don't know or they don't understand. You could ask questions like:

- “Jack, you haven't said much. Is there anything you would like to ask or add to what has already been said?”

or

- “Jack, is what Bob said clear enough to you, or do you want him to restate it?”

17. If a participant in your Bible study speaks too frequently, too long, off-subject, or unbiblically, you must take control of the situation as soon as you become aware of what is happening. It would be uncomfortable for everyone were you to attempt to deal with the person publicly, so you should take him (or her) aside for correction, or you can try one of these approaches in the group:

- “John, you obviously have a lot to contribute and you know a lot about the subject, so please understand that, when I see your hand raised but call upon someone else, I am not ignoring you; I am merely trying to get a diversity of opinions and responses.”

or

- “John, I am sorry to interrupt you. What you are saying is interesting and valuable, but you are not answering my question. My question is ...”

or

- “John, I am having trouble following you because you are giving me so much more than I asked. As an experiment in conciseness, can you answer my question in one sentence? Alright, in five sentences! If you can, you get a prize. Who will help us count John’s sentences?”

If you try the last suggestion, you had better be prepared to come up with the prize!

18. End the study session with a prayer but, before you do, ask if anyone has any last thoughts or comments and, if applicable, reveal what will be studied at the next session.

Rules of Procedure for Conducting a *Beit Din*⁶⁷

The following rules for conducting a *Beit Din* are recommended:

1. Caption of Documents

Each written document in a *Beit Din* should contain a standardized caption that includes:

- The name of the presiding congregation
- The name(s) of the Complainant(s) followed by the word “Complainant”
- The name(s) of the Respondent(s) followed by the word “Respondent”
- The title of the document (e.g. “Complaint,” “Answer,” “Motion for...”)

⁶⁷ Based upon typical Rules of Civil Procedure in Anglo-American tribunals.

- The body of the document (text that explains the document's purpose). Numbered paragraphs containing no more than two sentences each is recommended
- A conclusion (a paragraph that summarizes the document's' purpose
- A line containing the writer's signature
- A statement consisting of service (the means by which a copy of the document was transmitted to the opposing party (e.g. email, U.S. mail, personal delivery, etc.)

2. Pre-hearing Proceedings

a. Complaint Filed

The complaint is a written statement of numbered paragraphs setting out the jurisdiction of the *Beit Din* to hear and judge the case, the wrong that is being complained of (e.g. marital abandonment, non-support, etc.), the facts supporting the Complaint, and/or the relief being sought (e.g. financial support, etc.)

b. Answer to Complaint Filed

The Answer is a written response consisting of numbered paragraphs responding to (admitting or denying) each numbered paragraph of the complaint, and a concluding statement of the relief being sought (e.g. that the complaint be dismissed)

c. Pre-hearing Motion(s) Filed with or without Oral Argument (e.g. motion for discovery, motion to dismiss, motion to change venue, etc.)

A word should be said about Discovery. Discovery is a process by which a party gains access to things or knowledge that is exclusively in the possession of the other party. A *Beit Din* does not have subpoena power as does a public court, but it can accomplish everything a subpoena can by ruling

against a party that does not comply. Typical pre-hearing motions are (a) motion for admission of facts; (b) motion to answer interrogatories; (c) motion for oral deposition; and (d) motion to produce physical evidence.

3. Hearing

a. Rule on Witnesses

Witnesses are excluded from the hearing room until it is time for them to testify.

b. Complainant's Opening Statement

The Complainant orients the judicial officers as to his complaint and the evidence he expects to present to support it.

c. Respondent's Opening Statement

An opening statement by the respondent is optional or can be deferred until after the Complainant rests his case.

d. Complainant's Case in Chief

The Complainant questions witnesses and/or testifies himself. This is termed "direct examination" and cannot include leading questions. After a witness testifies on direct examination, the Respondent questions the same witness; this is termed "cross-examination," and can include leading questions. The judicial officers can question at any time if they so desire.

e. Respondent's Case in Chief

Same as above.

g. Recalling Witnesses

If a witness for either party is to be recalled he must leave the hearing room after he testifies. If not, he can remain to observe the remainder of the hearing.

k. Motions for Judgment

Motions for Summary Judgment, Judgment on the Pleadings, and a Directed Verdict are similar in that they ask that

a party to the *Beit Din* be granted judgment without the hearing going any further. A Motion for Summary Judgment may (for example) be requested by the Respondent after the Complainant has produced all his evidence if the Respondent believes that a *prima facie* case has not been made. Lack of a *prima facie* case is one in which there is insufficient evidence to support a Complaint even if no defense is offered. If the *Beit Din* agrees, the Complaint will be dismissed.

4. Post-hearing Proceedings

a. Final Motions.

Either or both parties can offer final motions. The most common final motion is a “Motion to Dismiss Complaint.” Motions for dismissal are predicated on their being no need for the *Bet Din* to render a verdict because the case is fatally flawed and therefore deliberating on the evidence would make no difference in the outcome.

5. Closing Arguments

a. Complainant’s Closing Argument.

b. Respondent’s Closing Argument

c. Complainant’s Supplementary Closing Argument. The Complainant is allowed a second closing argument because he has the burden of proving his case.

6. Judgment of the Bet Din

a. The hearing officers retire to consider their judgment.

b. The hearing officers either deliver their judgment verbally and follow it up in writing or take what they have heard under advisement and communicate their judgment in writing at a later date.

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