

NewsLetter 5860-010

The 1st Year of the 5th Sabbatical Cycle

The 29th year of the 120th Jubilee Cycle

The 11th day of the 3rd month 5860 years after the creation of Adam

The 5th Sabbatical Cycle after the 119th Jubilee Cycle

The Sabbatical Cycle of the Red Heifer, Famine, Captivity & The 2 Witnesses

April 20, 2024

Shabbat Shalom to the Royal Family of Yehovah, this Sabbath is the Seventh of the Sabbaths of counting the Omer. It is the 49th day since the morrow after the Sabbath during the seven days of Unleavened Bread

TAKANOT AND MA'ASIM

One of the very first teachings I heard Nehemia Gordon give was on the Greek Jesus and Hebrew Yehshua way back in the winters 2004/2005 in Lansing Michigan. He blew me away with this profound understanding.

A few years ago, we went to Israel with the purpose of demonstrating how many of the barley searchers, some of whom were Karaites, had themselves incorporated Takanot and Ma'asim into the searching of the barley to begin the year. This year again, with all the hullabaloo and people calling me a liar for using their own testimonies to show that the barley was indeed Aviv or with green ears as we stated, it is once again time to look at exactly what Takanot and Ma'asim are and whether or not we have added to the Torah things we should not have added.

I am specifically speaking about the following takanots:

- You must have brown harvest ready barely by the end of the 12th month.
- You must have a field full of brown, ripe, harvest-ready barley by the end of the 12th month.
- You must have the entire country with fields of brown ripe, harvest-ready barley by the end of the 12th month.
- You must have brown harvest ready barley by the 10th day of the 1st month.
- You must have roastable green ears of barley by the 10th day of the 1st month.
- You must have lambs birthing.
- You must have grapes budding.
- You must have Storks migrating overhead.
- You must have make your own takanot.

As we are now approaching the Feast of Shavuot this weekend, we must also now address another bunch of takanot, some of which I was once a part of. First of all, none of the Karaite

searchers look for wheat to follow up on their barley reports. Here are some of the takanot that have been added to the first fruits of the wheat harvest:

- You must only use the Black Emmer Wheat because it was the one used in the Temple.
- You cannot use GMO wheat that is grown today.

Although Emmer wheat has been found in the pyramids along with other varieties, it is a leap of faith to claim that this is the only wheat used in the Temple. Today the emmer wheat is only found around the Galilee and Golan areas which are at higher elevations.

No GMO wheat is being grown commercially in the world, with the exception of Argentina. To claim that all wheat is GMO and not to be used except the Black Emmer variety is not true.

Genetically modified wheat is [wheat](#) that has been [genetically engineered](#) by the direct manipulation of its [genome](#) using [biotechnology](#). As of 2020, no GM wheat is grown commercially, although many field tests have been conducted, with one wheat variety, Bioceres [HB4 Wheat](#), obtaining regulatory approval from the Argentinean government.^[1]

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Genetically_modified_wheat

Today in 2024, the genetic source of all our wheat comes from the wild Emmer wheat variety. Durum wheat is the descendant of the Emmer variety.

Every spring in the Biblical Garden, religious school students sow two strains of ancient wheat, einkorn wheat, the ancestral mother of all wheat, and emmer wheat, the genetic source of modern wheat varieties. Wild einkorn often survives in sandy or rocky soils where other varieties of wheat fail. Emmer wheat has a higher yield with fatter kernels and more nutrients than einkorn. Rich in gluten, it was the variety commonly grown for bread-making throughout the eastern Mediterranean region and in Egypt during the Israelite sojourn there. The “bread of affliction,” the unleavened dough which the Israelites, in their haste, carried on their journey from slavery to freedom, was made from emmer wheat. Indigenous wild wheat grows today in the rocky soil of the Galilee and Golan Heights. The genetic sources of modern bread wheat stem from these ancient grains.

In our day, wheat provides 20% of the calories and proteins consumed around the globe. The impacts of population growth, political instability, and climate change are of urgent humanitarian concern. Scientists are investigating ways to improve the hardiness, nutritional value and yield of modern wheat as one way to address the hunger that stunts the lives of millions of children and adults. Much of this work is being done in Israel. [The Wild Cereal Gene Bank at the University of Haifa's Institute of Evolution](#) provides a gene pool of over 3,000 wild wheat samples, sourced mostly from Israel. Scientists use this material in searching for useful genes that can be cross-bred into domesticated wheat to improve drought and disease resistance, protein content, and adaptability to varied soils and rainfall levels.

<https://www.templeinairi.org/biblical-garden-blog/ancient-wheat-in-todays-world>

The cross-pollination over millennia does not disqualify all wheat. That is just absurd and another takanot being added to the Torah.

Jacob crossbred sheep. Does this mean that we are only allowed to eat the breed of sheep that lived before Jacob for Passover? What is coming up next will be the grapes. All grape varieties are crossbred to get the best variety for what the farmer or winemaker is looking for. We can create a new takanot that only green grapes can be used because the red or purple grapes don't count for some asinine reason yet to be made up.

TAKANOT

I explained to my Torah-keeping Christian friend that the ancient name was Pharisees. And actually Pharisees comes from the Hebrew word *Perushim*, which means “the separated ones”, and at the time of the Second Temple they were separated off from the mass of the nation. Later on, after the destruction of the Temple, they began to take over more and more Jewish institutions, and today their modern name is the Orthodox Rabbis or Orthodox Jews.¹²⁶ <https://www.nehemiaswall.com/hebrew-yeshua-vs-greek-jesus-2>

Now, this is something that Orthodox Rabbis actually proclaim very proudly, that they are a direct continuation of the Pharisees of Second Temple times. And in fact, in order to be called an “Orthodox Rabbi,” a person must have rabbinical ordination from a previous rabbi, and that rabbi from a previous rabbi, going back in an unbroken chain all the way back to the Pharisees of the 1st century. So, the Rabbis of today are literally a direct continuation, one rabbi to the next, from the Pharisees of the 1st century.

And Pharisaism, ancient Pharisaism and modern Orthodox Judaism are both founded upon five fundamental principles, five fundamental principles of Pharisaism, which I lovingly call, “the five iniquities of the Pharisees.” And before we go into the first principle of Pharisaism, and which is really the most foundational principle, I want to throw out a question to you: how many Torahs are there? How many Torahs? Very simple question; it's not a trick question. How many Torahs are there?

Audience: One!

Nehemia: One Torah. But if you're a Pharisee, there are *two* Torahs. And that's your most fundamental doctrine and belief - that when Moses went up to Mount Sinai for forty days and forty nights, the Creator revealed to him two separate and distinct revelations: the written Torah and the Oral Torah. The written Torah is what you were referring to, the Five Books of Moses. That was the revelation that was written down.

However, the second Torah according to the Pharisees, which is the Oral Torah, which is also known in English as the Oral Law, and they believe that God revealed to Moses this oral revelation which was transmitted from Moses to Joshua and so on and so on, down to the Pharisees of the 1st century, and even down to the rabbis of today.

Doctrine of the Oral Torah

Now, everything we're going to learn today about Pharisaism is really predicated upon this concept of the Oral Law, the Oral Torah. If we don't understand Oral Torah, we're not going to understand anything else about Pharisaism. Everything else flows from that concept.

Now, the concept of the Oral Law is really an ancient concept. The first reference to it, the first datable historical reference, is an incident from the era of Shammai. Shammai... many of you may have heard of Hillel. Hillel was the author of the Seven Rules of Hillel. His sidekick was Shammai. And an ancient source tells us, "An incident with a certain gentile that came before Shammai." The gentile said to Shammai, "How many Torahs do you Pharisees have? Shammai answered: We Pharisees have two! Two Torahs, the written Torah and the Oral Torah."

So, this is an ancient concept that goes back to approximately at *least* 20 Before the Common Era, approximately 50 years before Yeshua's ministry. And really, it probably goes back even a few hundred years before that. So, this is an ancient doctrine, and really, the most fundamental principle of Pharisaism is the theology or the doctrine of the two Torahs, the written Torah and the Oral Torah.

Now, the Pharisees explain that the written Torah is sort of an outline; they often give the analogy of a lecture. The notes that you're writing down right now, those notes, that's the written Torah. And the actual details, everything I'm saying, that's the Oral Torah. And because of this, the Pharisees explain that the written Torah is completely incomprehensible without the Oral Torah. The Oral Torah completes the written Torah and really fills in all the details. You cannot understand the written Torah without the Oral Torah according to the Pharisees.

Now, one of the major changes in Pharisaism in the last 2,000 years is that the Oral Torah has actually been written down, and today it's written down and contained in four collections of writings.

The first one of these to be written down was the Mishnah, which was written down around the year 200 of the Common Era. And it contains the collection of Pharisaical traditions and teachings and practices and customs and laws, and that's really the backbone of the Oral Law.

The next thing to be written down was the Jerusalem Talmud, which was written down around the year 350 of the Common Era. You might think it was written in Jerusalem, but in fact it was written in Tiberias. It was called Jerusalem to give it more prestige. That was written down around the 350 of the Common Era. In the Jerusalem Talmud, it contains discussions of, “When the rabbi said X,Y,Z in the Mishnah, what were they talking about?” And it elaborates and discusses and examines the Mishnah.

The next thing to be written down is the Babylonian Talmud, which actually *was* written in Babylon as the name implies, around the year 500 of the Common Era. Finally, the last thing to be written down was the Midrash, which was written down over many hundreds of years, from around 200 up until the year 900 of the Common Era.

These four bodies of writings, these four collections, collectively are today what's known as the Oral Law. Even though it was originally oral - in the time of Yeshua it was still oral - today, the Oral Law has been written down. And this is really the most fundamental principle of Pharisaism, the doctrine of the Oral Torah. Everything else we're going to hear today about Pharisaism is predicated upon this.

Absolute Authority of the Rabbis

The second principle of Pharisaism is the absolute authority of the rabbis; the rabbis have absolute authority on earth to interpret Scripture. And this is epitomized by the saying in the Midrash, which we now know as part of the Oral Torah. In the Midrash it says, “Even if the Pharisees instruct you that right is left, or left is right, you must obey them.”

Well, what does that mean? What that means is if my rabbis tell me that this is my right hand, I have to obey them. By the way, it doesn't say I have to believe them. I'm allowed to even say and know that the rabbis are factually wrong, but I must obey their authority because they have the absolute authority to interpret Scripture.

And in fact, when I was growing up, I was told that if the rabbi is wrong, the sin is upon him. But you, as the individual believer, cannot take the initiative to question the authority of the rabbi. If your rabbi tells you this, you must accept it and follow it.

Well, I really had a problem with this when I was growing up and I began to study the Torah, and I began to study the Talmud, the Oral Law, and I could see in the Torah that this was clearly the word of God. In the Torah we read, “And Yehovah spoke unto Moses, saying.” And we get to the Prophets, and we read, “Thus says Yehovah.” It's clearly the word of God. And we get to the Talmud, and we read, “Rabbi Meir

says this, but Rabbi Akiva disagrees and says that.” And I looked at this and I went to my rabbis, and I said, “Look, one is the word of God, the other is clearly the words of men. Shouldn't we accept the word of God over the word of men, especially since they're not consistent with each other?” And my rabbi said, “No, absolutely not! Although these things are spoken as the words of this rabbi or that rabbi, the actual content of their words were revealed to Moses on Mount Sinai.”

And I wasn't convinced, and I came back, and I said, “Look, the way the rabbis are interpreting Scripture and the Oral Law, the way they're interpreting the *written* Scripture is just not consistent with what it says in Scripture. And I can read, and I can see that's not what it says.” And I said to them, “Shouldn't we reject this Oral Law and just accept the written Scripture?” And my rabbi said to me, “No, absolutely not. You must not say such things. That's what the Karaites say!”

And I said, “Who?” And I investigated and I found out throughout history there had always been Jews who only believed in the written Scripture, and they were called Karaites. *Kara* is the ancient Hebrew word for Scripture; Kara-ite is a follower of the Old Testament or the Hebrew Scriptures, and we'll talk about that a little bit more later.

I really had a hard time with this Oral Law, and I just couldn't accept it. One day, one of my rabbis sat down and he said, “Enough of questioning the authority of the rabbis, Nehemia. You *must* accept their authority.” And he began to tell me a very famous story, the story of Rabbi Eliezer, which is a foundational story in Rabbinical theology.

And the story of Rabbi Eliezer, it's told in the Babylonian Talmud, and it goes as follows: Rabbi Eliezer was the greatest of the sages of his era. He was actually the teacher of Rabbi Akiva, who's maybe one of the most famous rabbis that ever lived, so you can imagine how great Rabbi Eliezer was. And one day Rabbi Eliezer is in the Rabbinical Academy and he's having a debate with all the other rabbis on some minutiae of Rabbinical Law about whether a certain type of oven is ritually clean or ritually unclean. And Rabbi Eliezer says, “that oven is ritually clean”, and all the other rabbis say, “it's ritually unclean”, and Rabbi Eliezer is trying to convince the other rabbis he's right. He's one and he's against this mass of other rabbis.

And the Talmud explains that on that day, Rabbi Eliezer brought forth every argument in the world and he couldn't convince the other rabbis he was right. He brought forth Scriptural arguments and rational arguments and he couldn't convince them he was right. He doesn't know what to do, he's getting very frustrated, and finally he says, “I know what I can do to convince them, I'm going to invoke a miracle.” And Rabbi Eliezer shouts out, and he says, “If I'm right, let the trees prove it!” And at that moment they heard the snapping of wood, and all the rabbis ran outside, and they saw

an entire orchard of trees being ripped from the roots and flying up in the air. And they looked at this and they said, “This is a miraculous occurrence. Rabbi Eliezer has invoked a miracle to prove he’s right, and the miracle has come to pass.” And they looked at this miracle and they turn to Rabbi Eliezer, and they say, “Sorry, Rabbi Eliezer, we don't listen to trees.” Oh, boy! What's he going to do? “You don't listen to trees? I just brought a miracle!”

So, he says, “Okay, maybe we're not quite understanding each other here,” and he says, “let's try this again. I'm going to invoke a second miracle. If I'm right, let the river prove it!” And at that moment, they heard the rushing of the water. It was a very great river, and they run outside, and they see this mighty river begin to flow backwards, and they look at this and they say, “This is a miracle! A second miracle has now been invoked that Rabbi Eliezer has brought to prove he's right. We're very impressed.” They turn to Rabbi Eliezer, and they say, “Sorry Rabbi Eliezer, we don't listen to rivers.” He's brought two miracles and they’re not listening to what he's saying. He's brought Scriptural arguments and rational arguments and two miracles, and they won't listen to him.

So, finally in desperation, he yells out and he says, “If I'm right, let the walls of the academy prove it!” And at that moment they heard the walls begin to shake and rumble. And the Talmud explains that the walls came to a 45-degree angle, collapsing in. Of course, if they'd fallen in the entire way, the story would have ended right here! And the rabbis look at these walls and realize they've almost been killed by these falling walls. And they turn to Rabbi Eliezer, and they say, “Wow! Three miracles! Now we’re *really* impressed. This *can't* be a coincidence; this is clearly a series of miraculous events.” They turn to Rabbi Eliezer and say, “Sorry Rabbi Eliezer, we don't listen to walls.” He doesn't know what to do. Three miracles and they won't accept his opinion; they won't accept these proofs that he's right.

And finally, in utter desperation he calls out and he says, “If I'm right, let heaven prove it!” And at that moment they heard the crack of thunder, followed by a voice, “Why do you dispute with Rabbi Eliezer? In all matters, the Law agrees with him.” And by the way, that's an actual recording that was made at the time!

They've heard this voice calling out from heaven saying, “Rabbi Eliezer’s right, why are you arguing with him?” And they hear this and they're very impressed. They turn to Rabbi Eliezer, and they say, “Scriptural evidence and three miracles and God calling down to us from heaven telling us you're right,” and they turn to him and say, “we're very impressed but sorry, we don't listen to heaven.”

And as my rabbi was telling me this story, he opened up to me the Book of Deuteronomy, Deuteronomy chapter 30 verse 12. And there it actually says

concerning the Torah, that the Torah is not in heaven, “it is not in heaven”. And these are the words that the rabbis said to Rabbi Eliezer, and they explained to him that God has no say in interpreting Scripture because the Torah is not in heaven. The Torah is here on earth, and the rabbis are the ones who have exclusive authority to interpret Scripture. God has no say in it.

And my rabbi turned to me as he was telling me this story and he said, “You see Nehemia? God *Himself* can't question the interpretation of the rabbis. So, who are you to question their interpretation?” And as I was hearing this, I was in shock. And I have to tell you, for years I struggled with the Oral Law. It was very difficult for me, because my father was a rabbi, and many of my ancestors were prominent rabbis. The man after whom I'm named, Nehemia, was a famous rabbi in Chicago. And for me to break from this Oral Law, which had been the heritage of my ancestors, was very difficult for me. And for years I struggled with this, and I had doubts, and I wasn't sure. But when I heard this story, I turned to my rabbi and I thanked him and I said, “Now I know this is not of God.”

Now the story actually has a continuation; it gets worse. The Talmud goes on... my rabbi didn't tell me this part, but later, I read this directly out of the Talmud, and it tells about how, later on, after the faceoff between Rabbi Eliezer and the other rabbis, one of the rabbis named Rabbi Natan was wandering through the forest. And who does he meet in the forest? He meets the prophet, Elijah.

Of course, the rabbis believe that Elijah never died. If you've ever been to a Rabbinical Passover Seder, one of the things that you'll notice very prominently, they'll stop in the middle of telling the story of the Exodus and they'll open up the door to let Elijah in.

Well, Rabbi Natan, according to the Talmud, actually met Elijah, and he said to him, “Elijah, when we said to God that the Torah is not in heaven,” and by the way, if you look at that passage where it says, “it is not in heaven” and you read two verses earlier, what it's actually saying in the context is, “the Torah is not too difficult for you”. It's saying there, “you have no excuse not to keep the Torah. It's not too difficult, it's not across the sea or in heaven that you have some excuse to say, ‘I need someone to go up to heaven to get it for me’. The Torah is not too difficult.” That's what it *actually* says in Deuteronomy 30, but the rabbis only take those five words out of context. And Rabbi Natan asked Elijah, “What was God's reaction when we said, ‘the Torah is not in heaven’?” And Elijah explains, according to the Talmud, that at that moment God laughed and said, “My sons have defeated me! My sons have defeated me!” And this appears in the Babylonian Talmud, the Tractate of Baba Metsia, page 59b.

The point of the story is, I don't believe that God actually said those words as the Talmud claims. But the point of the story in the Talmud, whether the words were said or not, is that the rabbis have vanquished God; that the rabbis have absolute authority on earth to interpret Scripture, and the rabbis have defeated God in this sense. He has no say in how Scripture is to be interpreted on planet Earth. In heaven He can say whatever He wants, but down here on earth, the rabbis have absolute authority.

And this is a fundamental principle of Pharisaism – that you really can't understand Pharisaism without understanding this concept.

Midrashic or Irrational Interpretation

Well, the third principle of Pharisaism is what I call Irrational Interpretation. The rabbis don't call it that, they call it Midrashic Interpretation. This is sometimes translated into English as homiletical or hermeneutical interpretation. And what it does is it systematically ignores the language and context of Scripture. And the principle behind this method of interpretation, of this approach, is that Scripture is a divine code, and only the rabbis have the knowledge and authority and tools to decipher that divine code. And we've already seen an example of that with the words "it is not in heaven" from Deuteronomy 30. The rabbis took only those words "it is not in heaven" out of the context, disembodied them from the context, and imbued them with a meaning that was never intended, that God has no authority in how to interpret Scripture.

Let's look at another example, a classic example of Midrashic interpretation, or irrational interpretation, Exodus 23 verse 2. There we read in the Torah, "You shall not go after the majority to do evil, neither shall you testify in a matter of strife, to incline after the majority to pervert justice." What this means is that you must not follow what the majority says just because the majority says it. You must follow the truth, even if you're the only one doing that. And if you're testifying in a court case, you must not say that a certain person is guilty just because everybody says he's guilty. You must testify the truth, even if you're the lone voice of reason, because to do otherwise would be a perversion of justice.

Now, this is a very, very, important commandment in the Torah, that we must follow the truth and not the majority, not to be sheeple, following after the herd. But the rabbis take this verse, and of course, they have the absolute authority on earth to interpret Scripture, and using this authority, Scripture being a divine code, they arbitrarily take off words from the beginning and words from the end, and what they're left with is the principle, "incline after the majority".

And in fact, this is a very important principle in Pharisaism, when there was this debate between Rabbi Eliezer and the rabbis. Why was it so important for Rabbi Eliezer to convince the other rabbis that he was right? Why couldn't he just say, "I'm a very wise man, you're very wise men, let's agree to disagree." Why did he have to invoke miracles and have God calling out from heaven? Why couldn't they just agree to disagree? Because the rabbis said to Rabbi Eliezer, "you must incline after the majority". They said to him, "In Exodus 23:2, it has already been written that 'you must incline after the majority.' We're the majority. You have to accept our opinion." That's why it was so important for him to convince them. If he can't convince them, he has to accept this opinion that he knows to be factually untrue.

Now, what's wrong with this? Who's to say Scripture's *not* a divine code? That's what the rabbis would respond. They'd say, "Okay, we're taking these words out of context, but that's the original intent that God had when He gave the Torah. Who's to say Scripture's not a divine code?"

Well, I know Scripture is not a divine code because it tells us in Deuteronomy exactly how to interpret Scripture. Deuteronomy chapter 31 verse 12. It describes there a commandment that the Torah must be read out loud in a public reading. And there we're told, "Gather the nation, the men, the women, the children, and the sojourner in your gates, in order that they hear, and in order that they learn and fear Yehovah your God and diligently do all the words of this Torah." And the purpose of this public reading every seventh year of the entire Torah, from Genesis to the end of Deuteronomy, is so that Israelites would hear the Torah. By hearing the Torah, they would learn the Torah, and by learning the Torah, they would know to do the Torah.

It goes on in verse 13 and it explains, "And their *children who did not know*." That seven-year-old boy who's never heard the Torah before, it's his first time, "their children who did not know, *they* shall hear and learn to fear Yehovah your God." Now, this is very important, because what this means is that the way the ancient Israelites learned Torah was by hearing it. And actually, this is the way that God intended that the Torah be understood, by coming every seventh year and hearing it in the public reading. Someone who's never heard Torah before, someone who does not know, will simply learn it by hearing it.

Now, once we realize that, we realize that you can't take five words out of context, "it is not in heaven", because when I'm hearing it, I'm hearing the entire passage, I'm hearing the entire verse. I can't take two verses here and three words there and half a verse here, and proof text myself into an entire theology. I have to actually read Scripture within its context and look at all the evidence and all the context, not just taking a few words here and a few words there, because that's what the ancient

Israelites would have understood and heard when they heard the Torah read out loud every seventh year.

Now, why is it that they had to hear the Torah? Why couldn't they simply sit in their houses and read Torah like we do today? Why did they have to actually hear it out loud, and come all the way to Jerusalem every seventh year? Well, the reason for that is that the average ancient Israelite did not have a copy of the Torah in his house. It took great wealth and resources to have a copy of the Torah in your house.

And in fact, there's a specific law in Deuteronomy 17 that the Messiah, anointed King of Israel, must write for himself a copy of the Torah. And the reason he must write for himself a copy of the Torah is that if he doesn't write for himself a copy of the Torah, he won't have one. He can't go to the store and buy one for \$3. If he doesn't write it out letter for letter, word for word, he simply won't have one. And if he doesn't have one, he can't reign as a righteous king. As a righteous king of Israel he has to have the Torah at his side at all times, and that's why Deuteronomy 17 has a specific law commanding the king to write a copy of the Torah.

Again, why did it take such great resources to make a copy of the Torah? Let's remember, in ancient times if I wanted a copy of the Torah, I had to start off with an entire flock of sheep that I could slaughter in order to make parchment. Not everybody could afford to do this. I had to have barrels and barrels of ink in order to actually write the Torah. And bear in mind, you couldn't go in ancient times to Office Depot and say, "I need thirty barrels of ink." You had to actually have someone go out and produce the ink and produce the barrels. This was the whole industry just to write one book! And finally, maybe the most expensive part is, you had to have a scribe sit for at least a year and sit and copy letter for letter, word for word, in order to have a copy of the Torah for yourself.

So, the average Israelite simply did not have a copy of the Torah. He didn't have the wealth or the resources to produce a copy of the Torah. And the Creator knew this, and that's why He took into account and said that the way the average Israelite will learn Torah, the simple shepherd and farmer, is by simply hearing it every seventh year. Once we realize this, we realize that the way Scripture is intended to be understood is by looking at the language and the context. And that's key to understanding the correct interpretation of Scripture, looking at the language and the context.

Now, this is actually a big challenge for us. We can't just show up every seventh year and hear it, because we have certain challenges that ancient Israelites did not have. The first challenge we have is a *linguistic* challenge, the language. The Torah is not written in King James English, it's actually written in Biblical Hebrew. The problem is

that nobody today in the world speaks Biblical Hebrew. I've lived in Israel for twelve years and I'm fluent in *Modern* Hebrew, and I actually read Biblical Hebrew fluently, but nobody *speaks* Biblical Hebrew as their native tongue.

To give you an idea of what the difference is, it's like the difference between the English you speak here today and the English of Chaucer. You could pick up the writings of Chaucer and you probably would understand a few words on each page, but unless you're specifically trained to read that dialect of English, you won't understand what Chaucer is saying. And that's the challenge we have with Biblical Hebrew. We have to understand the language as it was originally spoken 3,500 years ago, the language that was spoken by the ancient Israelite shepherds and farmers that could simply show up and hear the Torah read and understand it.

So, we have to work a lot harder than they did. And that's part of what it means to be in exile, to be thrown out of the Land of Israel and lose our language, to be scattered throughout the world. These are the things that we have to deal with being in exile.

The next thing we have to look at is the context. And we've already talked about textual context. That is, I can't just take the words "it is not in heaven" and disembodiment them from the context. I have to look at the entire passage or I'm twisting what Scripture says. And there's also historical context. Let me illustrate what I mean by this historical context with an example. Three times in the Torah we're commanded, "*Lo tevashel g'di b'chalev imo*", "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk." Three times that appears, word for word, jot for jot, tittle for tittle, the exact same commandment, three times. Three times.

Now, the rabbis, of course, look upon Scripture as a divine code, and when they hear three times, Exodus 23, "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk", Exodus 34, "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk", Deuteronomy 14, "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk," they hear that three times and they say, "Scripture is a divine code, and when codes have repeated things, it's to encode extra hidden meaning. And when it appears, the same commandment three times, that actually indicates three different things."

What are the three different things this indicates? Of course, only the rabbis have the authority to interpret what those three things are. The first one, according to the rabbis, is you shall not eat meat and milk together. The second time it says, "You shall not boil a kid in its mother's milk", what it *really* means is you shall not *cook* meat and milk together, and the third time it appears, it means you shall not even benefit from meat and milk cooked together. What do they mean by benefit? You may not even feed it to your dog.

Well, that's how the Pharisees, the rabbis, look at it. When I hear three times that the Creator tells me, “You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk”, I first ask the question, “What would the ancient Israelite shepherd or farmer have understood if he heard these exact words repeated three times? If he was that boy, that seven-year-old boy who knew nothing?” Deuteronomy 31 verse 13, he didn't know anything; what would he have understood? And I came to the conclusion after a linguistic and textual analysis that what I would understand from hearing this three times is “You shall not boil a kid in its mother’s milk!” It's very clear! It has nothing to do with meat and milk!

Now, today we know that's correct. We know that's the correct interpretation, because archaeologists have uncovered ancient documents written by the Canaanites from a city in Syria called Ras Shamra which had ancient Canaanite writings, and there the Canaanites talk about how they have a fertility rite where they would boil a kid in the milk of its mother as a fertility rite for one of their goddesses. And so today we know that the reason the Torah forbade us from partaking in this pagan practice or forbade us from boiling a kid in the milk of its mother, is that this was an ancient pagan fertility custom or sacrifice, and that's why the Torah doesn't say “don't eat meat and milk together” or “don't boil meat and milk together”. Because it's not talking about that, it's talking about a very specific pagan fertility sacrifice of boiling the kid in the milk of its mother. It's not even a dietary law. It's a pagan sacrifice we're forbidden from partaking in.

And every ancient Israelite, shepherd or farmer, would have known this. They interacted with the Canaanites, and they knew these pagans. They knew their ways, and they knew that they were sacrificing kids in the milk of their mothers, and the Torah’s coming to forbid them from doing that.

That's the difference between interpreting Scripture as a divine code and actually interpreting Scripture in its context, according to its language and according to its historical context. And what this teaches us is that we have to use archaeology and history in order to uncover and try to get a better picture and understanding of what the Torah is commanding us. That's the third principle of Pharisaism.

Sanctified Tradition

The fourth principle of Pharisaism is sanctified tradition, and in Hebrew this is called *minhag*, or “custom”. And there's a principle in Pharisaism, “*minhag yisreal torah hi*”, “A custom of Israel is law”. And what that means is that a custom done over and over by an Israelite or a Jewish community over time becomes sanctified, and it becomes an actual law.

So, I mentioned today that I'm dressed as a modern-day Pharisee. I don't actually dress this way normally; I'm dressed in the garb of a modern-day Pharisee to illustrate to you what it would mean to obey the Pharisees. And this is actually a sanctified outfit, a tradition that's been sanctified over time. And if you go to Jerusalem or New York or certain parts of Chicago you'll see people all over dressed like this because they're following the sanctified tradition of their ancestors.

Now, what do we mean by a sanctified tradition? The classic example of a sanctified tradition is wearing the head covering, and right now I'm going to illustrate to you what it would mean *not* to follow the traditions of the Pharisees, the sanctified traditions. We're going to peel away some of these man-made laws, some of these sanctified traditions. I'm going to take off the hat because this is a traditional Pharisee hat. I'm going to take off the hat and peel away a layer of tradition. And now I'm left wearing the *kippah*, the skullcap; and the *kippah* is a tradition that's been sanctified over the last approximately 800 years. A thousand years ago there was no such thing as Jews wearing *kippahs*; it didn't exist. There was no such custom like that. Approximately over the last 800 years this custom has been sanctified over time. And today it's been so sanctified that there is an actual law with its own rules and regulations that the Pharisees teach, that you must wear the skull cap if you're a male. And this is described in the Shulchan Aruch, which we've seen before as the modern universally accepted guide to Pharisaical living. And there it says about the *kippah*, the skullcap, "One may not walk four cubits with an uncovered head." So, this is not just a folk custom, "Oh, I feel Jewish if I wear a *kippah*." No! If you wear the *kippah*, you're following this man-made law that's been sanctified over time, and now it's taking on its own rules and regulations. "One may not walk four cubits with an uncovered head." Let's see how that would work.

So, I'm going to take off my *kippah*, peel away another layer of tradition, and we're going to see what this means. So, if I'm following the sanctified tradition I can walk one cubit, and I can walk a second cubit, and a third cubit, and if I walk that fourth cubit then I'm violating the laws of the Pharisees, this sanctified tradition.

There's another law there, in the Shulchan Aruch, concerning the head covering. And there it says, "It is forbidden to *pray* with an uncovered head." That's very interesting, and I think that matter speaks for itself. But what you can see here is that this is not just a folk custom or tradition, this is something that has been sanctified over time and now is taking on its own rules and regulations.

Well, what's wrong with that? Many people will say, "Well, it makes me feel good to wear a *kippah*. It makes me feel more Jewish, not just to wear the *kippah*, the skullcap, but to follow all these different traditions, even if I'm not Jewish by extraction. I feel good following these traditions, it makes me feel closer to the ancient

roots.” What's wrong with that? What's wrong with adding new commandments, with sanctifying these traditions?

What's wrong with it is that the Torah specifically forbids us from doing this! In Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 2 it says, **“You shall not add unto the matter which I command you today nor shall you diminish anything from it, to keep the commandments of Yehovah your God which I am commanding you!”** There’s a specific prohibition in the Torah from adding to the Torah!

So, if we add these man-made laws, if we follow these sanctified traditions, we are partaking in adding to the Torah. Now, it's very interesting here, because in the same breath that it forbids us from adding to the Torah, it forbids us from taking away from the Torah. So, to follow one of these sanctified traditions is no different than abolishing the Sabbath. Adding to the Torah, taking away, those are both a violation of this fundamental law in the Torah of adding or taking away from the Torah.

Now, this appears a second time. There's a second witness to this, Deuteronomy 12:32. **“All that I'm commanding you, you shall diligently do; you shall not add to it or diminish from it.”** You must not add to the Torah or take away from the Torah. And the question becomes, if you follow these man-made laws, these sanctified traditions, who are you obeying? Who are you being obedient to? Are you being obedient to our Creator? Or are you following these man-made laws which are in addition to the Torah?

This appears a third time! Proverbs 30 verse 6, there we’re told, **“Do not add unto His words, lest He reprove you and you be found a liar.”** I don't want God calling me a liar. I don't want any part of that.

Enactments (Takanot)

The fifth principle of Pharisaism is very similar to number four, and the fifth principle is the “commandments of men”, or “enactments”. In Hebrew, the *takanot*.

The *takanot*, that's the fifth principle of Pharisaism. Has anybody heard that word before, *takanot*? Is that familiar from anywhere? Yes? Okay. So, let’s all say it together, *takanot*!

Audience: *Takanot*!

Nehemia: Okay. So, *takanot*, these man-made laws, and these are actually called by the rabbis... there is another term for this, *mitzvat derabanan*, “commandments of our rabbis”. And the rabbis actually make a very clear distinction between laws that they derive from the Torah, albeit using their irrational method of interpretation, and laws

that they derive simply by either tradition or by a Rabbinical enactment. And the truth is that sometimes they can't distinguish between whether a certain law was established by tradition, by doing it over and over, or whether it was established by an actual rabbi sitting down and making a new enactment. And so really those are very related and similar categories. But there's a very clear distinction between that and laws derived from the Torah even using their irrational methods of interpretation.

Now the classic example of *takanot*, or “commandments of our rabbis” is the washing of the hands. And because the Oral Law gives the rabbis the absolute authority to make these new enactments - they have a divine God-given right to make new enactments - because of that you make the blessing, “Blessed art thou Lord, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, commanding us to wash the hands.” The rabbis know very well that God never commanded us to wash the hands, but what they mean by this is that God commanded you to obey the rabbis. By obeying the rabbis, you're indirectly obeying God. And this is very interesting. What this means is every time you sit down to eat a meal and wash your hands, you're actually proclaiming the God-given authority of the rabbis to make these enactments.

Now, how many people are thinking here, “I'm not going to do these Rabbinical enactments. They're not from the Torah.” How many people are thinking that? Okay, we've got a good group of Pharisees here, most people are... How many people are thinking they're not going to follow these man-made laws because they're not from the Torah? Okay, that's much better.

Now, this is what the Oral Law says to everyone who raised their hands. It says in the Midrash, which is part of the Oral Law, it says, “A person must not say, ‘I will not keep the commandment of the elders because they are not from the Torah.’” You must not say that. “The Almighty says to such a person,” now they're literally putting words in God's mouth, “The Almighty says to such a person, ‘No, My son! Rather all that they decree upon you, observe!’” And then it goes on, and now it quotes Deuteronomy 17:11, “As it is written, ‘According to the instruction which they teach you.’”

Now, you could look up in Deuteronomy 17, and it's not talking about the Pharisees or rabbis. You won't see them mentioned anywhere. What it's *actually* talking about is the High Priest at the Temple and the prophetic judge. And what it talks about there is if there's a difficult court case and the lower judges... remember Moses came along and he appointed lower judges, and lower judges below them, because he couldn't handle judging every matter by himself.

So, what it's describing in Deuteronomy 17 is if one of those lower judges comes along and says, “I don't know what the law is here”, or “this is a difficult case, I don't

know what to do”, then he goes to the high judge at the Temple, or to the High Priest at the Temple. This is not talking about the Pharisees or the rabbis. And actually in various passages such as in Ezra chapter 2 verse 63, it talks about an actual case they had like this. And it says there that this had to be decided by the High Priest with the *Urim* and the *Thummim*, or in Hebrew the *Urim* and the *Tummim*, which was a prophetic device that the high judge would go and ask, “What is the answer?” He would ask from God; he wouldn't just make it up, because God actually does have a say in how Scripture is interpreted.

But the rabbis apply this to themselves, because to them God has no say; only *they* have a say. And then it goes on in the Midrash... remember, God is speaking here, the Almighty. And it goes on there and it says, “Even I must obey their decree.” Even I, God, must obey the decrees of the rabbis. And by the way, it quotes a verse there from Job, which has nothing to do whatsoever with the authority of the rabbis, or God obeying them. But the principle here is that the rabbis are given absolute authority, not only to interpret Scripture but to make new enactments, and *God Himself* must obey those enactments according to the Oral Law.

Well, now that we understand Pharisaism, let's get an overview. We see these five principles of Pharisaism, and the first principle is the concept of the two Torahs, the written Torah and the Oral Torah. Then we have the authority of the rabbis, the absolute authority of the rabbis to interpret Scripture. God has no say in it, only the rabbis do. Irrational or Midrashic interpretation; Scripture is a divine code and things can be taken out of context. Sanctified tradition, such as the *kippah*. And the *takanot*, or commandments of men, such as the washing of the hands.

Now that we understand Pharisaism, what we need to do is go back to Matthew 15 and see if we can understand what's happening. The Pharisees come along and say to Yeshua, “Your disciples are transgressing the tradition of the elders because they don't wash their hands before they eat,” which is that ritual we saw before. What is exactly going on there? There in verse 3, Yeshua says to the Pharisees, “Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?” So how do the Pharisees transgress the commandment of God by their tradition? How is the Pharisee tradition a transgression of the commandment of God? They're adding to the Torah! Deuteronomy 4:2, Deuteronomy 12:32 and Proverbs 30 verse 6 forbid us to add to the Torah! And by adding these laws to the Torah, this commandment to wash the hands, it's a transgression of the commandment of God.

Yeshua goes on in verse 6 and he says to the Pharisees, “Thus have you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition.” How did the Pharisees make the commandment of God of none effect? This is something that I see every day in modern day Israel. I see it all the time.

One of the things that most people are surprised at when they come to Israel for the first time is that most Jews in Israel do not observe the Sabbath. Most people, when they come to Israel, are shocked to see that, and if you ask the average Israeli, “Why don't you keep the Sabbath?” He'll respond and tell you, “It's *impossible* to keep the Sabbath.” And I respond, “Okay. I've been keeping the Sabbath my whole life. Why is it impossible?” And he'll tell you, “Well, if I keep the Sabbath, I have to do this and I have to do that, and I can't do this and I can't do that.” And every single thing he lists is something... these man-made traditions and laws that the Pharisees have foisted upon the nation, these heavy burdens they've loaded up upon the nation, and the average person can't always distinguish between what has the Creator commanded us and what are these man-made laws that the Pharisees have commanded. And because of that, they just completely give up and say, “Okay, I just can't do it.” They give up. And by requiring these man-made laws, the Pharisees have made the commandment of God of none effect. They've made it impossible to keep the Torah.

Now, I've been keeping the Sabbath my whole life, and I know from firsthand experience that it's a pleasure to keep the Sabbath! The Sabbath is a delight! It's only when you add all these man-made laws and rules and regulations, then it becomes impossible to keep and it becomes a burden. And this is how the Pharisees make the commandment of God of none effect. Well, what we can see here very clearly in Matthew 15 is Yeshua is warning his disciples *not to follow the man-made laws of the Pharisees*. You must not follow the man-made laws.

Mitzvat Anashim Melumada

He goes on in verse 7, this is a very interesting passage, and he says, “You hypocrites,” speaking to the Pharisees, “You hypocrites, well did Isaiah prophesy of you saying,” and now he quotes Isaiah 29 verse 13, “This people draws near into me with their mouth, and honors me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men.”

Well, now we know what he's talking about, “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”. That is Pharisaism with their Oral Law and their man-made authority to interpret Scripture even above that of God and their *takanot* and their sanctified traditions. That's “teaching for doctrines the commandments of men”.

Now, when I first read this, I was very intrigued, for a different reason than you're so intrigued by it. I was intrigued by this because Matthew 15:9 is actually a paraphrase of Isaiah 29:13. Isaiah 29:13 actually speaks about, in Hebrew, “*mitzvat anashim melumada*”, which is translated variously as, “a learned commandment of men” or “a commandment of men learned by rote” or some variation of that translation. And the reason I was so intrigued by this is that I knew that, throughout history, Karaite Jews,

strictly Old Testament Tanakh-following Jews, have always quoted these verses from the moment that Pharisaism was invented, have always quoted Isaiah 29:13 in reference to the Pharisees. And I thought this was very interesting that Yeshua was applying the same exact verse to the Pharisees back in the 1st century.

Well, the answer is here, in the Hebrew, and if you can read this old Hebrew script, then you already know the answer. This is what it looks like transcribed into modern Hebrew print. And what Yeshua says there in Hebrew Matthew chapter 23 verses 2 to 3, Yeshua says, “*Al kish Moshe yeshvu ha'pirushim ve'ha'chachamim: ve'ata kol asher yomar lachem shimru ve'assu u'be'takanotayhem u'ma'aseyhem al ta'assu she'hem omrim v'hem einam osim.*”

So, there you have it. There you see, it's very clear. This is what it would look like translated into English, there Yeshua says, “The Pharisees and sages sit upon the seat of Moses. Therefore, all that he says to you, diligently do, but according to their reforms and their precedents do not do, because they talk but they do not do.”

Now that's a very subtle difference between what you saw in the Greek, a difference of one single word, or primarily one single word. In the Greek it said in Matthew, “all that *they* say” you must obey, all they say, “they” being the Pharisees. In the Hebrew he says, “you must obey all that *he* says”, “he” being Moses.

They Talk and They Do Not Do According to the Torah

So, the difference of this one single word fundamentally changes Yeshua's message. What he's saying now is, if their claim to authority is that they sit in the seat of Moses, so do as Moses says, obey Moses. They claim their authority is they are sitting in this ornate stone chair in the synagogue, they're teaching with supposed authority, sitting in the seat of Moses, so obey Moses. Do what Moses says.

He goes on there, Yeshua, in Hebrew Matthew, and he says, “**according to *their* reforms and *their* precedents do not do,**” and the word I've translated here as “reforms”, in Hebrew is *takanot*. We've heard that word before, so let's all repeat that word, *takanot*! So, *takanot* are these man-made laws, like the washing of the hands, and Yeshua's warning his disciples *not* to do according to their *takanot*.

And I translated this before as “enactments”, a more precise dictionary definition of *takanot* is “reforms that change biblical law”. That's how the word is defined more precisely in the Jastrow Dictionary, which is the standard dictionary of early Rabbinical Hebrew, late Second Temple Hebrew, “reforms that change biblical law”, and the classic example of one of these man-made laws, these *takanot*, is the commandment to wash our hands, of the rabbis, before you eat bread.

Well, now that we understand Matthew 23, we see that Yeshua is not telling you to obey the Pharisees, he's telling you to obey Moses. We still have to go back to Matthew 15 and see what it says there in the Hebrew. If we started off with what was a contradiction in the Greek, we can't just look at the Hebrew of one passage and not the other.

Not According to Their Takanot and Ma'asim

So now let's look at Matthew 15 in the Hebrew, and there we read, Yeshua says to the Pharisees, "Why do you also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition?... you made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition." Can anyone guess what the Hebrew word behind "tradition" is? The word is *takanot*! So not only is there no contradiction in the Hebrew between Matthew 15 and Matthew 23, but in the Hebrew, there's a consistent message throughout the entire book. There's this consistent string that runs through the book that Yeshua's warning his disciples *not* to follow the *takanot* of the Pharisees, these man-made laws of the Pharisees.

Yeshua goes on. He warns against the *takanot* of the Pharisees. He also warns against their precedents, not to do their precedents, and the Hebrew word for "precedents" is *ma'asim*. *Ma'asim* is a word we'll look at in a moment, but these are two really important words, *takanot* and *ma'asim*. Because these are the two things that if you're disciples of Yeshua that he's warning you not to do, the *takanot* and *ma'asim*. So, let's say those words together, *takanot* and *ma'asim*!

Alright, so what are these *ma'asim*? *Ma'asim* are "precedents." The literal meaning is "actions" or "deeds", and in the Greek it translates this as *ergon*, which in your English you have "works", the works of the Pharisees. But what are the works of the actions or deeds of the Pharisees? In Pharisee terminology, *ma'asim* refers to "precedents", or "acts or deeds that serve as precedents". And what do they mean by that? Well, we've already seen that Pharisee law means to legislate every aspect of life, literally from the moment you wake up in the morning to the moment you go to sleep at night.

For example, the Pharisees command their disciples which shoe to put on first in the morning. So, what does a Pharisee do when he comes to a new situation where the Oral Law doesn't tell him what to do? For example, if he lives in a country where you don't have shoelaces, and he doesn't know which shoe to put on first in the morning because he doesn't know which one to tie first because there are no laces. So, what he does is he combs the Oral Law looking for instruction, and he combs tradition and man-made laws, and if he can't find any instruction on which shoe to put on first in the morning, if there are no laces, then he goes and he looks at the precedents of one of his rabbis. Meaning, he looks and he says, "We know that such and such a rabbi, on

such and such an occasion put on his right shoe first even though he didn't have laces,” and that becomes a precedent, that then establishes what the proper norm, the proper standard of behavior is. The assumption is this rabbi could not be sinning, and if he put on his right shoe first, even though it didn't have laces, that's the proper standard for behavior.

And what Yeshua is saying is, don't look to the precedents of the Pharisees as the proper standard of behavior. Don't do according to their precedents. Do as Moses says, not according to their *takanot* and their *ma'asim*.

Let's look quickly at an example of a precedent. This is a precedent brought in the Talmud, and it says, “A *ma'aseh*”, *ma'aseh* is the singular for *ma'asim*, so a precedent. “A precedent in which Rabban *Gamaliel*” you probably thought it was pronounced “Gama-liel”, the correct Hebrew pronunciation is “*Gamliel*”. And *Gamaliel*, as you all know, was the Pharisaical teacher of Shaul of Tarsus, of Paul. However, this is *Gamaliel*'s grandson, *Gamaliel II*. So, “A precedent in which Rabban *Gamaliel II* and the elders were traveling in a ship, when a gentile made a ramp on which to descend, and Rabban *Gamaliel* and the elders descended by it.” Okay, so what on earth is this talking about? The Pharisees start off with the principle that if somebody built something for you on the Sabbath, you may not use that. If they build a ramp for you on the Sabbath, you may not use that ramp. And so, then they asked the question, what if the ramp is built on the Sabbath, but it's not specifically for me? May I use that ramp? And the Oral Law doesn't tell them what to do, so they go, and they say, “Okay, we remember that one time Rabban *Gamaliel II* descended on such a ramp, and that tells us that this was the proper behavior, and that such a thing is permissible.” In other words, the behavior of the rabbi in a specific circumstance becomes the standard by which one should behave in the future.

And what Yeshua is warning his disciples is, don't do according to their *takanot*, and don't do according to their *ma'asim*. Their claim to authority is that they sit in the seat of Moses, so do as he says. Do as Moses says.

Now, what about this statement, “because they talk but they do not do”? When I first read this, my question was, “What do they talk and what don't they do?” When we read this in the Greek, it's very clear that it's saying they're hypocrites, but now in the Hebrew, we have a whole new context. He's not saying to obey the Pharisees even though they don't do what they say themselves, he's saying obey Moses. So, what's this, “they talk and they do not do”? What are they talking and what aren't they doing?

And then in 2 Kings 17 verse 34, it summarizes the ways of the Samaritans and it says, “Until this very day they do according to *their* former ways, according

to *their* statutes and *their* judgments” this how it reads in the Hebrew, “they do not fear Yehovah, and they do not do.” And then in the Hebrew, the words “they do not do” is isolated in such a way that it emphasizes those words. And then it completes the sentence, and it says, “according to the Torah and commandments that Yehovah commanded the children of Jacob.” So, what don't the Samaritans do? They don't do according to the Torah.

Now, after I had read Matthew 23 and then I reread this passage, I realized in Hebrew this sounds very similar. There's a similar style here, and it seems to me that Yeshua was echoing the words of 2 Kings 17:34 about the Samaritans. **And I think what he was saying is that just as the Samaritans of old do according to *their* statutes and *their* judgments, and they do not do according to the Torah, so too the Pharisees of his own era, do according to *their* *takanot* and *their* *ma'asim*, *their* reforms and *their* precedents, and they talk Torah, but they don't do Torah.** And what does he mean they talk Torah? They're sitting in the seat of Moses, talking Torah to you all day long, but what they're really telling you is not Torah, it's just in the guise of Torah. What they're really telling you are their own reforms and precedents, and they don't really do Torah.

So again, what we see up till now is that in the Greek, Jesus is coming along and changing Torah, saying “obey the Pharisees”, whereas in the Hebrew he's actually upholding Torah. Now, in light of that, how do we explain this passage, Matthew 5?

Do Not Swear by Anything Falsely

Matthew 5, six times Yeshua says in the Greek... he says, “You have heard it said, but I say.” And what it really sounds like when you read this in English is that Yeshua, or in the Greek, Jesus, is coming along and changing entire Torah commandments, adding, taking away, modifying. So, what's going on? Did he uphold Torah or did he not uphold Torah? And this is especially a very difficult textual question, because in that very same passage, in verse 17, he says he's not come to do away with “one jot or one tittle”! So how can he then turn around and a few verses later start changing things saying, “you have heard it said, but I say”?

Well let's look at one passage here, one passage that particularly caught my eye. This is Matthew 5:33 to 37. It says there in the Greek, “Again, you have heard that it was said to the people long ago, ‘Do not break your oath, but keep the oaths you have made to the Lord.’ But I tell you, do not swear at all”! And here, very explicitly, Jesus is saying in the Greek not to swear at all. It's an absolute prohibition if you're a disciple of Jesus to swear, to make any kind of oath.

Now, you should be getting a little bit nervous here right now because Jesus has forbidden you to swear under any circumstances, and if you swear, you're from the evil one, according to the Greek Jesus. But let's see what it says in the Hebrew. In Hebrew Matthew 5, we read, "You have further heard what was said by the ancients, 'you shall not swear falsely by my name,'" that's a direct quote word for word from Leviticus 19:12. "But you must pay your vow to Yehovah," which is a paraphrase of Deuteronomy 23:21.

And then he goes on and he says, "But I say to you, that you must not swear by anything *falsely*," *falsely* is what he says in the Hebrew. So, in the Hebrew, he is *not* prohibiting vows, he's prohibiting *false* vows. "Not by the earth, which is His footstool," meaning you must not say, "I swear by the earth" and be lying; you have to be telling the truth if you swear by the earth. "Nor by Jerusalem, which is His footstool, nor by your head because you cannot make one hair white or black. But let your yes be yes and your no, no. Anything added to this is evil." And we'll get back to, "anything added to this is evil" in a minute.

But in verse 37, he starts off saying, "let your yes be yes and your no, no." Now he's not talking about making vows here, he's talking about making *false* vows. So, when he says, "let your yes be yes", what he means in this new context is if you say, "I swear by Jerusalem! Yes, I will do such and such," that better be a true yes, that better not be a false yes. And if you say, "No! I swear by the throne of God, I will do such and such," that better be a no, you better not be lying there.

Now, why would he need to tell us not to make false vows? Or why would he need to tell *you* not to make false vows? Isn't it obvious that you shouldn't make false vows? That's pretty obvious. But what happened, apparently, is in that period some Pharisees came along and they said, "Okay, well it says in Leviticus 19:12, 'you shall not swear falsely by My name', so if I don't use the name, I'm allowed to swear falsely." That's what the Pharisees were teaching in this period, that you're allowed to swear falsely as long as you don't use the name. Because it says, "by My name", and anyway, they don't use the name so they can swear falsely all day long.

What Yeshua is saying is, "No! When it says in Scripture 'not to swear falsely by My name', it doesn't mean you can swear falsely by other things." Yes, as a keeper of Torah, you're supposed to be swearing by the name of the Creator, that's what we read in Deuteronomy. But if you're going to swear by other things, that doesn't mean you're allowed to lie! The principle behind this commandment is not to swear *falsely*. Even if you don't use the name, you're not supposed to swear falsely. And I think that's obvious to anybody who uses common sense and looks at this in its context that this is not a permission to vow falsely or to swear falsely. Simply, the way that an Israelite

should be swearing is by the name, and if you're swearing by the name, you must not swear falsely.

And all Yeshua is doing here is, he is bringing out the underlying Torah principle, saying, “No, what you Pharisees are doing, opening up these loopholes, saying ‘I’m allowed to swear falsely’, that’s not the point of the commandment. You’re over-literalizing it. You’re taking the words and disembodimenting them from the context and from the meaning behind what it’s saying. You’re only taking the words and not the spirit of what it’s really saying.” Which is the contextual meaning that anyone with common sense would understand.

Now, there's no doubt that 2,000 years ago, when Yeshua said this, he would have been accused by the Pharisees of adding to the Torah, because they said it does say, “by My name”, and if you tell me I can’t swear falsely by Jerusalem, where does it say that in Scripture? Now, to anyone who uses their common sense, to the simple Israelite shepherd or farmer who comes and hears “you shall not swear falsely by My name”, it's obvious that you can't swear falsely by other things as well. That's obvious.

But to the Pharisees that's not so obvious, because to them Scripture is divine code. And Yeshua wanted to make it very clear that he's *not* adding to Torah, he's just bringing out the underlying Torah principle, and that's why he ends his statement saying, “anything added to this is evil”. He wouldn’t add *anything* to the Torah because that would be evil. And this is simply a paraphrase of Deuteronomy chapter 4 verse 2, “do not add anything to the Torah or take away”, and Yeshua is simply reiterating this basic Torah principle.

Now, what we have in the Greek Matthew, like it or not, is an abolition of vows. Jesus is coming along and abolishing vows. You're forbidden to swear by anything, that's a fact, that's what he says there. In the Hebrew Matthew on the other hand, we have an abolition of *false* vows. That's a very different message, isn't it? A very different statement. He's not abolishing vows; he's abolishing *false* vows.

And really, what we see is the Greek *Iesous* as he's called in the Greek, the Greek Jesus, is abolishing entire Torah commandments, “Don't worry about adding to the Torah, obey whatever the Pharisees tell you to do. And don't worry about vowing in the name of the Creator, don't vow at all, that's what I'm telling you to do. Don't swear at all.” Whereas we've now uncovered a Hebrew Yeshua, the words of Yeshua as he's portrayed in the Hebrew, and there, he's upholding Torah. He's saying, “**Their claim to authority is they sit in the seat of Moses. Do what Moses says, do as *he* says. And they're telling you that you can jump through these loopholes and swear falsely? No, that's not the point of the commandment. The point of the commandment is to not to swear falsely at all.**”

Blind Chairs

Let's look at Hebrew Matthew chapter 23 verses 16 and on, and there Yeshua is speaking to the Pharisees throughout Matthew 23, and there he says to the Pharisees, "Woe to you, you blind chairs." You could look in the Greek and you'll see it says, "Woe to you, you blind *guides*." In the Hebrew he says, "you blind chairs". Remember, Matthew 23 verse 2, he said, "they sit in the seat of Moses", and now he's calling them "the blind chairs". "Yeah, you're sitting in that seat, but you're blind chairs."

"Woe to you, you blind chairs, who say that he who swears by the sanctuary is not obligated." Does that sound familiar? "Swear by the sanctuary is not obligated." In other words, if you say, "I swear by the Temple of Jerusalem", you're allowed to lie because you haven't used the name. "Who say that he who swears by the sanctuary is not obligated but he who vows by anything that is sanctified to the sanctuary building is obligated to pay." Meaning, if you make a vow to bring something to the Temple, then you have to pay it. Well, that's very convenient, isn't it?

"Mad men and blind men! Which is greater, the sanctuary or the thing which is sanctified to the sanctuary? And you say he who vows by the altar is not obligated but he who vows to bring a sacrifice must give it." Meaning if you say, "I swear by the altar in Jerusalem", then you're allowed to lie because you haven't used the name. But if you swear to bring a sheep to the altar, then you have to give it because some of the priests were Pharisees, and the Pharisees have got to eat, so it's a simple economic consideration. "Which is greater, the sacrifice or the altar? The sanctuary or the sacrifice?"

And this next verse, verse 20, is really, I think, the decisive verse. There he says, "He who swears by the altar swears by *it* and by all that is in it." So here he's actually upholding vows. Now, what happened to "if you make a vow by anything, you're from the evil one"? That's not here at all, that's not reflected at all. He's saying, "If you make a vow, you must keep that vow, you must not swear falsely."

Now, the reason this is so significant is because in the Greek, in the very same verse in Greek Matthew, he says, "Therefore, he who swears by the altar swears by *it* and by everything on it." In other words, in the Greek he's saying the exact same thing as he's saying in the Hebrew on this particular verse - upholding vows. Meaning that in Matthew 23:16 to 20, both in the Greek *and* the Hebrew, Yeshua is saying no to false vows, yes to true vows. Well, what happened to anybody who swears is from Satan? That's not being reflected here even in the Greek!

PENTECOST'S HIDDEN MEANING

In the Old Testament, the word Pentecost is not there. This feast day was referred to as “Feast of Weeks”(Ex. 34:22; Duet. 16:9-10) because it was celebrated seven weeks after the offering of the barley sheaf. Also know as the “Feast of the Harvest” (Ex. 23:16), because it came at the end of the barley harvest, and it was also known as the ” Feast of First Fruits” (Ex 34:22 ; Num. 28:26), because it marked the beginning of the first-fruits of the wheat harvest being offered at the temple. It is referred to in the New Testament as “Pentecost”, a term derived from the Greek *pentekoste* (meaning fiftieth).

The Counting of the Fifty What?

In ancient Israel, the grain harvest lasted 7 weeks, beginning with the barley harvest right after Passover and ending with the start of the wheat harvest seven weeks later on, Pentecost. **The barley harvest was key to the whole religious calendar** because Passover could not be observed until at least some of the barley was ready for harvest. The offering of the first barley wave offering took place on the day after the weekly Sabbath during the days of Unleavened Bread. This meant that if no barley was ready for harvest, the celebration of Passover had to be delayed by intercalating a month in the lunar calendar. Since barley ripens a few weeks before wheat, the ceremony of the barley wave sheaf offering, which fell on the day after the weekly Sabbath during the days of Unleavened Bread, marked the starting point of the fifty-day countdown to Pentecost.

This point is often not understood as to its importance and is also often confused or mixed up, thereby causing some to start their counting of the fifty days on the wrong day. I am going to spend some extra time here. Please bare with me.

The term “Feast of Weeks” refers to the entire period of the grain harvest of about seven weeks from the first cutting of the barley to the completion of the start of the wheat harvest. A feast that extends over seven weeks. But it was only the beginning and the end of the feast that were marked by a wave offering (a *Tenuphah*) .

The date of the Feast of Weeks was reckoned by counting seven weeks from the first putting of the sickle to the barley: “You shall count seven weeks for yourself; begin to count the seven weeks from the time you begin to put the sickle to the grain. (Duet. 16:9). The problem was to determine which day the first sheaf of barley, known as *Omer*, was to be cut and presented as a wave offering before Yehovah.

This determination was based on the instructions given in Leviticus 23:15-16 ‘And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to Yehovah.

We are to count from the ‘*day after the Sabbath*’. Since the term Sabbath is used to refer to both the seventh day of the week and to the annual Feast mentioned in the same chapter (Lev. 23:8, 21, 23, 32, 34), the question is “What is the meaning of “Sabbath” here, the seventh day of the week or festival day?”

If you look up the word Sabbath in the concordance you will see the weekly Sabbath and Atonement are Strong’s #7676 (shabbath). The other annual Sabbaths are Strong’s #7677 (shabbathon). So there is a difference in the word, but many have missed this little clue.

The Pharisees, as well as Philo and Josephus all, claim it was the day after the 1st day of Unleavened Bread. The Sadducees, Boethusians, Karaites and Samaritans all took the word Sabbath to mean a weekly Sabbath and not an annual one due to the fact that the word Sabbath by itself was never used to denote an annual Festival. So who is right?

I believe we should allow Yehshua to show us. We all know He was killed as the Passover Lamb on Nisan 14. We know He died in 31 A.D and that Nisan 14 was a Wednesday. The *sign of Jonah* had to be completed in all of its phases. The only sign that was given to us that Yehshua was the Messiah was the *sign of Jonah*. Yehshua said that the function of three days and three nights in the belly of the whale or great fish of Jonah was the same as his ministry, and he would be three days and three nights in the belly of the earth (as the great fish). That was the only sign given to prove His ministry. So Thursday was the 1st day of Unleavened Bread, Friday was the Preparation day for the weekly Sabbath. Saturday was the weekly Sabbath. Three days and three nights. So Yehshua rose from the grave on the Sabbath just before sunset, just as He was placed in the grave Wednesday late afternoon just before sunset. Three days and three nights as prophesied.

Matt.28:1 Now after the Sabbath, as the first day of the week began to dawn, Mary Magdalene and the other Mary came to see the tomb.

Luke 24:1 Now on the first day of the week, very early in the morning, they, and certain other women with them,* came to the tomb bringing the spices which they had prepared. **2** But they found the stone rolled away from the tomb. **3** Then they went in and did not find the body of the Lord Jesus. **4** And it happened, as they were greatly perplexed about this, that behold, two men stood by them in shining garments. **5** Then, as they were afraid and bowed their faces to the earth, they said to them, “Why do you seek the living among the dead? **6** He is not here, but is risen! Remember how He spoke to you when He was still in Galilee, **7** saying, ‘The Son of Man must be delivered into the hands of sinful men, and be crucified, and the third day rise again.’” **8** And they remembered His words. **9** Then they returned from the tomb and told all these things to the eleven and to all the rest. **10** It was Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Mary the mother of James, and the other women with them, who told these things to the apostles.

But it is in John 20 that we learn more.

1 Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene went to the tomb early, while it was still dark, and saw that the stone had been taken away from the tomb. **2** Then she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple, whom Jesus loved, and said to them, “They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.” **3** Peter therefore

went out, and the other disciple, and were going to the tomb. **4** So they both ran together, and the other disciple outran Peter and came to the tomb first. **5** And he, stooping down and looking in, saw the linen cloths lying there; yet he did not go in. **6** Then Simon Peter came, following him, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying there, **7** and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. **8** Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. **9** For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead. **10** Then the disciples went away again to their own homes. **11** But Mary stood outside by the tomb weeping, and as she wept she stooped down and looked into the tomb. **12** And she saw two angels in white sitting, one at the head and the other at the feet, where the body of Jesus had lain. **13** Then they said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping?” She said to them, “Because they have taken away my Lord, and I do not know where they have laid Him.” **14** Now when she had said this, she turned around and saw Jesus standing there, and did not know that it was Jesus. **15** Jesus said to her, “Woman, why are you weeping? Whom are you seeking?” She, supposing Him to be the gardener, said to Him, “Sir, if You have carried Him away, tell me where You have laid Him, and I will take Him away.” **16** Jesus said to her, “Mary!” She turned and said to Him, “Rabboni!” (which is to say, Teacher). **17** **Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to Me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God.’ ”** **18** Mary Magdalene came and told the disciples that she had seen the Lord, and that He had spoken these things to her. **19** Then, **the same** day at evening, being the first day of the week, when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you.”

I have marked out in bold that it was the first day of the week, before dawn, Yeshua had not yet ascended to heaven but was about to. It was the first day of the week. I have presupposed that you understand that the wave sheaf offering is Yeshua. Let me back up a little.

The Wave Sheaf Offering seems to have been waved at 9 a.m. on Sunday morning within the feast of the Passover. The general wave offering was brought by the worshipper and made in conjunction with the priest (Ex. 29:24-25). We know that the Samaritans and the Sadducees kept a Sunday Wave Sheaf and a Sunday Pentecost. That is an important factor in history. The Jews do not keep the Wave Sheaf because they keep a Sivan 6 Pentecost, which came from the **traditions** of the Pharisees in rabbinical Judaism after the Temple was destroyed. We know that the Samaritans keep the 14th and 15th and the concept of the Wave Sheaf and count the Omer from Sunday within the feast. So from the Temple period and right throughout, including the Samaritans, Pentecost has been kept on a Sunday. The early church kept Pentecost on a Sunday. Only the Jews kept a Sivan 6 and only after the Temple was destroyed.

The Wave Sheaf Offering needs to be kept in order to understand the full implications of Yeshua's sacrifice and the power that he was given in terms of his resurrection from the dead. The Wave Sheaf Offering is an ancient requirement of Israel within the Torah. The ordinance is found in Leviticus 23:9-14 and also in Exodus 29:24-25 and other texts. It is poorly understood by scholars and ignored by many. It is a mandatory ordinance associated with the feast of the Passover and controls both the timing of Pentecost and the consumption of the new harvests

(Lev. 23:9-14). To put it in its modern perspective, **we should look at the significance of the timing of Yeshua's death.**

The Wave Sheaf Offering was known as *sfirat haomer*, that is, “the counting of the omer”, because on this day we begin to count the fifty days to Pentecost. It is described in

Lev. 23: **10** “Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them: ‘When you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the first fruits of your harvest to the priest. **11** He shall wave the sheaf before the Lord, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath the priest shall wave it. **12** And you shall offer on that day, when you wave the sheaf, a male lamb of the first year, without blemish, as a burnt offering to the Lord. **13** Its grain offering shall be two-tenths of an ephah of fine flour mixed with oil, an offering made by fire to the Lord, for a sweet aroma; and its drink offering shall be of wine, one-fourth of a hin. **14** You shall eat neither bread nor parched grain nor fresh grain until the same day that you have brought an offering to your God; it shall be a statute forever throughout your generations in all your dwellings.

This cutting of the first barley sheaf was a lively ceremony. The sheaf was cut the evening before on the edge of the city in front of a small crowd of worshippers. And they would do as they are told in

Duet. 26:**1** “And it shall be, when you come into the land which the Lord your God is giving you as an inheritance, and you possess it and dwell in it, **2** that you shall take some of the first of all the produce of the ground, which you shall bring from your land that the Lord your God is giving you, and put it in a basket and go to the place where the Lord your God chooses to make His name abide. **3** And you shall go to the one who is priest in those days, and say to him, ‘I declare today to the Lord your God that I have come to the country which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us.’ **4** Then the priest shall take the basket out of your hand and set it down before the altar of the Lord your God. **5** And you shall answer and say before the Lord your God: ‘My father was a Syrian, about to perish, and he went down to Egypt and dwelt there, few in number; and there he became a nation, great, mighty, and populous. **6** But the Egyptians mistreated us, afflicted us, and laid hard bondage on us. **7** Then we cried out to the Lord God of our fathers, and the Lord heard our voice and looked on our affliction and our labor and our oppression. **8** So the Lord brought us out of Egypt with a mighty hand and with an outstretched arm, with great terror and with signs and wonders. **9** He has brought us to this place and has given us this land, “a land flowing with milk and honey”; **10** and now, behold, I have brought the first fruits of the land which you, O Lord, have given me.’ Then you shall set it before the Lord your God, and worship before the Lord your God. **11** So you shall rejoice in every good thing which the Lord your God has given to you and your house, you and the Levite and the stranger who is among you.

But it should be duly noted that the wave sheaf had to be prepared before it was waved in front of the Lord. Because it reads in

Leviticus 2:**11** ‘No grain offering which you bring to the Lord shall be made with leaven, for you shall burn no leaven nor any honey in any offering to the Lord made by fire. **12** As for the offering of the first fruits, you shall offer them to the Lord, but they shall not be burned on the

altar for a sweet aroma. **13** And every offering of your grain offering you shall season with salt; you shall not allow the salt of the covenant of your God to be lacking from your grain offering. With all your offerings you shall offer salt. **14** **'If you offer a grain offering of your first fruits to the Lord, you shall offer for the grain offering of your first fruits green heads of grain roasted on the fire, grain beaten from full heads.** **15** **And you shall put oil on it, and lay frankincense on it.** It is a grain offering. **16** Then the priest shall burn the memorial portion: part of its beaten grain and part of its oil, with all the frankincense, as an offering made by fire to the Lord.

So here we see that the first fruits were a grain offering; an offering of Green Ears, or green heads. It was to be roasted. The grain was to be beaten from the husks of the barley. And it was to have salt added to it, as well as Frankincense.

If we ignore the wave sheaf offering we are missing out on a significant part of the Passover Sacrifice. Yes, we all understand that Yeshua was the Passover Lamb. And we can connect the dots in this. But answer this question. When was the Lamb ever beaten? When did the lamb have its body beaten so badly that the flesh was exposed so that the bones of the ribs could be counted? It was not. Not a bone was to be broken. But the Barley Sheaf was to be beaten. It was to be beaten until the grain was exposed and fell from the husk. The Lamb was never beaten. The lamb in one sense represented Yeshua and in another sense the Barley also represented Yeshua. Yeshua would then have to be killed as the lamb and beaten as the barley and presented before Yahweh.

Each and every detail that was foretold in scriptures was to be fulfilled on that Passover day. Beaten is foretold in

Isaiah 53:4 Surely He has borne our grief's And carried our sorrows; Yet we esteemed Him stricken, Smitten by God, and afflicted. **5** But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed.

The consecration of the first-fruits sanctifies the whole harvest since the part stands for the whole. As Paul puts it,

“If the dough offered as first fruits is holy, so is the whole lump” (Rom. 11:16)

By the symbolic gesture of consecrating the first fruits, the whole of the harvest was consecrated to Yehovah.

The idea that the consecration of a part exercises a sanctifying influence on all is applied in the Bible to the plan of salvation.

“Israel was holy to the Lord, The first fruits of His harvest” (Jer. 2:3 Hos. 9:10)

Because it was called by Yehovah to exercise a sanctifying influence on all nations. Similarly, as Christians, we are ” a kind of firstfruits of His creatures: (James 1:8), because we are called to be a sanctifying influence in the world. Those who arose from the dead at the time of Yeshua's resurrection became the first fruits, that is, the pledge of all those who will rise at the time of Yeshua's return (Matt. 27:52-53; Eph.4:8; 1 Thes. 4:13-18). The 144,000 saints who follow the

Lamb are the first fruits for Yehovah and the Lamb” (Rev. 14:4).

Paul specifically calls Yehshua’s resurrection the first fruits of those who will rise from the dead.

“20 But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the first fruits of those who have fallen asleep. 21 For since by man came death, by Man also came the resurrection of the dead. 22 For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive. 23 But each one in his own order: Christ the first fruits, afterward those who are Christ’s at His coming. 24 Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power.” (1Cor.15:20-24)

In this passage, Paul speaks of Yehshua twice as “the first Fruits,” not only to indicate that He was the first to rise bodily from the grave, but also that by so doing He fulfilled the offering of the first fruits. At Passover and Pentecost. We have noted that the Omer of the Sheaf of Barley was waved before Yehovah, by the priest as a pledge of the full harvest that would follow. The ceremony was performed on the day after the weekly Sabbath at about 9 AM, Sunday Morning.” The wave sheaf offering, specifically the roasted omer of grain, with salt and frankincense, was a type of Christ, the “first fruits” or pledge, of the great harvest that will follow when all the righteous dead are raised at the second coming of Yehshua (1Cor. 15:23, 1 Thes. 4:14-16). Yehshua rose from the dead on the eve of the very day that the wave offering was presented in the Temple (Lev. 23:14, Luke 23:56, 24:1) As the first sheaf was a pledge and assurance of the ingathering of the entire harvest, so the resurrection of Yehshua is a pledge that all who put their trust in Him will be raised from the dead.

Please take note. The Priest did not present before Yehovah just one head of grain, but a whole Omer of Barley. Salted and Frankincense were also added. Similarly, Yehshua did not come forth from the grave alone, for “many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised” (Matt. 27:52) Paul tells us that when Yehshua “ascended on high he led a host of captives” (Eph. 4:8 RSV). Those who were raised at Yehshua’s death and came “out of the tombs after His resurrection” (Matt 27:53) ascended with Yehshua to heaven as trophies of His powers to resurrect all who sleep in the grave. Just as the Omer of Barley was a pledge of the coming harvest, so the saints that Yehshua raised at the time of His death are a pledge of a future harvest of Saints.

We must pause here and ask the question. It says in John 3:13 No one has ascended to heaven but He who came down from heaven, that is, the Son of Man who is in heaven. This was Yehshua speaking to Nicodemus, and when Yehshua said it, it was true. No one but Yehshua had gone to heaven. Not until Yehshua died, and was raised up from the grave. Then He took a host of Saints to Heaven for the very first time. I have just quoted many scriptures that prove this, and Paul himself says so. But look at what John is shown in his vision in

Rev 4:1 After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet speaking with me, saying, “Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.” 2 Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne. 3 And He who sat there was like a jasper and a sardius stone in appearance; and there was a rainbow around the throne, in appearance like an

emerald. 4 Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads. 5 And from the throne proceeded lightning's, thundering, and voices. Seven lamps of fire were burning before the throne, which are the seven Spirits of God. 6 Before the throne there was a sea of glass, like crystal. And in the midst of the throne, and around the throne, were four living creatures full of eyes in front and in back. 7 The first living creature was like a lion, the second living creature like a calf, the third living creature had a face like a man, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle.

8 The four living creatures, each having six wings, were full of eyes around and within. And they do not rest day or night, saying: "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, Who was and is and is to come!" 9 Whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to Him who sits on the throne, who lives forever and ever, 10 the twenty-four elders fall down before Him who sits on the throne and worship Him who lives forever and ever, and cast their crowns before the throne, saying: 11 "You are worthy, O Lord, To receive glory and honor and power; For You created all things, And by Your will they exist and were created."

There are now 24 elders in heaven sitting on thrones, wearing white robes. These are the saints that ascended to heaven with Yeshua at His resurrection. If this is beyond your comprehension then stop here and reread all that I have said up until now. These are the first fruits. Yehovah is showing us that He is going to do as He said and raise us up from the dead. This is so unbelievable: Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph, Job, Moses and the prophets. All the scriptures say first fruits. Never first Fruit in the singular. Never Yeshua alone, but with others. Who are these elders again?

Elder is in Strong's Concordance #4245 originally spelled presbuvtero and means -elder, of age, the elder of two people, advanced in life, an elder, a senior, forefathers, a term of rank or office.

Note that it means forefathers-humans who were born and lived before us. These 24 elders were not created by Yehovah but were born on earth and lived and died having not received the promise. But now John is telling us they are now in Heaven with Yehovah and have now received that promise. How great is this? How unbelievable?

Also note that in Matt.5:13 Yeshua told the apostles that they and we are the salt of the earth. We are the salt of the wave offering.

Pentecost

The meaning of Pentecost is found not only in the offering of first fruits which took place on the first and fiftieth day, but also in the fact that it lasted fifty days, that is to say, seven times seven weeks, plus a day. From this characteristic the usual titles are derived, the Feast of Weeks or Pentecost (fiftieth).

Meaning is found through reasoning about the meaning of the seventh day Sabbath, which is the basis for the seven weeks structure of time. The Sabbath provided release and liberation from the

hardship of life and social inequalities, not only every seven days but also every seven years (sabbatical year-Lev. 25:4) and every seven weeks of years (Jubilee year-Lev. 25:8).

The common denominator between the seven weeks of days and the seven weeks of years is the number 50, which was the symbol of remission of debts.

As with other great feasts, a special offering was made in addition to the daily burnt offering. The main offering of Pentecost was a special cereal offering consisting of “two loaves of bread ”

(Lev. 23:17) **15** ‘And you shall count for yourselves from the day after the Sabbath, from the day that you brought the sheaf of the wave offering: seven Sabbaths shall be completed. **16** Count fifty days to the day after the seventh Sabbath; then you shall offer a new grain offering to the Lord. **17** You shall bring from your dwellings two wave loaves of two-tenths of an ephah. They shall be of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven. **They are the first fruits to the Lord.** **18** And you shall offer with the bread seven lambs of the first year, without blemish, one young bull, and two rams. They shall be as a burnt offering to the Lord, with their grain offering and their drink offerings, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma to the Lord. **19** Then you shall sacrifice one kid of the goats as a sin offering, and two male lambs of the first year as a sacrifice of a peace offering. **20 The priest shall wave them with the bread of the first fruits as a wave offering before the Lord, with the two lambs.** They shall be holy to the Lord for the priest. **21** And you shall proclaim on the same day that it is a holy convocation to you. You shall do no customary work on it. It shall be a statute forever in all your dwellings throughout your generations.

The loaves were made with flour milled from the new wheat crop and baked with leaven. The loaves were presented as a **wave offering** on behalf of all the people. None of the bread was placed on the altar because it was baked with leaven. Along with the two loaves, two lambs were offered as a wave offering. Pentecost was an offering of loaves with leaven as a **wave offering**, just as the omer of barley was a **wave offering** of firstfruits. Pentecost’s **wave offering** had leaven in it and it too was a first fruits offering. It was also accompanied by a sin offering.

Although we all know that on Pentecost Yehovah gave to Israel the Torah by His very own voice, with thunder and trumpets blasting (Ex. 19,20) and also of the Holy Spirit to the Apostles (Acts 2:3), do we realize Pentecost holds yet another secret? It is the day the second crop of saints is to be raised up from the grave, and even those that are still alive at that time. They are the second wave offering of leaven loaves.

John 4: 32 But He said to them, “I have food to eat of which you do not know.” 33 Therefore the disciples said to one another, “Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?” 34 Jesus said to them, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. 35 Do you not say, ‘**There are still four months and then comes the harvest**’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! 36 And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. 37 For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ 38 I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors.”

Yehshua said the fields are already white for the harvest. When he said don't look ahead and say four more months He was saying don't look to the harvest at the fall feast days. Look now at Pentecost, which is four months before the Feast of Trumpets (the day the Messiah Returns), The Day of Atonement (the time when Satan is put away) and The Feast of Tabernacles (The Wedding Feast)

Matt. 13:24 Another parable He put forth to them, saying: "The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field; 25 but while men slept, his enemy came and sowed tares among the wheat and went his way. 26 But when the grain had sprouted and produced a crop, then the tares also appeared. 27 So the servants of the owner came and said to him, 'Sir, did you not sow good seed in your field? How then does it have tares?' 28 He said to them, 'An enemy has done this.' The servants said to him, 'Do you want us then to go and gather them up?' 29 But he said, 'No, lest while you gather up the tares you also uproot the wheat with them. 30 Let both grow together until the harvest, and at the time of harvest I will say to the reapers, "First gather together the tares and bind them in bundles to burn them, but gather the wheat into my barn."

Pentecost is the start of the wheat harvest and the wheat is lost amongst the many false followers of the Messiah. The tares are then separated. By their works, you'll know them, and the wheat is then saved in the King's barn.

See how Yehshua himself explains it.

Matt 13: 36 Then Jesus sent the multitude away and went into the house. And His disciples came to Him, saying, "Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field." 37 He answered and said to them: "He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. 38 The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. 39 The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. 40 Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. 41 The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, 42 and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. 43 Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!

When Yehshua told the Apostles about the end time, and in particular, Matt.24:22 And unless those days were shortened, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, those days will be shortened.

How could he shorten the time for the elect, unless, instead of our redemption taking place on the Feast of Trumpets as we have always been taught, it takes place on the Feast of Pentecost? He must do all things in relation to the Holy Days that He has had Israel performing since Mount Sinai. The Holy Days are a rehearsal of future events.

CONCLUSION

Yeshua was the wave sheaf of Passover or First Fruits, with an “S” for more than one, and ascended to heaven with a host of captives, as Paul has said. The apostle John says that there are 24 elders in heaven today wearing crowns and worshipping Yehovah. These are those Yeshua led with Him on that Sunday that the wave offering of barley was presented in the Temple. The wave offering of Pentecost, the two wheat loaves, are those that have followed this way of life and obeyed the laws of Yehovah. Although not perfectly as is represented by the leaven in the offering. All those that have died since Yeshua’s death in 31 AD up until His return and those who are still alive at His return will be raised up at Shavuot or Pentecost.

1 Cor15:50-58 Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; nor does corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I tell you a mystery: We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed—in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, and the dead will be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible has put on incorruption, and this mortal has put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written: “Death is swallowed up in victory.”

“O Death, where is your sting?

O Hades, where is your victory?”

The sting of death is sin, and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

1 Thess 4:13-18 But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus.

For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive and remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words.

Now compare these verses above to those that follow.

Isaiah 27:12-13 And it shall come to pass in that day

That the Lord will thresh,

From the channel of the River to the Brook of Egypt;

And you will be gathered one by one,

O you children of Israel.

So it shall be in that day:

The great trumpet will be blown;

They will come, who are about to perish in the land of Assyria,

And they who are outcasts in the land of Egypt,

And shall worship the Lord in the holy mount at Jerusalem.

Exodus 19:16-19 Then it came to pass on the third day, in the morning, that there were thunderings and lightnings, and a thick cloud on the mountain; and the sound of the trumpet was very loud, so that all the people who were in the camp trembled. And Moses brought the people out of the camp to meet with God, and they stood at the foot of the mountain. Now Mount Sinai was completely in smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire. Its smoke ascended like the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mountain quaked greatly. And when the blast of the trumpet sounded long and became louder and louder, Moses spoke, and God answered him by voice.

This is not a second resurrection, but it is part of the First Resurrection that began on the day Yeshua was raised from the dead. Just as the Wave Sheaf offering during the Days of Unleavened Bread is the beginning, so is Pentecost the conclusion of the Wave Offering 50 days later. Those raised with Messiah in 31 AD were the beginning and those alive at His return along with those that have died in His name will be raised up at Shavuot, Pentecost if they are keeping the Torah and the commandments. The one that those under the altar await.

Rev. 6:9 When He opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of those who had been slain for the word of God and for the testimony which they held. 10 And they cried with a loud voice, saying, "How long, O Lord, holy and true, until You judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell on the earth?" 11 Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until both the number of their fellow servants and their brethren, who would be killed as they were, was completed.

They are given white robes just as the 24 elders were dressed in white, representing righteousness, in preparation for the wedding. Matt 22. Where we must come dressed in righteousness in order to be a part of the wedding party.

Psalms 119:172 My tongue shall speak of Your word, For all Your commandments are righteousness.