



The Oral Torah and the Messianic Jew

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Moshe received Torah at Sinai and handed it on to Joshua, Joshua to the elders, and the elders to the prophets. And the prophets handed it on to the men of the Great Assembly...

(Pirkei Avot 1:1)

by *Reb Yhoshua*

[Note from Peter: I found this intriguing article on the web and consider it a fascinating perspective on Jews, Messianic Jews/believers, and the Oral Law. It came with the following disclaimer:]

[Note of Messianic613: *This article has formerly been published on an Orthodox Jewish site that later on seems to have disappeared from the web. Since then, we have unsuccessfully tried to contact the author and ask him permission to republish his valuable article. As we are quite willing to obtain this permission, we invite the author to contact us. On his request we will immediately remove the article, if he has objections against a republication in general or on Messianic613's Weblog specifically. We also invite our readers to inform us if they should know the author's whereabouts on the web...*]

Messianic Jews tend to take the Reformation doctrine of Sola Scriptura, Scripture Alone, very seriously. A quick count of the number of Messianic translations of the Bible can demonstrate the Messianic Jewish love of Scriptures. There is The Complete Jewish Bible, the Living Scriptures, The Scriptures, and many more. It is remarkable that a group of New Testament believers who number only in the hundreds of thousands has produced so many translations, not to mention commentaries, on the Bible. Messianic believers have even gone where mainstream Christian scholars have not by producing New Testament translations that use both historical and extrapolated Hebrew and Aramaic manuscripts as their source texts. These translations are invaluable in understanding Jesus' more difficult teachings, many of which can only be properly understood in the context of the Semitic languages they were spoken in.[1] The Church is deeply indebted to Messianic believers for their scholastic efforts. Messianics have born a lot of fruit because of their reliance on Scripture alone, but

with that commitment has come a difficulty understanding some of the precious things that they have inherited from their parent religion.

The doctrine of the Oral Torah is one of the defining beliefs of traditional Judaism. Rabbi Moses Ben Maimon (Maimonides) included it among his Thirteen Principles of the Jewish Faith, [2] all of which a Jew must believe in order to be religiously identified with the people of Israel. Most Messianic Jews reject it as mere tradition, but for Orthodox Jews, it is the backbone of halakha, Jewish Law. It is the flesh on the living frame provided by the Pentateuch. In his introduction to Mishnah Torah Maimonides wrote, "All the precepts which Moses received on Sinai were given together with their interpretation." [3] Contrary to the perception of many Messianic believers, the Oral Torah is not believed by Orthodox Jews to be the collective teachings of the Rabbinical Sages. Traditional Judaism holds that it was divinely revealed to Moses, and passed down to the sages by word of mouth until it was partially codified by Yhudah HaNasi, who gathered it into the Mishnah. [4] Further codification was resisted at first. The Oral Torah was meant to be oral. But when it became clear that the transmission process was decaying even more, Rav Ashi gathered the tradition into the Gomorrah. [5] Together the Gomorrah and the Mishnah comprise the Talmud, the modern embodiment of the Oral Torah. The Talmud, however, is not simply a book filled with laws. It was written in very compact language that was designed to keep the Oral Torah largely oral. Nobody can study the Talmud on his own, and the process of passing the teaching on from teacher to student is still an important part of the transmission of the Torah. [6]

For Messianic Jews, the idea of an enigmatic tradition slipping beneath the radar of history and appearing suddenly and dramatically in the form of the Mishnah seems unlikely. Their disbelief is not unprecedented. There was controversy in Judaism itself concerning the Oral Torah centuries before Jesus was even born. In the first century, the Sadducees and Boethusians denied its very existence. Named for Zadok and Boethus, two students of the famous Talmudic rabbi Antigonus of Sokho, the two sects were created when their founders broke away from Pharisaism because of a misinterpretation of Antigonus' famous statement, "Do not be like servants who serve their Master only for reward, but be like servants who serve their master not just to receive a reward. And let the fear of Heaven rest on you." [7] Zadok and Boethus understood Antigonus' teaching to mean that there was no afterlife, and they rejected belief in eternal reward. They reasoned that their teacher had

abandoned belief in the afterlife because the dogma of eternal reward and punishment did not appear in the written Torah. As a result, they also rejected any other doctrine that was not clearly found in the Five Books of Moses. The Oral Torah fell into that category.[8] By the time of Jesus, most of the priests and aristocrats were Sadducees, but the general public tended to align itself with the Pharisees and remained uninterested in the sect.[9]

The Karaite sect of the eighth century also rejected the validity of the Oral Torah, though they voiced allegiance to the entire Hebrew Bible, which the Sadducees and Boethusians did not. The Karaites resembled modern Torah observant Messianic Jews in a lot of ways. They called themselves, "Followers of the Bible," and they rejected many of the same traditional Jewish practices Messianic Jews reject now: shekhita, the ritual slaughtering of cattle; separation of meat and dairy; and the authority of rabbinical decrees.[10] Though European Karaites won themselves many more civil rights than their traditional counterparts, they were completely ejected from the Jewish community. Today there are only a few thousand Karaites living in small communities in the State of Israel.

Messianic Jews typically take a stand beside the Sadducees and Karaites and hold that the written Torah interprets itself. Among those Messianic groups that believe the written Torah remains intact even today, the rejection of the Oral Torah, second only to a belief in Jesus as the Messiah, is the defining difference they see between themselves and traditional Judaism.[11] There are a few exceptions. Dr. Michael Brown shocked many of those who listened to his tape series, *Let's Get Truthful*, a rebuttal of Rabbi Singer's famous anti-missionary tape series, *Let's Get Biblical*, when he refused to engage Rabbi Singer over the issue of the Oral Law. Brown conceded the point by simply saying, "There's something to the Oral Law." [12] Other Messianic leaders have also taken the minority view. Dr. Stern, former Jews for Jesus board member and popular translator of the Jewish New Testament and Complete Jewish Bible, gave limited support to the idea of an Oral Torah in his Messianic Jewish Manifesto. "There could never have been a time when tradition of some sort was not a necessary adjunct to the written Torah," he writes. "For the written Torah simply does not contain all the laws and customs needed to run a nation." [13] Despite the respect afforded these two scholars within the Messianic Jewish community, their views are not widely accepted. For the most part, Messianic Jewish leaders are resistant and even hostile to the notion that G-d gave Moses anything other than the written text of the Pentateuch at Mount Sinai.

On the opposite pole from Brown and Stern's accepting positions are the views of vehemently anti-Oral Torah Messianic Jews. One Messianic Jew is reported to have asked an unnamed rabbi, "If you are not a missionary, then why have you rabbis lawlessly wrested authority from the kohanim and are now missionizing Jewish people away from the faith squarely founded on true Biblical, apocalyptic Torah Judaism as taught by the Jewish Bible?"[14] In addition to the position that the Oral Torah is a result of a rabbinical hijacking of the Jewish faith, others have contended that it is the result of superstitions carried back to Israel from the Babylonian Exile, or a result of, "Inflated ideas of rabbinic authority...motivated by self-aggrandizement and political ambitions." [15]

There are, of course, calmer voices. Most Messianic Jews view the Oral Torah as simply a mistaken doctrine of traditional Judaism. They are not willing to accept it, but neither are they prepared to level incendiary accusations at those who hold to it. An interesting centrist position among Messianic Jews is that an Oral Torah was given at Sinai, but was meant only for that generation. It was not meant to be binding forever, and its usefulness lasted only a short while.[16]

The matter of the Oral Torah is obviously important and controversial. Different stances on the issue divide the Messianic community and cause additional bitterness between Messianic believers and traditional Jews. What is needed is an objective study of the issue. Any number of factors can cause believers to resist or accept the idea irrationally. Some may reject the Oral Torah simply because the idea is foreign. Most Messianic Jews come to Messianic Judaism from mainstream Protestantism. To a Protestant, the notion that another authority exists beside scripture is high heresy. While many Messianic believers are willing to risk ridicule for believing the written Torah still provides a valid and holy way of life, few are willing to take a stand that would send them careening so far out of the mainstream that their neighbors would begin to whisper cult. Another reason for rejecting the Oral Torah without a hearing would be what psychologists call Entrapment. Entrapment is a process that takes place when a person grows more and more committed to an idea simply because they have sacrificed something for the cause. Many of the more extreme anti-Oral Torah Messianic believers may not be capable of questioning their stance because, after they have stood so firmly against the Oral Torah doctrine, it would be too emotionally traumatic for them to rationally consider recanting.

There is an opposite extreme as well. There are those Messianic believers who feel that by accepting the Oral Torah they will eventually be accepted by mainstream Judaism. Some have fantasies of the State of Israel suddenly granting all Messianic Jews the Right of Return once they all accept the authority of the Oral Torah. Visions of believers in Jesus walking down Ben Yehudah Street in Israeli army uniforms and yarmulkes cloud their eyes and interfere with their capacity to see the merits of reasoned arguments against the doctrine. In the end, however, the issue should not be about the acceptance of Protestantism or Orthodoxy, but about which train of thought is correct. G-d is truth, and nothing false can ever get one closer to Him, even if it does make life easier. If the truth is to be found, it can only be through searching for it in the pages of history and the Bible.

1. History of the Oral Torah

Historians do not agree on how or when the doctrine of an Oral Torah entered Judaism. Though some claim it only arose after the Babylonian exile, there is substantial evidence to the contrary. The apocryphal book Tobit was regarded as Scripture by many Jews, until it was officially rejected and cast out of the canon by a Rabbinical decree in 90AD,[17] and it is still a part of the Eastern Orthodox and Roman Catholic Bibles. Tobit is an adventure story set shortly after the fall of the Northern Kingdom, and it contains some of the earliest references to the Oral Torah in non-canonical, non-rabbinical, Jewish literature. There are references to the duty to bury the dead[18] (Tobit 1:17) as well as the ban on digging or burying the dead on festivals[19] (Tobit 2:4). Neither of these mitzvos[20] appears in the Pentateuch, but are important acts of piety in the Oral Tradition. There are also references to demons, and to marriage contracts.[21] Neither of these appears in their traditional form in the written Torah, but also became important parts of later Judaism. Because the heroes of Tobit are first generation exiles from the Northern Kingdom, the creation of the Oral Torah tradition had to have taken place before the exile of the Kingdom of Israel in 722 BC.

The Qement, a group of Ethiopian Jews, also testify to the antiquity of an Oral Torah doctrine in ancient Judaism. The Qement practice a paganistic form of Judaism that resembles the biblical description of the idolatry of the Northern Kingdom. According to Ethiopian tradition, they, as well as the Falashas, another tribe of Ethiopian Jews, are the products of an encounter between King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba around 950BC. Though the Qement violate many parts of the Torah, they still

retain a few vestiges of Judaism. Among their practices is a form of slaughter known as shekhita, a butchering technique not directly mentioned in the Pentateuch, but described in the Oral Torah.[22] If an animal is not slaughtered in this manner, the Qement will not eat it.

Finally, digs at the sight of the Essene community of Qumran, near the Dead Sea, have unearthed tefillin, or phylacteries, made exactly as they are prescribed in the Oral Torah. In eleventh century France, Rabbi Shlomo Yitzakhi (Rashi) and his grandson Rabbenu Tam, inheritors of the Pharisaic tradition, both claimed to be the latest link in the direct line of the Oral Torah's transmission from Moses. They disagreed, however, on the manner in which phylacteries should be made. Rashi insisted that four passages from the Torah be inserted into the phylacteries in a certain order; Rabbenu Tam reversed the order of the last two parchments. Some of the phylacteries found at Qumran were made according to Rashi's description, and some according to Rabbenu Tam's. There were no other variations. The discovery of the Qumran phylacteries proved that Rashi and Rabbenu Tam were, in fact, the recipients of an oral tradition at least a thousand years old.[23] The discovery of the phylacteries also proved that the Pharisees and the Essenes, two very different Jewish sects, shared a common extra-biblical tradition explaining, "You shall bind them as signs upon your hands." (Duet. 6:8)

But all of the historical evidence simply demonstrates early Hebrew apostasy if there is no trace of the Oral Torah in the Bible. Certainly, the Hebrews were guilty of other forms of religious perversion very early on. They molded the golden calf even as the Torah was being transmitted. It is very possible that the concept of the Oral Torah is just another example of their reprobate hearts going astray.

The formation of a degenerate tradition would have needed to happen very early in the biblical period of Jewish history to affect the Ethiopian Jews, Tobit, and the Essenes. The earliest example of an extra biblical tradition being used by a group of Jews is the example of the Qement and shekhita, dating the development of this example from the Oral Torah to the tenth century BC at the latest. Several hundred years had passed since the revelation at Mount Sinai. Outside of Scripture, history offers very few records of Israelite life before then, so there are limits to the usefulness of a historical search for the Oral Torah. Records simply do not go back far enough to confirm or deny its existence. If conclusive evidence for or against the Oral Torah is going to be found, it must be found in scripture.

Unfortunately, a scriptural search for the Oral Torah is very difficult. Until Sadducean Judaism developed, Jews in the early Rabbinical Period referred to the Written and Oral Torahs collectively as "The Torah."^[24] There is no reason to believe the ancient Israelites would not have done the same. If it is assumed they did, then every verse that admonishes Israel to follow the Law becomes a proof text for the Oral Torah. If it is assumed they did not, then the opposite becomes true. Further, it would be futile to search the Pentateuch for examples of commands from the Oral Torah. The Oral Torah's very nature would exclude their presence in the Pentateuch.

Scripture can shed light on the issue in two ways. If examples can be found of the Jewish people being condemned for following the extra-Biblical practices found in the Oral Torah, or if there are passages that say clearly that Moses only received text from G-d, then it can be assumed there is no valid Oral Torah. On the other hand, for the Bible to support the belief in the Oral Torah, it would have to be demonstrated that Scripture contains either examples of righteous people practicing precepts from the Oral Torah religiously, or passages that refer specifically to an oral tradition being given to Moses alongside the written Torah.

A problem arises with this approach, however. What is Scripture for us was not Scripture for any of the heroes of the Bible. Obviously when Jesus spoke with his contemporaries about Scripture, he did not quote from the Gospel of Matthew or the Epistle of James. These were not written yet. Likewise, the only Scripture in the times of any of the Old Testament characters was the Pentateuch. Acceptance of any other authoritative writings began only after the Babylonian exile. Therefore, if the Bible describes King David acknowledging a portion of the oral tradition, it would be anachronistic to believe that King David was doing so because a similar practice was mentioned in Joshua. The book of Joshua was not Scripture during the reign of King David. If characters in both Joshua and 1 Samuel mention a certain practice not found in the Pentateuch, they are not drawing on each other's authority, but on an extra-biblical source known to both of them. With those guidelines in mind, it should be possible to begin the Scriptural search for some clue regarding the existence, or non-existence, of an oral tradition from Moses.

2. Oral Torah In the Old Testament

When looking in the Old Testament for proof texts for or against the Oral Torah, the immediate evidence seems damning. One encounters several verses in the Torah itself that apparently condemn the idea of an accompanying tradition. "Moses wrote down all of HaShem's words," (Ex. 24:4) and, "You shall not add to what I command you or take away from it, but guard the commands of HaShem your G-d that I give you today." (Duet. 4:2). Together these verses seem to make it clear that there is no Oral Torah. There is also the testimony of Joshua, "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel...." (Joshua 8:35). If Joshua read every word that Moses commanded, then there could not have been an oral tradition that accompanied the written Word. Nothing oral can be read. Very early in the Old Testament, the very idea of an Oral Torah seems to be debunked.

The case, however, is more complicated than it at first appears. Deuteronomy 4:2, "You shall not add to what I command you," cannot be taken as proof against the Oral Torah. The Oral Torah is not believed to be a legislated addition to the text, but a divinely revealed clarification. If it is, then "What I command you..." would include those details that were not written down. "Moses," however, "Wrote down all of HaShem's words;" (Ex. 24:4) and could not have committed any special details to memory to be passed down later. But the Torah does not specify whether at that time Moses recorded every word in the entire Torah, or just all of the words that had been spoken to him until then. Many more commandments were given to Moses after Exodus 23, and Moses could not have written them all down at that point. The verse still provides for the possibility of an Oral Torah.

However, the conjunction and can also mean then in Hebrew. If the verse is translated, "Then Moses wrote down all of HaShem's words," it could be understood as an introductory sentence beginning the tale of how Moses came to transcribe everything HaShem said to him, and the verse would again become proof that he did not receive an Oral Torah. There is room for doubt in either direction.

Joshua 8:35 also leaves room for doubt. In context, it can't be clear what is meant by, "There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read before all the assembly of Israel." (Joshua 8:35) Joshua 8 tells the story of what happened when Joshua divided Israel and stood six of the tribes on Mount Gerizim and the other six on Mount Ebal. The narrative states that, "He read all the words of the Teaching, blessings and curses, according to all that is written in the book of the

Teaching.” (Josh 8:34)[25] The people were commanded in Deut. 27:11-26 to stand on the two mountains and listen to the teachings concerning the rewards for obedience and the punishments for disobedience. Thus, when the Bible says, “There was not a word of all that Moses commanded that Joshua did not read,” it cannot be certain whether there was not a word of all that Moses commanded in the Torah, or whether there was not a word of all that Moses commanded to be read (Deut 27:11-28:68), that Joshua did not read before all of Israel. The evidence against the Oral Torah is not so damning that it does not leave reasonable doubt.

There seems to be a possibility that there was an Oral Torah, but the possibility is not enough to prove its existence. There is also some evidence that it did not exist. Exodus 24:4 and Joshua 8:35 can still be interpreted to condemn the belief that Moses received anything on Sinai besides a written text. Is there any evidence that he did receive an oral tradition?

There are many examples of Biblical characters following and advising others to follow commandments that are not specifically mentioned in the written Torah. The Torah commands, “A woman is not to wear men’s clothing, and a man is not to put on women’s clothing, for whoever does these things is detestable to HaShem your G-d.” (Duet 22:5 CJB)[26] The Hebrew is more ambiguous than its English translation, and the word translated clothing more accurately means gear or equipment.[27] The Oral Torah understands men’s equipment to include not only masculine clothing, but also weapons and war implements.[28] Women were forbidden to even carry swords or armor, and were certainly excluded from military service.[29] Two famous, biblical heroines apparently received a similar tradition. Deborah, the only female judge, held near absolute power in Israel for over forty years (Judges 4:4-5 and 5:31); but when it was time to fight against Israel’s enemy, Sisera, she called on a man, Barak, to lead the troops. Barak, however, refused to go to war unless Deborah went with the army. She reluctantly agreed, but prophesied, “HaShem will hand Sisera over to a woman.” Though Deborah accompanied the army, she wouldn’t go into combat, and sent Barak in her place. (Judges 4:14) Barak routed Sisera’s army, and Sisera was forced to flee on foot to friendly Kenite territory. Jael, the Hebrew wife of a Kenite named Heber, offered Sisera sanctuary.[30] Once he fell asleep, she killed him. Though Sisera was running from a battle, and was undoubtedly heavily armed, Jael felled him with a tent peg rather than his sword. (Judges 4:21)

The prophet Samuel also demonstrated a knowledge and acceptance of the Oral Torah. According to the written Torah, sacrifices were not permitted anywhere but at the Tabernacle. (Lev 17:1-5) The Oral Torah, however, allowed several leniencies for different eras.

Before the Tabernacle was erected, the High Places were allowed.... When the Tabernacle was erected, the High Places were banned.... They came to Gilgal, [and] the High Places were allowed.... They came to Shiloh, [and] the High Places were banned.... They came to Nob and Gibeon, [and] the High Places were allowed.... They came to Jerusalem, and the High Places were banned and never allowed again. (Mishnah Zebahim 14:4-8)

Scripture seems to be much more stringent. After the Tabernacle was erected the written Torah does not seem to endorse the High Places at all. (Lev 17:8-9) One of the most startling proofs that an Oral Torah existed is that the prophet Samuel continued to sacrifice at the High Places after the Tabernacle had been built. When Saul first met Samuel, Samuel was preparing a sacrifice at one of the High Places. (1Sam 9:12-13) Later in Israel's history, Israel would be strongly rebuked for sacrificing at such cult sites, but because the Tabernacle was not at Shiloh or Jerusalem, the text of 1 Samuel seems to defer to the Oral Torah, and allows the apparent transgression to pass without comment. The Bible's lack of rebuke is surprising in the light of Leviticus' warning, "When someone from the community of Israel or one of the foreigners living with you offers a burnt offering or sacrifice without bringing it to the entrance of the tent of meeting to sacrifice it to HaShem, that person is to be cut off from his people." (Lev. 17:8-9) The only explanations possible are that either a leniency existed that was not mentioned in the written text of the Pentateuch, but was ordained by G-d and known to Samuel; or that Samuel was spiritually severed from Israel on the same day that he met Saul. Because Samuel continued to serve G-d and Israel for many more years, it is doubtful that he had been spiritually cut off from his people.

The special exemption that Samuel took advantage of is not the only case of a biblical hero benefiting from a leniency in the Oral Torah. The kingship of King David, and thus of the Messiah, was also only possible through a traditional softening of the written Torah's rigor. The written Torah makes it clear that, "No A'moni [Ammonite] or Mo'avi [Moabite] may enter the assembly of HaShem, nor may any of his descendants down to the tenth generation ever enter the assembly of HaShem." (Deut 23:3)

Mo'avi, the Hebrew word for Moabite, is in the masculine. In Semitic languages, the masculine form of a word is usually the neuter form as well. Mo'avi would normally be seen as referring to all Moabites, both male and female; but the Oral Torah interprets the word Moabite, in this case, in the more narrow sense of only Moabite men. Moabite women, it says, may convert at any time. Ruth, the great-grandmother of David, was the most famous beneficiary of the Oral Torah's special dispensation to Moabite women. If there were no Oral Torah, King David would not have been considered an Israelite.

Some have made the claim that David would have been considered an Israelite through Boaz even though Ruth was a Moabite.[31] There is a common misconception that, biblically, Jewish ethnicity was passed through the father, and the Rabbis changed the system of reckoning because it cannot always be certain who a baby's father is. Dr. Brody writes, "Biblically a person is Jewish if his father was a descendant of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob." [32] This just isn't so. The matriarchs are often used to prove that Judaism was passed patrilineally. They came from non-Jewish households, but their children were considered Jewish because the children's Fathers were Jewish.

It is hard, however, to find a criterion by which the matriarchs were any more or less Jewish than their husbands. Hagar also confuses the issue. She did not have a lineage any more or less tainted than Sarah, but her child was considered a Gentile. Before the Sinai experience, the written Torah is simply not clear on the issue; nor does it clarify its stance in later chapters. In the Torah, being Jewish in the early years of the Patriarchs was not a matter of being part of a chosen people, but of being a chosen individual. Even among twins, one could be Jewish and one not, as in the example of Jacob and Esau. According to Chazal [33] however, the Oral Torah has always taught that minhag, tribal affiliation within Israel, is determined patrilineally; but whether an individual is Jewish or not has been reckoned matrilineally since the revelation at Sinai. Scripture shows that this was Ezra's understanding.

When the Jewish people returned from the Babylonian exile, Ezra demanded that the men who had intermarried send away their foreign wives and the children that had been produced by their illegal unions. (Ezra 10:3) It is hard to understand why Ezra would demand that Jewish children be sent to live in an idolatrous culture unless, of course, they weren't truly Jewish. Moreover, Ezra's stance is said to be, "In accordance with the Torah." (Ibid.) The written Torah never says that the children of foreign women and Israelite men are foreigners; nor does it demand that men divorce their foreign

wives. The only Torah that Ezra could be acting in accordance with would be an oral one. The same Oral Torah the Apostle Paul obeyed when he circumcised Timothy, the son of a Jewish woman and a Gentile man. (Acts 16:2)

The prophet Jeremiah also made a ruling that demonstrates a Scriptural belief in the Oral Torah. Keeping the Sabbath was very important in Jeremiah's day. Today's common practice of simply avoiding activities that feel like work was not sufficient in his era. Desecrating the Sabbath was a breach of civil as well as religious law in ancient Israel, and was considered a capital offence. (Ex 31:14) For public harmony, the laws of the Sabbath had to be clearly defined. The Pentateuch forbade certain activities: lighting fires (Ex 35:3), leaving one's dwelling (Ex 16:29), and gathering sticks (Num. 15:32-36); but it left the definition of work strangely ambiguous. Some feel that this was done purposely, to allow for individual interpretation; but the Oral Torah clarifies the issue with a list of 39 categories of forbidden labor. The Oral Torah interpreted, "Keep my Sabbaths and venerate my sanctuary," (Lev. 19:30) to mean that the Israelites were responsible for keeping the Sabbath on the seventh day, and building the tabernacle on weekdays. Thus, it reasoned, the 39 categories of work that were uniquely necessary to build the tabernacle were the types of labor forbidden on the Sabbath. It is a very strange form of reasoning, and one of the oddest categories enumerated in the Oral Torah is the thirty-ninth form of forbidden labor – carrying an object from a private domain to a public domain and vice versa.[34] As peculiar as the rule is, the prophet Jeremiah rebuked Israel for breaking it. "If you value your lives...don't carry anything out of your houses on Shabbat." (Jer. 17:22) In all the passages in the Pentateuch regarding the Sabbath, none of them ever forbids carrying objects out of one's dwelling. The ban on the thirty-ninth form of forbidden work is found exclusively in the Oral Torah. According to the book of Jeremiah, however, Jerusalem was destroyed for violating this oral tradition. "But if you will not obey me and make the Shabbat a holy day and not carry loads through the gates of Jerusalem on Shabbat, then I will set its gates on fire; it will burn up the palaces of Jerusalem and not be quenched." (Jer. 17:27)

There is more evidence for an oral tradition dating back to the early Old Testament era. The most common examples of the Old Testament acknowledging the Oral Torah's authority are also the most commonly overlooked. They occur so many times, that it is almost never noticed that the Five Books

of Moses never mention them. It is often forgotten that the written Torah never instituted either the calendar or the Temple.

3. The Calendar

After the Communist party took control of Russia, the government immediately decided it was time to bring the newly formed Soviet Union in step with the rest of the world. One of their first acts was to abolish the archaic Julian calendar, which Russia had been using since Orthodox Christianity took hold, and replace it with the Gregorian calendar, which had been in use in the rest of the world for centuries. The change immediately improved the Soviet Union's capacity for interaction with the rest of the world. Banking was easier. A Soviet businessman did not have to write a different date on a check drawn on a foreign bank anymore. Diplomacy was simplified. Russian embassies no longer had to arrange conferences using two different calendars. The Soviet Union was now literally keeping in time with the rest of the world. There was a minor drawback, however. Red October, the anniversary of the Revolution, had not taken place in October according to the Gregorian calendar. It had happened in November. The Soviets changed the date accordingly, but kept the old name. Much to the amusement of the rest of the world, until the fall of the Soviet Union, the Soviet government celebrated a holiday called Red October at the beginning of every November.

For the ancient Hebrews, a calendar change was not so simple. Accurate time keeping was a matter of life and death. Holidays, appointed times to meet with G-d, were set for specific dates. If the Israelites celebrated Yom Kippur, the only day the High Priest was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, on the wrong day, the High Priest would die when he entered the most sacred area of the Tabernacle. Keeping the holidays at the right times was an urgent necessity, and unauthorized calendar reform was out of the question. There was a problem, however. While the written Torah gave clear dates as to when the holidays were to be observed, it gave no indication on how to calculate those dates. It gave no system for tracking the months or even the years. It would be easy to assume that when G-d spoke of the first day of the seventh month (Lev 23:23), he was imposing a date on an already existing calendar; but the Hebrew calendar does not resemble any calendar in use in the area at that time.

The Hebrew calendar used by Jews today isn't the same as the one used by their biblical counterparts. The modern Jewish calendar is a mathematical clock invented when the great Sanhedrin realized the Christian emperor, Constantianus, was going to forcibly disband it.[35] Today's calendar was designed to keep the holidays from creeping out of their proper seasons until the year 2240AD.[36] The biblical calendar was much more complex.

In the ancient world, there were four methods that peoples used to calculate time: by the sun (solar), by the moon (lunar), by the stars (stellar), and arbitrarily. The Hebrew calendar used all four methods. The days were calculated according to the sun, and the weeks were set to a seemingly arbitrary seven-day cycle.[37] The months were determined by the phases of the moon, and the year was set according to the Zodiac's rotation. It was so necessary for the months to stay timed with the proper astrological sign, the Sanhedrin had the power to declare an extra month when the months started to misalign. For ancient Jews, the Zodiac had a G-d given purpose apart from its pagan corruption. It taught them about the holidays.

Because the ancient Egyptians worshiped sheep, and abhorred shepherds (Gen. 46:34), when G-d freed Israel from slavery, he did it in the month of Nissan. On the first night of Nissan, Aries, the lamb, appears on the eastern horizon and ascends through the sky the entire month.[38] G-d ordered the enslaved Jews to wait until the fourteenth of Nissan, the day Aries, the god of the Egyptians, had ascended to the zenith, to slaughter the Passover lamb. (Ex. 12:18-21) When the Egyptian god was apparently at its most powerful, the Jewish slaves slaughtered its earthly representation; and the Jewish G-d slaughtered the Egyptian firstborn in mockery of their fertility god's alleged power. The imagery was so powerful and important that the calendar allowed for the insertion of an extra month right before Nissan if Passover wasn't going to correlate with the ascent of Aries.

The spring festivals weren't the only ones that required synchronism with the Zodiac. According to Jewish tradition, Tishrei, the month of the fall holidays, was when G-d judged mankind every year.[39] As with Nissan, Tishrei was heralded by a sign in the sky. Libra, the scales, ascends on Rosh Hashanah to warn the world that its deeds are being weighed.[40]

None of these unique features of the Hebrew calendar, such as the added month in leap years or the number of days in each month, are mentioned in the written Torah; and they are all so unique that it

is clear that G-d did not set the holidays according to a previously existing calendar. Yet all the Biblical characters followed the Hebrew calendar when they celebrated the feasts. If there was no Oral Torah given to Moses, then the Hebrew calendar was invented by men very early in Israel's history, and the holidays have been off schedule since the conquest of Canaan. Not one of the prophets or kings or, most importantly to the Messianic believer, Jesus himself, could have possibly observed the holidays correctly if the calendar in use was different from the calendar ordained by G-d.

4. The Temple

The Temple too was a product of the Oral Torah. The written Torah never acknowledges Jerusalem as the proper place for worship, and only briefly mentions that the L-rd will someday chose a special place for Himself. (Lev. 18:6) Only the Oral Torah identifies the chosen place as Jerusalem, yet David knew where he wanted to build the Temple. The written Torah also gives detailed instructions for how to build G-d's sanctuary. It was to be a tent erected by the priests. Even if one assumes that David knew through prophecy that Jerusalem was the place the L-rd had chosen, there is no provision in the Torah for a permanent structure to replace the Tabernacle. It was forbidden to add or detract from the commands that G-d gave to Moses (Duet. 4:2), and Moses never wrote down any plan for the Tabernacle to be permanently folded up and put away. If G-d did not pass his plan to someday have a Temple on to Moses, then all of Israel's worship from the reign of Solomon on was invalid. Because Jesus frequented the Temple, Messianic Jews, as believers in Jesus as sinless, can be sure this too was clearly not the case.

5. The Oral Torah in the New Testament

For Messianic Jews, there is no higher authority than Jesus, himself. Becoming like Jesus is one of the life goals of every Messianic Jew. In the matter of the Oral Torah, committed Messianic Jews must follow Jesus just as in every other matter, to be doctrinally consistent. Because of his frequent altercations with the Pharisees, the alleged keepers of the oral tradition, many assume that Jesus did not follow the Oral Torah. It is easy to overly simplify Jesus' relationship with Pharisaic Judaism by anachronistically projecting modern Protestant doctrine into the New Testament. Scholars, however, have noticed that, "The teachings of Jesus show the closest affinity to that of the Pharisees." [41] The fact that Jesus also had differences with the Sadducees, the virulent anti-Oral Torah sect, is often

downplayed; as is the fact that whenever he disagreed with them, it was because he held to a doctrine found only in the Oral Torah – resurrection from the dead.[42] [Peter's note: As ישוע argues in Matthew 22.32, the quote from Exodus 3.6, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob"? He is not the God of the dead but of the living," shows resurrection in the written Torah.] As in the Old Testament, the New Testament's view of the Oral Torah is much more complicated than is commonly assumed.

Jesus and his disciples clearly held to at least some of the Oral Torah. Jesus warned his disciples against making their tefillin wide. (Mt 23:5) Tefillin are leather boxes containing scripture verses that are worn by observant Jewish men in accordance with Deut 6:8, "Tie them [the commandments] on your hand as a sign, [and] put them as frontlets between your eyes." Most Christians take the verse figuratively. Dr. Daniel Botkin, a respected Messianic leader and publisher of Gates of Eden magazine, understands the commandment to be metaphorical as well. "Since there is no actual instructions to make leather boxes," he writes. "It is highly doubtful that this commandment really means, 'Thou shalt make for thyself little leather boxes to strap upon thy hand and thy head when thou prayest.'"[43] Dr. Botkin also points out that the Karaites, too, abandoned the literal interpretation of the mitzvah. However, abandon is the most accurate term for their decision not to follow the custom. Their practice of not wearing tefillin was unique, and not an outgrowth of a previously existing belief. Before the destruction of the second Temple, Judaism split into over twenty different sects, or according to some opinions, 200, and all of them wore tefillin. Tefillin were worn so universally among Jews that the Sadducees, who rejected the Oral Torah, never thought to question their validity. Even some modern Messianic Jewish scholars accept the practice. Dr. Stern, in his Complete Jewish Bible, translates Duet. 6:8, "Tie them on your hand as a sign, put them at the front of a headband around your forehead."

Jesus also seems to have regarded the Oral Torah's interpretation of the written precept as the correct one, otherwise it would be difficult to explain why he would criticize hypocrites for making tefillin wide when, without an Oral Torah, they really should not have made them at all. Many would assert that it is not wrong to wear tefillin, only unnecessary.[44] However, while it is certainly not wrong to wear leather boxes as a fashion statement, Deut 4:2 makes it very clear that making up unauthorized religious requirements is forbidden. Jesus was not afraid to tell the Pharisees when he thought their

customs were man made (Mt 15:7), but he did not condemn them for wearing tefillin. When he commented that the cases should not be made wide, he acknowledged that they should be made, albeit smaller than some of his contemporaries made them. He also acknowledged his acceptance of at least that portion of the Oral Torah. [Peter's note: Or שויע" is taking a literal interpretation of Deuteronomy 6.8 and not regarding an Oral Torah.]

Jesus and his disciples also held a standard of kashrut, proper eating, that was consistent with the Oral Torah. For ancient Jews eating was a religious act, and the early Judeo-Christian believers were no different. The awesome sanctity of eating was so ingrained in the minds and heart of the early believers that even though Paul downplayed it by saying, "Now food will not improve our relationship with G-d – it will be neither poorer if we abstain nor richer if we eat;" (1Cor 8:8) three of the four commandments that the Jerusalem Council insisted all believers observe immediately upon becoming Jesus believers dealt with food. (Acts 15:20&29; 21:25) Two of these came from the Oral Torah: not to eat things sacrificed to idols,[45] and not to eat things strangled.[46] The written Torah does not forbid either of these types of food, yet Jesus, in Revelation, is portrayed as strongly rebuking the communities of Pergamum and Thyatira for breaking the ban on their consumption. (Rev 2:14 & 20) The authority of the Oral Torah in the lives of early Messianic believers cannot be doubted when half of the commands the Jerusalem council required of Gentiles were from the Oral Torah.

Jesus also demonstrated a belief in the oral traditions in his most beloved set of teachings – the Sermon on the Mount. More than a few biblical scholars have noticed that the morality demanded by Jesus in Matthew 5-7 far exceeds that which is written in the five Books of Moses. The Decalogue forbids adultery; Jesus forbids adulterous thoughts. The Decalogue forbids murder; Jesus forbids anger. Many see this as an example of Jesus' higher calling, but few acknowledge the question his words create. If Deuteronomy 4:2 forbids adding to the commandments, wouldn't Jesus be sinning by demanding so much more than the written Torah asks, something completely inconsistent with Christian and Messianic theology?

It is easy to dismiss the question by relying on the doctrine that Jesus was G-d and reasoning that as such he could do anything he wanted. Such reasoning ignores that Christian and Messianic doctrine also maintains that he was the Son of G-d, and a man bound by his Father's law. Nobody would

suggest that if Jesus murdered someone it would not be a sin. Thousands of protesters gathered in front of movie theaters when they believed *The Last Temptation of Christ* suggested he had committed sexual sins with Mary the Magdalene. Everybody understands that if Jesus could do whatever he liked without it being counted a sin, the claim that he was sinless would be meaningless. It is a basic New Testament teaching that when Jesus walked the earth he was perfectly obedient to G-d's will. That obedience would have to include not adding to the Torah. (Deut 4:2)

Yet if G-d only gave Moses the Written Torah, the Sermon on the Mount would not, as Christianity and Messianic Judaism clearly hold, be a sterling example of Jesus' brilliance and authority. It would be a demonstration of his sinfulness in violating Deut. 4:2. [Peter's note: Believers in ישוע do not see His teaching as adding to Torah, but clarifying God's original intent, as in Matthew 19.3-9.] His claim to be anything more than a mere sinner would be condemned by his most cherished teachings. However, careful study reveals startling similarities between Jesus' Sermon on the Mount teachings and teachings Jews believe had been passed down orally from Moses. If Jesus was teaching from an authoritative oral revelation given to Moses, then he did not disobey G-d by adding to His word during the Sermon on the Mount.

Many scholars have struggled with Jesus' teaching, "You have heard that our fathers were told, 'Do not commit adultery.' And I tell you that a man who even looks at a woman with the purpose of lusting after her has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Mat 6:27) It seems to demand something impossible of men, something the written Torah never asked. Even Jewish scholars have questioned its source. Conservative Jewish Rabbi Joseph Telushkin writes concerning Jesus' words, "Judaism's attitude is that the deed, not the thought, is what counts. That's why the Seventh of the Ten Commandments legislates, 'You shall not commit adultery.'"[47] However, Jesus was not arbitrarily adding an unnatural stringency to the Torah; he was teaching from a tradition Moses received at Sinai, "Not only is he who sins with his body considered an adulterer, but he who sins with his eye is also considered one." [48]

Jesus' comments, "If your right eye makes you sin, gouge it out and throw it away...If your right hand makes you sin, cut it off and throw it away," (Mat 5:29-30) have also tormented readers for thousands of years. Some, understanding that vv. 27-30 are all teachings on lust, have suggested

Jesus condoned castration. Origen, for example, castrated himself to fulfill Jesus' command. Nietzsche too ascribed to Origen's interpretation when he mocked the verse by saying, "It is not precisely the eye that is meant."^[49] Unfortunately for Origen, neither he nor Nietzsche was familiar with rabbinical literature.

Jesus certainly didn't mean for his followers to emasculate themselves. G-d forbade the Israelites to subject even their animals to painful castration. (Lev. 22:24) Mention of cutting off one's hand within the context of a teaching on lustful thoughts and improper glances was simply a quote from the Oral Torah, "The hand that frequently touches [the genitals]...in the case of a man, should be cut off."^[50] Jesus was using the same hyperbole with his audience that G-d used with Moses to communicate the sinfulness of masturbation. It is extremely unlikely that he ever intended for any kind of amputation to take place.

Jesus' ideas on prayer mirror those in the Oral Torah, as well. He taught his disciples not to babble when they prayed (Mat. 5:7), and advised them to never stop praying for something they really needed. (Luke 18:1-6) What Jesus called babbling, Chazal labeled calculating, purposely making one's prayers long so that they would be answered. Calculating, or babbling, was forbidden by the Oral Torah;^[51] and just as Jesus advised his disciples to continue asking G-d for what they wanted, the Oral Torah commanded the Israelites, "If a man realizes that he has prayed and not been answered, he should pray again."^[52]

6. The Oral Torah Then and Now

It is clear that early believers believed in an Oral Torah. Jesus taught from it during the Sermon on the Mount, and the Apostles commanded even Gentiles to keep portions of it. When rumors circulated that Paul had apostatized from the Torah, the other apostles took measures to confirm he had not been, "Telling them [Jewish believers] not to have b'rit-milah for their sons and not to follow the traditions." (Acts 21:21 emphasis added) But was the Oral Torah Jesus and his disciples ascribed to the same as the one modern Judaism possesses? It would be very nice if it were. As complicated as the Talmud is, at least it is in writing and still very much extant. If the Talmud is the embodiment of the tradition Moses received at Sinai, it is in existence today, and available for study. If the earliest

believers knew of an Oral Torah different from the one that is preserved in the Talmud, then Messianic Jews are faced with the very difficult project of recovering it.

Some Messianic Jewish leaders have already suggested that option. "A Messianic Jew who realizes that the Torah still is in force under the New Covenant ought to be full of questions," writes Dr. Stern. "One can imagine creating a body of New Testament case law much like the Talmud, the Codes and Response of Judaism."^[53] Is there such a need?

Spiritually speaking, the easy route never seems to be the proper, or even the available one. The road is always hard and the gate is always narrow. (Mat.) With the Oral Torah, the case is the same. There is considerable evidence that though Jesus and his disciple did believe in an Oral Torah, it was not the Oral Torah, i.e. the one embodied in the Talmud. Jesus' Oral Torah seems to have possessed explanations the Talmud lacks, and to not have had ones the Talmud does.

Immersion is one such example. Jesus approached John by saying, "Let it be this way now, because we should do everything righteousness requires." (Mat 3:15) There is no commandment in the written Torah to be immersed for the remission of sins, nor does the Talmud possess such a mitzvah. Why Jesus and John felt that righteousness required immersion is a mystery for many modern scholars. Jews of the time, including the Pharisees, Essenes, and Sadducees, required periodic immersions in a mikvah, a body of naturally gathered rainwater; but the immersion was only for the removal of ritual impurity, and had to be repeated. Outside of the early Messianic community, no first century Jewish sect practiced a ritual involving a one-time immersion for the cleansing of sins. The Talmud does mention a story that may indicate where the idea came from. According to legend, after Adam and Eve sinned and were evicted from Eden, they stood in a river up to their necks to remove the stain of sin. Also, a proselyte to Judaism was said to be a new person when he emerged from the mikvah. Naturally, because he was a brand new person, all of his previous sins were expiated. However, this was only true of Gentiles coming into the Jewish faith. For Jews to try to reap the same reward from the mikvah would have been an innovation.

If the examples of Adam and Eve and proselytes were the sources for John and Jesus' idea of immersion for the remission of sin, then it would still be possible for the Oral Torah they knew to be identical with the one that is preserved today. What's more, because Jesus believed himself sinless,

his immersion could not have been for repentance. There is a passage in the Talmud that indicates Jesus' immersion was not for remission of sins and not an innovation without precedent. According to the Oral Torah, a King should be anointed at a river so that his reign would be long like the river itself.[54] If John saw his immersion of Jesus as a way of recognizing Jesus as king, then the immersion was done in a manner keeping with Oral Torah. Immersion for the remission of sins, however, was either the result of a reinterpretation of the significance of the mikvah, or the product of a tradition separate from the one preserved in modern Judaism. It is unclear which was the case. The difference between the Messianic communities' understanding of the Mikvah and the traditional understanding is not great enough to preclude the possibility that they are both the product of the same oral tradition.

The significance given to immersion by the early believing community is not the only example of an early Messianic practice diverging from its Pharisaic counterpart only enough to point to a possible difference in the core tradition. The manner in which the early Messianic believers accepted newcomers to the faith was done largely in accordance with the Oral Torah as preserved in the Talmud. Pharisaic Judaism too immersed newcomers before accepting them as members of the community. Unlike traditional Judaism, however, the early Messianic community did not demand that Gentile newcomers become circumcised, a necessity according to the Talmud. However, there were opinions even within Pharisaic Judaism that circumcision was unnecessary for people wanting to join the community; and James' reluctance to make Gentile believers circumcise themselves may have also been due to another aspect of the Oral Torah – Gentiles were not to be allowed to become circumcised and convert after the Messiah came, and James firmly believed he had.

There are, however, passages that make it clear that the Oral Torah Jesus and the apostles knew was not the one that the Talmud embodies. Jesus's concept of what was permitted on the Sabbath was different from what the Talmud preserves as the law. Jesus did not seem to consider plucking grain one of the forms of work forbidden on the Sabbath. (Mat. 12:1-8) He also seemed to regard human well-being, not just human life, as a cause for breaking the Sabbath.[56] That compassion would take precedent over the Sabbath seems obvious to most people, but the issue is not just one of compassion. It is certainly one of tradition. The Pharisees, too, were concerned with compassion; but the controversy was over which acts were truly compassionate.

Christianity maintains a belief in a spiritual world and a physical world. Judaism and other ancient religions, such as Hinduism, blur the line between the two. The physical world is not seen as a separate reality from the world of the spirit, but as the spirit world's exposed edge that pokes through into the realm of our perceptions. When the Pharisees forbade healing on the Sabbath (except in the case of mortal danger), they were not saying that the Sabbath was more important than curing human suffering. They were holding to a tradition that taught that the damage done in the spiritual world by breaking the Sabbath would, in the end, create more human suffering than waiting until after Shabbat to cure a person would.

Of all the differences between the New Testament and the Talmud, perhaps the most interesting is Jesus's words to the Pharisees, "Which one of you wouldn't raise his sheep from a hole on Shabbat?" Rescuing the sheep would be a violation of the Sabbath according to modern Jewish law.[57] The verse seems to indicate that even the group of Pharisees Jesus was speaking to held a different tradition than the one preserved in modern Judaism.

That different groups would have different versions of the Oral Torah is absolutely consistent with the doctrine. If a tradition is passed on from generation to generation it is only natural for the transmission to result in discrepancies. Judaism solved the problem by reasoning that whatever the majority of people received as the tradition was probably closer to the original than the minority view. Even in Judaism, it is accepted that the majority was not always correct. Sometimes, the majority believed G-d gave Moses an interpretation he had not. However, even when this was the case, the majority was still followed. Otherwise, the minority would always believe the majority was wrong, and continue practicing according to its opinion. Sects and schisms would appear, and the survival of the Jewish people would be threatened. Because the sages believed that the Judaism's survival was more important than being correct on every single aspect of the Torah, the majority was always followed, even when it was known to be wrong.[58] [Peter's note: This revealing comment explains much, not only about the conflict between יִשׂוּעַ and certain Jews, but the way the world works today. It's interesting to think that more Pharisees might have agreed with יִשׂוּעַ, but not willing to admit it for fear of social upset.] Jesus' view, as well as that of those Pharisees who would have rescued the sheep, was a dissenting opinion. Deut. 7 makes it clear that after the law was codified as it is today, it is a Torah requirement to keep it.

7. Conclusions

It is clear that there was an Oral Torah given at Mount Sinai. Tribes separated from Judaism since the first Temple period keep parts of it, and righteous members of the exiled Northern Tribes observed at least a segment of it. The Judges and Prophets made it a part of their lives, and the Apostles even instructed Gentile new comers to the fledgling Messianic faith to keep two of its commands. But what is its relevance for Messianic believers today?

For those who accept that the New Testament never abrogated the older one, it is clear that they should keep the Oral Torah with as much devotion as they observe its written counterpart. It is one Torah, given by the same G-d. Until the Sadducees arose to question the validity of the oral half, righteous Jews simply referred to both pieces as, "The Torah." (Pirkei Avot 1:1) With the scriptures so clear, it seems Biblically mandated that Jews of every ilk to follow its teachings.

Jesus told his disciples, "The Torah teachers and the P'rushim [Pharisees]...sit in the seat of Moses. So whatever they tell you, take care to do it. But don't do what they do, because they talk but don't act." (Mat 23:2-3 JNT) The particular Pharisees Jesus was talking about mouthed Pharisaic doctrines while swallowing widows' houses and praying for show. (Mat 23:14) It would seem that it is their negative actions, not their traditionalism that he condemned; their works not their beliefs. Even when he chastises them for being extra scrupulous with their tithes while neglecting mercy and justice, he tells them, "You should do the latter without neglecting the former." (Mat 23:23) He was not opposed to their acts of piety, but to the hypocrisy some of them displayed. Should Messianic Jews practice the Oral Torah as passed down by the Pharisees even though it does not appear to be the one Jesus knew?

The differences between the two aren't great. Jesus and his disciples appear to have shared a common tradition with the Pharisees regarding kashrut, tefillin, and morality. On the Sabbath they diverge; but only on the issue of whether the Sabbath should be violated to protect human life or also to enrich it. However, if they clearly diverged over the Sabbath, where did they differ that we no longer know about? Perhaps it is time for the code of New Testament Case Law that Dr. Stern spoke of to be written. In any case, Messianic Jews must begin the process of education. "Any scribe who

becomes a scribe for the Kingdom of Heaven is like a something that brings forth new treasures with the old," Jesus said. (Mat. 13:52) Messianic Judaism needs a few such scribes.

[1] David Blivin and Roy Blizzard, Jr. *Understanding the Difficult Words of Jesus*, (Shippensburgh, Pa: Destiny Image Publishers, 1994), p67

[2] Maimonides, *Commentary to Mishnah, (Sanhedrin ch. 10)*. Maimonides does not use 'Oral Torah' in his *Ani Maamin*. It is universally accepted that Principles eight and nine refer to both the Written and Oral Torahs.

[3] Isadore Twersky. *A Maimonides Reader*. (New York: Luhrman House, Inc. 1972), p35

[4] Ibid p36

[5] Ibid p37

[6] Jacob Neusner, *An Invitation to the Talmud*. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, 1973), Foreword p.xi

[7] Pirkei Avos 1:3

[8] Reuban Kaufman. *Great Sects and Schisms in Judaism*. (New York: Jonathan David Publishers.), 1967. P24

[9] Josephus. Antiquities XVIII. 1, 4

[10] Kaufman, *Sects*, pp40-42.

[11] Carol Calise. "Messianic Judaism versus Rabbinic Judaism" (www.bethemanuel.com/messj.htm)

[12] Dr. Michael L. Brown. *Let's Get Truthful*, tape I

[13] Dr. David H. Stern, *Messianic Jewish Manifesto*. (Clarksville: Jewish New Testament Publications, 1991) p148

[14] Anonymous, *How to Point to Moshiakh In Your Rabbi's Bible*, (Artist's for Israel International, 1995).

[15] Dan Levine, "Is the Oral Torah Binding for Jewish Believers in Jesus?" *Gates of Eden*, Jul-August 2000, vol 6 No.4, p. 18. In keeping with the *Gates of Eden* copyright policy all *Gates of Eden* articles sited will be reproduced in their entirety as endnotes. Letter to the Editor are sited under Fair Use. Daniel Botkin has bimonthly publication, *Gates of Eden*. For a sample issue, write to PO Box 2257, East Peoria, IL 61611-0257

[16] Ariel and D'vorah Berkowitz, *Torah Rediscovered*. (Lakewood, Co: First Fruits of Zion, 1996), p. 87.

[17] James Beasley, *An Introduction to the Bible*. (Nashville, TN: Abingdon Press, 1991) pp. 55-56.

[18] Mishnah Sanhedrin 6:5

[19] Mishnah Shabbos 7:2

[20] *Mitzvots* are good deeds or commandments.

[21] Marriage Contracts, or *ketubot*, are not a part of the Oral Torah, but were instituted as part of a rabbinical decree meant to protect women from frivolous divorce. The custom seems to have had its origin much farther back than the decree and is universally known among the scattered Jewish communities. See Babylonian Talmud, Ketubos 39b

[22] Graham Hancock. *The Sign and the Seal*. (New York: Simon and Schuster, 1992.) p. 246.

[23] Hosit, "Teffilin", *The Encyclopedia Judaica*.

[24] See Pirkei Avos 1:1 where the Oral Torah is simply called, "The Torah."

[25] I have translated the Hebrew word, *Torah*, as *Teaching* rather than *Law*. Not only is this a more accurate translation, it also helps illustrate the ambiguity present in the meaning of the Hebrew text.

[26] Stern, *Complete Jewish Bible*. (Clarksville, MD: Jewish New Testament Publications, Inc. 1998). Here and elsewhere, where Stern translates the Tetragrammaton's *A/donai*, it is rendered *HaShem*.

[27] W. Gunther Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary*. (New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1981) p. 1485.

[28] Women's gear was defined as feminine clothing, hair dye, cosmetics, and anything women usually use to beautify themselves. On a recent trip to Jerusalem, a sales clerk informed the author that men are permitted to dye their hair unnatural colors such as pink and blue because this is not considered 'beautifying'. The author was able to confirm this with several lower level yeshiva students, but not with a rabbi or higher-level scholar. One yeshiva rebbe flatly denied it, and his opinion should be followed. Piercings are permitted wherever the prevailing culture considers them gender appropriate and there is no risk of infection.

[29] Theodore Gaster, *Myth, Legend and Custom in the Old Testament*. (New York: Harper and Row, 1969) pp. 316-318.

[30] Judges does not specifically say that Jael was a Hebrew, but her name is Hebrew for "The L-rd is G-d," and it is hard to see why a native Kenite would have a Hebrew name or attack a needy ally.

[31] It is inaccurate to say that Ruth was a Moabite. While she was certainly born a Moabite, it is clear that she converted to Judaism and became fully Jewish. Evidently she had converted when she married Naomi's son, or she would not have been allowed to marry Boaz under the law of *Halitzah* (Deut 25:5-10) as Israelite men were not permitted to take foreign wives. (Ezra 9:2)[32] Harold Brody, "Who is a Rabbi, Who is a Jew," *Petah Tikvah*. (Rochester, NY)

[33] *Chazal* is a Hebrew acronym for Our Sages of Blessed Memory, and is used to refer to the sages of the Talmud.

[34] Mishnah Shabbos 7:2. The Mishnah forbids carrying anything from one domain to another. The classes of domains are more complex than the simple difference between private and public property. For example, everything within a walled city is considered one domain; however, apartments in an apartment building are different domains.

[35] Anonymous, "The New Moon and the Power of Judaism" sited from: (www.beingjewish.com/yomtov/chodesh/newmoon.html)

[36] 2240AD is the year 6000 on the Hebrew calendar, the date the Rabbis calculated as the latest the Messiah could possibly come. They expected him to restore the Sanhedrin's power to declare the beginning of the months and the leap year, and they didn't bother adding more features to the calendar to fortify it indefinitely against seasons' creeping. The average Hebrew year is .0046 days longer than the average solar year; so the holidays will creep out of their proper seasons in 6880AD.

[37] The seven-day, biblical week is so common today that few people realize how arbitrary it is. The Bible reports that it's length is in memory of creation (Gen. 2:1-4 & Ex 20:11), but other cultures, which did not share a belief in the biblical creation account, used other periods for their week. The Roman week had eight days, some Africans use five days, and the Yoruba week lasts sixteen days. Anthony Aveni, *Empires of Time*. (New York: Basic Books, Inc. 1989), p107

[38] Gad Erlanger, *Signs of the Times: The Zodiac in Jewish Tradition*. (New York, NY: Feldheim Publishers, 1999), p. 27.

[39] Edward Chumney, *The Seven Festivals of the Messiah*. (Shippensburgh, PA: Treasure House, 1994.), p. 105.

[40] Erlanger, p. 121.

[41] Wilson, *Abraham*. P. 40.

[42] The Talmud says that the resurrection from the dead actually does appear in hidden form in the written Torah. Daniel (Dan 12:2) also contains references to resurrection, however, the canon of the Old Testament past the Torah (called the Nakh in traditional Judaism) is the product of a Rabbinical Injunction made in 90AD, and can't be considered authoritative in an argument that took place c.28 AD. In any case, in Jesus' time, the Nakh was considered holy only by Pharisees, and was much larger than the present day Hebrew Bible. The "Bible" of Pharisaism in Jesus' time was very similar to the Catholic Old Testament, which is why the Sadducees mocked the book of Tobit (Tob 3:8), a book in the Pharisaic canon, when they attacked Jesus for holding to the hope of resurrection, a Pharisaic doctrine. (Mt 22:23-28; Mk 12:18-22)

[43] Dr. Daniel Botkin, "Magic Squares, 666, & The Mark of the Beast," *Gates of Eden*, vol. 6 no.2, March-April 2000, p. 13.

[44] Botkin, "Magic Squares, 666, & The Mark of the Beast." p. 13.

[45] Mishnah Avodah Zorah 2:3

[46] Mishnah Chullin 1:2. If the disciples at the Jerusalem synod used 'strangled' in the same way Chazal did, they actually forbade meat slaughtered with all but the sharpest knife and greatest care.

[47] Rabbi Joseph Telushkin, *Jewish Wisdom*. (New York, NY: William Morrow and Company, Inc., (1994), p. 136.

[48] Leviticus Rabba 23:12

[49] Robert Sheaffer, *The Making of the Messiah*. (Buffalo, NY: Prometheus Books, 1991), p. 17.

[50] Mishnah Nidah 2:1.

[51] Babylonian Talmud, Berekhot 32b.

[52] Babylonian Talmud, Berekhot 32b.

[53] Stern, *Manifesto*, p. 158.

[54] Tosefta, Sanhedrin 4:10.

[55] Babylonian Talmud, Yebemos 46a and b.

[56] Compare Mat. 12:12 and Talmud, Shabbos 132a.

[57] Stern, *Manifesto*, p. 112.

[58] Talmud, Bava Metzia 59b.

About the Author

Reb Yhoshua is a man of very small stature, and fancies himself the Yiddishe Martha Stewart, without the insider trading. He is author of several articles on Messianic Judaism and its relationship to Torah and history, and is translator and author of *The Illuminated Tikkun Chatzos*, which nobody has ever read except himself.

He liked it.