

A Rabbi's Perspective-Rabbi Rob Miller

I believe this is a slippery slope. I believe one never reacts but acts. And when we act it must be on the basis of Scripture.

I do not believe it is wise to react to Nehemiah Gordon's book, "The Hebrew Yeshua vs. the Greek Jesus: New Light on the Seat of Moses from Shem-Tov's Hebrew Matthew." Admittedly, he searched around until he found a text of Shem Tov's document that agrees with him in a musty library in Russia. Admittedly, he knows most Shem Tov documents agree with Rabbinic opinion. In the one archaic text, he found what he needed to satisfy Michael Rood's growing intolerance with organized religion. Remember he never had a problem not believing in Rabbis, he personally never needed proof, he's a Karaite for goodness sake. This is Michael's push against Rabbis and Pastors. And I for one do not need nor want a Rood awakening.

I for one do not have a problem with identifying with the Rabbis of old. Sure there were a certain of the Rabbis that opposed Rebbe YahShua. But Rav Gamaliel went on record supporting the Netzarim. Rav Yakkov haTzaddik, the president of the Sanhedrin, was Rebbe YahShua's brother and through his leadership many of the Rabbis became Netzarim Believers.

There were some Israelites that did not support our Messiah, and most Jews still don't today, still I am resolute in the fact that I am an Israelite! ?Then Rebbe YahShua said to the crowds and to His Talmidim: "The Rabbis of the Torah and the Parushim sit in Moses' seat (katedra deMosheh). So you must obey them and do everything they tell you. (Matthew 23:1,2)?

No other passage in the Messianic Record stands more at variance with Replacement Theology than Matthew 23:2-3. By taking away this verse, you cut our tie to 3,000 years of Faith. The ?Seat of Moses? represents the chief authority given in the community like Moses was the chief delegated authority in the whole of the Commonwealth of Israel. Moshe is called Rabbinue from which we derive the title, Rabbi. The local pastor or Rabbi over the congregation sits in the ?Seat of Moses.? He does so with grave sobriety. Yahweh never gives authority apart from responsibility. Those who are held responsible are accountable to Yahweh who appointed them. "My brethren, let not many of you become teachers (didaskalos - the teachers of the Jewish religion, in other words Rabbis), knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment. (James 3:1)"

However, if we return to calling ourselves pastors then we align ourselves with Christianity and loose our dialogue with Judaism.

As the ?Seat of Moses? Yahweh speaks to him ?face to face.? ?Then Miriam and A?aron spoke against Moses because of the Ethiopian woman whom he had married; for he had married an Ethiopian woman. So they said, "Has Yahweh indeed spoken only through Moses? Has He not spoken through us also?" And Yahweh heard it. (Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)

Suddenly Yahweh said to Moses, A?aron, and Miriam, "Come out, you three, to the tabernacle of meeting!" So the three came out. Then Yahweh came down in the pillar of cloud and stood in the door of the Tabernacle, and called A?aron and Miriam. And they both went forward. 6Then He said, ?If there is a prophet among you, I, Yahweh, make Myself known to him in a vision; I speak to him in a dream. Not so with My servant Moses; he is faithful in all My house. I speak with him face to face, even plainly, and not in dark sayings; and he sees the form of Yahweh (Adam Kadmon). Why then were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:1-8)?

Miriam, the Elder of the women and A?aron the Elder of the Priests had to learn the hard way the differences in call and anointing, and position

and authority. If you reduce all spiritual authority to the office of Elder, then the other elders of the congregations may feel empowered to usurp authority like Korah did when he felt everyone had equal authority. (Numbers 21: 4-9)

Rebbe YahShua was entirely orthodox. Some could even say ultra-orthodox. He declared the pre-eminence of the whole Torah in Matthew 5:17-19 and even accepted Pharisaic extensions in Matthew 23:2-3 when He said, 'observe and practice all they tell you.' Some of these include: tithing of herbs (Matthew 23:23), grace at meals (Mark 6:41; 8:6), blessings over the wine and the reciting the Hallel at the Passover Seder (Mark 14:22,23,26). Those are all Rabbinics!

In the Encyclopaedia Judaica (vol. 10, p.14) it says, 'the Gospels provide sufficient evidence that [YahShua] did not oppose any prescriptions of the written or oral Mosaic Law.' The Jewish scholar, Yehezkel Kaufmann puts it this way, 'The attitude of [YahShua] to the Torah is the very same attitude one finds among the masters of halacha and aggadah who followed the Pharisaic tradition.'

Rebbe YahShua was welcomed and preached regularly in the Synagogues and on the Temple Mount. This could not have happened if His lifestyle or teachings had been profoundly different from the current halacha of His day.

Rebbe commends the Pharisees for their desire to call Israel back to true adherence to the Torah. They were reformers. In their zeal to be strictly orthodox, however, they drew many lines and split many hairs. Sometimes it caused them to be legally right while evading the real spirit or intention of the Torah.

'Woe to you, Rabbis of the Torah and Pharisees, pretenders (hypocrites)! For you give a tenth of your mint and dill and cummin, and have neglected and omitted the weightier (more important) matters of the Torah--right and justice and mercy and fidelity. These you ought [particularly] to have done, without neglecting the others. (Matthew 23:23)'

Is Rebbe YahShua condemning the Rabbis and the Pharisees? No, it is just as a sect they had not gone far enough in rightly dividing the Word of Truth getting bogged down in opinion and more importantly failing to practice it. Rebbe YahShua was a Rabbi of the Pharisaic tradition of the first century CE and all the arguments that He had with the Pharisees were typical arguments bantered around the Yeshivas by the students and their Rabbis. We belong to Beit YahShua, the House or School of YahShua. He is our Rebbe and it is important for us as His talmidim to understand Him so that we may walk as He walked and talked as He talked. Rebbe YahShua took the clear position, not against Torah, but against the tendency to put the latter of the Torah before the Spirit of the Torah.

The other two Schools at Rebbe YahShua's time was the School of Hillel and the School of Shammai. Even though it was not His motivation, Rebbe YahShua found His teaching to be in conflict with one school or the other at times. For example, the statement about tithing mint and dill (Matthew 23:23) reflects one of the things included for tithing by Shammai, but not by Hillel (Maaserot 1.1 cf. 4.6; Eduyyot 5.3; Demai 1.3). The reference to enlarging the tzitziyot alludes to another discussion between the two schools. In response to the command to make tzitziyot (Deuteronomy 22:12), Shammai wanted to make broader tzitziyot than the followers of Hillel (Menahot 4). 'they love to be greeted in the marketplaces and to have men call them 'Rabbi.'

'But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have only one Master and you are all brothers. And do not call anyone on earth 'father,' for you have one Father, and he is in heaven. Nor are you to be called 'teacher,' for you have one Teacher, the Messiah. (Matthew 23:7-10)'

It was not sinful to wear tefillin or tzitzit. Yahweh commanded

Israel to wear both the tefillin and tzitzit according to Exodus 13:9,16 and Numbers 15:37-41. But, these hypocrites pretentiously exaggerated the symbols to impress man. The Mishnah points out that some had tzitzit on their talits that were so long they drug behind them on the ground. Isn't it interesting that today it is the Karaites that exaggerate their Tzitzit.

And it was not wrong to call someone Rabbi or Teacher no more than it wrong to call your earthly male parent, father because the Ruach calls us to be teachers and Rabbis or Pastors. The Ruach HaKodesh is the "Teacher," but Yahweh uses anointed humans as His agents to teach His Torah, if they are true to the term, Rabbi. "gave some to be apostles, some to be prophets, some to be evangelists, and some to be pastors and teachers, to prepare Yahweh's people?" It is not wrong to call your biological father, father. Scripture shows that it was permitted for the Patriarchs of Israel to be called father, and also Rabbi Sha'ul called himself father to the believers. Rav Yochannan the Immerser was called Rabbi by his disciples.

Rebbe YahShua is prohibiting Believers from accepting unearned honors, appropriating titles and offices for which they are not anointed or chosen of Yahweh rather than outlawing prohibited titles. Do not seek to be addressed in a way which is glorifying to our selfish pride.

Rabbi Sha'ul called himself an apostle, only stating what work he was assigned. If one says, "I am a Rabbi" as an assigned ministry as the one "who pastors, preaches and teaches," is that an error? Not at all! It would be error only if he believes in his heart that the title makes him a master over the people, instead of a servant to people for right ruling through Messiah. Rabbis, teachers, pastors and elders must first be servants of Yahweh, and not masters. Rebbe YahShua is merely rebuking the principle of arrogance and pride in man's tendency to issue or appropriate titles, without divine sanction and anointing!

The Pastor is to be a Rabbi, a teacher. "Here is a trustworthy saying: If anyone sets his heart on being an Pastor, he desires a noble task. Now the Pastor must be above reproach, the husband of but one wife, temperate, self-controlled, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not given to drunkenness, not violent but gentle, not quarrelsome, not a lover of money. He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. He must not be a recent convert, or he may become conceited and fall under the same judgment as the devil. He must also have a good reputation with outsiders, so that he will not fall into disgrace and into the devil's trap. (1 Timothy 3:1-7)?"

But a Rabbi is not just someone who teaches. All of us have been called to teach. "Let the word of Messiah dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to Yahweh. (Colossians 3:16)?"

The Rabbi is to be one who brings instruction to the whole Movement.

"I gave you milk, not solid food, for you were not yet ready for it. Indeed, you are still not ready. You are still worldly. For since there is jealousy and quarreling among you, are you not worldly? Are you not acting like mere men? For when one says, "I follow Rabbi Sha'ul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not mere men?"

What, after all, is Apollos? And what is Rabbi Sha'ul? Only servants, through whom you came to believe--as the King has assigned to each his task. "I planted the seed, Apollos watered it, but Yahweh made it grow. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only Yahweh, who makes things grow. The man who plants and the man who waters have one purpose, and each will be rewarded according to his own labor. For we are Yahweh's fellow workers; you are Yahweh's field, Yahweh's building. By the grace Yahweh has given me, I laid a foundation as an expert builder, and someone else is building

on it. But each one should be careful how he builds. (1 Corinthians 3:2-10)?

It was in the sect of the Pharisees that Rebbe YahShua and His talmidim identified. This is also the reason that Rebbe YahShua is so involved with them and at times even angry with the Pharisees ? because they were the closest to Him. You do not find Him interacting with the Sadducees this way because they were so far from the Torah. From the point of view of the Pharisees the same is true. Rebbe YahShua is considered to be one of them. We all argue with people closest to us and expose hypocrisy with those we know the best. This is why His crucifixion had to be at night away from the Sanhedrin, which was dominated by the Pharisees. They awoke in horror that day to see one of their own being led up the gallows.

Rebbe YahShua condemns hypocrisy in Matthew 23 not Pharisaic teaching. Even the Talmud condemns the hypocrisy of certain Pharisees criticizing them as hypocrites and insincere. They are labeled as ?sore spots? and ?destroyers of the world? (Berakot 14b; Hagigah 14a; Sotah 3:4).

Legalistically applying Torah will not save anybody. The Rabbis in which Rebbe YahShua finds company have always opposed legalism. The Midrash expounds on it this way, ?Davis said, ?Some trust in their fair and upright deeds and some in the works of their Patriarchs but I trust in You.? Although I have no good works, yet because I call upon You, You will answer me.? Likewise the Pharisees criticized those among them that continually asked, ?What good deed may I do?? In their discussions and commentaries the Rabbis repeatedly refer to Yahweh?s grace which, is the unmerited power given unto mankind to fulfill Yahweh?s will ? Torah. The Midrashim reflect on this Scripture, ?Deal with Your servant according to Your grace (Psalms 119:124),? with this comment, ?Perhaps You take pleasure in Your own good works? Merit and good works we have not, act toward us in grace (Tehillim Rabbah 119:124).?

Our Messiah was making it clear that Yahweh, through His commandments, was calling for true righteousness of the heart.

If we show ourselves to be righteous of heart will be judged as good talmidim and keepers of our Most Holy Faith.

Your Servant,
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