

Y'shua, Sha'ul and the Oral Law

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PROFESSOR WA LIEBENBERG

Y'shua, Sha'ul and the Oral Law

A special thank you to all the "truth" seekers who contributed to make this concise exposition of the Oral Law a reality. I have cited you in the footnotes and salute you for your exceptional research work, without your great insight this book would not be a reality. It is my prayer that the citations will lead the reader to your work. The book is written in such a way that it is easily understandable for Christians. It is my prayer that many Christians will receive the truth and be transformed.

by
Professor WA Liebenberg

Academic Proofread by: Ed Garner BTh. MSc.

The 1998 Scriptures Bible has been used as basis
unless otherwise referenced

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Distributed by:
Hebraic Roots Teaching Institute
Pretoria – South Africa
Email: products@hrti.co.za
Mobile: +27 (0)83 273 1144

Facebook Page: "Hebraic Roots Teaching Institute"
Website: <http://www.hrti.co.za>

Preface

YHWH "God" has called us to do two things. First, we are to never give up studying and seeking the correct interpretation of any given Bible passage. Second, such opportunities are golden moments for us to learn to show grace and love to others whose understanding of a given passage may differ from ours.

Throughout the HRTI's teachings, we use a slightly different vocabulary to that which some might be accustomed. We have chosen to use what many refer to as a Messianic vocabulary. The reasons being: firstly, using Hebraic-sounding words is another way to help you associate with the Hebraic Roots of your faith. Secondly, these words are not merely an outward show for us, they are truly an expression of who we are as Messianic Jews and Gentiles who have "taken hold" of our inheritance with Israel.

Instead of saying "Jesus", we call our Saviour "Y'shua" – the way His parents would have addressed Him in Hebrew. In addition, rather than referring to Y'shua as "Christ", we use the word "Messiah" – which is an Anglicized version of the Hebrew word, Moshiach.

"YaHoWaH" is the name of God in Hebrew, where it is written as four consonants (YHWH or YHVH, as the W and V are derived from the same Hebrew letter 'vaw'). These four letters are called the Tetragrammaton (Greek for "[a word] having four letters"). Jews ceased to use the name in the Greco-Roman period, replacing it with the common noun Elohim ("God") to demonstrate the universal sovereignty of Israel's God over all others. At the same time, the divine name was increasingly regarded as too sacred to be uttered and was replaced in spoken ritual by the word Adonai ("My Lord"). From about the 6th to the 10th century the Masoretes (Jewish scholars who were the first to add vowels to the text of the Hebrew Bible) used the vowel signs of the Hebrew words Adonai or Elohim as the vowels for YHWH; and later on the artificial name *Jehovah* was produced. Christian scholars and translators after the Renaissance and Reformation periods replaced the sacred name YHWH with GOD and LORD (all in capital letters in the Bible); which was a strategic move of satan for not using the Name. The Sacred Name occurs 6,828 times in the Hebrew text of the Bible, proving YHWH wants us to use it.

In the 19th and 20th centuries, biblical scholars again began to use the form Yahweh and it is now the conventional usage in Biblical scholarship; but leading Hebrew Scholars suggest YHWH should be pronounced as Yah-oo-VaH (Y'shua is derived from YaH-shuvah which means YaH saves. Yah (יָהּ) is an abbreviation of God's name, YHWH, as seen in Psalm 68:4. The Name is also found in the word hallelu-YaH, which means "you praise the LORD").

Is the Oral Law Evil or Not?

There are more than 17 Scriptural facts in the Messianic Writings that Y'shua adhered to the traditions of the Jews as prescribed in the Oral Law suggest that.

Sha'ul taught the Oral Law to the lost sheep of the House of Israel with unrestrained effort and even instructed them to obey them:

2 Thess 2:15: *So, then, brothers, stand fast and **hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or by our letter.***

Notice that he particularly mentions traditions that were delivered by "word of mouth".

Sha'ul gave severe instructions regarding dealings with people who did not keep the "traditions" or Oral Law:

2 Thess 3:6 *But we command you, brothers, in the Name of our Master Y'shua Messiah, that you **withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which you received from us.***

Sha'ul makes it clear he not only kept the Written Law but the Oral Law as well:

1 Cor 11:1-2: *Become imitators of me, as I also am of Messiah (meaning the same as Y'shua did). 2 And I praise you, brothers, that you remember me in every way and **keep the traditions as I delivered them to you.***

What does Sha'ul say to Believers about those who try to prevent people from observing the traditions of the Jews?:

Rom 16:17: *Now I call upon you, brothers, **watch out for those who cause divisions and stumbling, contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.***

Final thought: Whether one accepts it or not, it is a fact attested to by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, that even in His final hour, Y'shua did not stop practicing the Halachic¹ rites of Orthodox Judaism. Even educational Jewish learning books, such as the Encyclopedia Judaica, say that "***the New Testament provides us with undeniable evidence that Yeshua did not oppose any prescription of the Written or Oral Torah.***"

¹ Halachah is the collective body of Jewish religious laws, based on the Written and Oral Torah, including the 613 mitzvot, and later talmudic and rabbinic law, as well as customs and traditions compiled today in the Shulchan Aruch, "the Code of Jewish Law." Judaism classically draws no distinction in its laws between religious and non-religious life; Halachah guides not only religious practices and beliefs, but numerous aspects of day-to-day life. Halachah is also translated as "the path" or "the way of walking".

Important Note:

The purpose of this publication is to compare the validity of the Oral Law to the Written Law. It must be emphasized that our salvation is NOT by adherence to either the Oral or Written Law (Eph 2:9). Salvation is by faith in Y'shua (Eph 2:8) followed by Halachah.

The Calling of Sha'ul

Sha'ul was earmarked by YHWH whilst in his mother's womb.

This clearly tells us that he was extraordinary! Sha'ul describes his calling in terms similar to the prophet Jeremiah, who was also chosen while in the womb:

*Jer 1:4-5: 4 Now the word of YHWH came to me, saying, 5 "**Before I formed you in the belly I knew you, and before you came out of the womb I did set you apart – I appointed you a prophet to nations.**"*

The sovereign control of YHWH is inferred here, who carries out His purposes through men He chooses, Sha'ul was selected by YHWH.

Sha'ul's Descendants

Sha'ul describes his upbringing and his training in a number of places. First, he identifies with the Hebrew people and with Abraham's descendants:

*2 Cor 11:22: Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they sons of Yisrael? **So am I.** Are they Avraham's descendants? **So am I.***

Sha'ul's Tribal Affiliation

Next, he identifies his tribal affiliation:

*Rom 11:1: I say then, has Elohim rejected His people? Let it not be! For I also am a Yisra'elite, of the seed of Abraham, of **the tribe of Binyamin.***

Sha'ul's Training as a Pharisee and Gamaliel

Sha'ul, apart from Y'shua, had probably undergone the best training and education in the Torah compared than any other person in history.

And he admits **proudly** to his upbringing as a Pharisee:

*Acts 23:6: Now Sha'ul, perceiving that one part were Sadducees and the other Pharisees, cried out in the council, "**Men, brothers, I am a Pharisee, the son of a Pharisee, I am being judged concerning the expectation and resurrection of the dead!**"*

While in Jerusalem under arrest, Sha'ul answered the crowds regarding the accusations made against him. In these remarks, he describes his own upbringing and training under Rabbi Gamli'el:

Acts 22:3: *I am indeed a Yehudite, having been born in Tarsos of Kilikia, but brought up in this city **at the feet of Gamli'el, having been instructed according to the exactness of the Torah** of our fathers, being ardent for Elohim, as you all are today.*

Who was Gamaliel, the teacher who trained Sha'ul?

Gamaliel was one of the most famous and greatest of all the Pharisees throughout history. *Gamli'el the Elder* or *Rabban Gamli'el I*, as he was known, was a leading authority in the Sanhedrin in the mid-1st century CE. He was the son of *Simeon ben Hillel* and grandson of the great Jewish teacher *Hillel the Elder*, and died twenty years before the destruction of the Second Temple in Jerusalem (70 CE). He fathered a son, whom he called Simeon, after his father, and a daughter. Gamli'el, was a great one of the rabanim, one of the leaders at the sanhedrin.

Sha'ul the Rabbi

Sha'ul was a prominent rabbi, well learned in the Torah and the law of the Jews. Shaul was zealous for the **tradition of the fathers**, also known as the **Oral Law**.

It was the understanding of first and second centuries rabanim that if the Oral Law wasn't recorded in writing it would be lost forever. So they compiled the customs and traditions along with some useful information only found in these compilations. And so lived this great rabbi, Sha'ul, a man born in Tarsus of Cilicia, a Roman citizen brought up in Judea.

Did Sha'ul start off as a Jew and end up as a Christian?

Some think he began as a Jew and ended as a Christian. They think he changed his name from Sha'ul to Paul and that was his new name from then on. Some even try to say that Paul was the Greek or Latin form of Saul or Sha'ul.

This couldn't be further from the truth, as the two names have completely different meanings. Paulos is from Latin and means "small"; Sha'ul on the other hand is Hebrew and means "prayed for" or "asked for." Why two names? Well, every Jewish boy or one that comes into faith in the galut (diaspora; land outside of Hebrew speaking Israel), has a local name in accord with the language of the place, and a Hebrew name that is used exclusively during synagogue services nowadays. The names don't have to be the same and usually do not have the same meaning. In acts 13:9 we read that "*Sha'ul, who is **also** called Paul...*" Note that it doesn't say "instead of," but it says "also."

The truth is that he was probably born Paulos as a Roman citizen in a Greek speaking country, and at his circumcision was given the name Sha'ul. He was raised in Jerusalem as a Pharisee by a great Pharisee. Common practice would therefore be followed – he would be called by his

name was therefore commonly called by everyone his Hebrew name Sha'ul.

The language of Sha'ul

Religious Jews in the first century didn't really do business with non-Jews, thus being limited in their Greek speaking, some of them not knowing any Greek whatsoever. The lingua franca in the orient at the time was Aramaic and not Greek. We see in Acts 21:37 that the commander was **surprised** that Sha'ul could speak Greek. If it was so common for the Jews in Judea to know Greek, there would not be a moment of surprise on account of the commander. He even goes on to say that he thought Sha'ul was an Egyptian rebel, in other words, an Egyptian who can't speak Greek. Because all of that region spoke Aramaic, making Greek almost unnecessary to learn if you were not immersed in Greek society.

Commerce, however, leaned heavily on Koine Greek. Sha'ul, being a Roman citizen was also knowledgeable in the Greek language, and probably the only writer of the Messianic Writings² that knew and maybe wrote in Greek, with the exception perhaps of Luke.

Sha'ul has to be one of the most challenging minds of those pages. His ideas put on parchment could cause unlearned people to stray from the ways set by YHWH, as was the case. One should be thoroughly learned in the Torah in order to fully understand his teachings.³

The Reputation of Sha'ul as a Pharisee

Before he met the Messiah, the Rav Sha'ul had a reputation. He was consenting unto Steven's death (Acts 8:1). He approved of it and assisted by holding the cloaks of those who were casting the stones. He was zealous for his beliefs and the lifestyle which he was taught as a Pharisee from his youth and upward. This zeal led him to persecute the followers of Messiah and imprison them.

Gal 1:13-24: 13 For you have heard of my former way of life in Yehudaism, how intensely I persecuted the assembly of Elohim, and ravaged it. 14 And I progressed in Yehudaism beyond many of my age in my race, being more exceedingly ardent for the traditions of my fathers. 15 But when it pleased Elohim, who separated me from my mother's womb and called me by His favour, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might bring Him, the Good News, to the gentiles, I did not immediately consult with flesh and blood, 17 either did I go up to Yerushalayim, to those who were emissaries before me. But I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then after three years I went up to Yerushalayim to learn from Kepha, and remained with him for fifteen days. 19 And I saw no other of the

² Also known as the New Covenant.

³ Shimon Ben-Yaakov

emissaries except Ya'aqov, the brother of the Master. 20 And what I write to you, see, before Elohim, I do not lie. 21 Then I went into the districts of Syria and of Kilikia. 22 And I was still not known by sight to the assemblies of Yehudah which were in Messiah, 23 but they were hearing only that, "The one who once persecuted us now brings as Good News the belief which he once ravaged." 24 So they were esteeming Elohim in me.

The detail of Sha'ul's Training as a Pharisee

Jewish education (in Sha'ul's time and today) is not interested in philosophy but in religious training. Jewish education had three major stages:

- 1) The first one was called the **House of Scribe** or the **House of Reading** (Beth Sepher). This was the starting point, and it focused on the reading of the Written Law.
- 2) The second level of education was the **House of Instruction** or the **House of Learning** (Beth Midrash or Beth Talmud). It focused on the Oral Law.
- 3) The final or third level was advanced studies under a great scholar. The focus here was on **principles of interpretation of the law**. This was required in order to be ordained as a rabbi. Sha'ul is an example of a Jewish boy who was a disciple under a great scholar, Gamli'el.

It was under Gamaliel that Sha'ul learned about the Oral Torah with all its man-made enactments and traditions. Sha'ul was a devout Jewish Pharisee at first; and later on when he accepted Y'shua as Messiah, it was his custom to enter the synagogue on Sabbath and teach Torah:

*Acts 14:1: And it came to be in Ikonion that they went **together into the congregation of the Yehudim**, and spoke in such a way that a great number of both Yehudim and Greeks believed.*

*Acts 18:4: 4 And he was reasoning **in the congregation every Sabbath**, and won over both Yehudim (from the tribe of Judah) and Greeks (Lost Sheep from Northern Ten Tribes). (Also Acts 19:8, 17:1-2.)*

In his letter to the Philippians, He gives testimony of his zeal when he was among the Pharisees, whom he now refers to as "dogs":

*Phil 3:2-4: 2 Look out for dogs, look out for the evil workers, look out for the mutilation! 3 **For we are the circumcision**, who are serving Elohim in the Spirit, and boasting in Messiah Y'shua, and do not trust in the flesh, 4 though I too might have trust in the flesh. If anyone else thinks to trust in the flesh, I more.*

Sha'ul goes on to expound upon his "human credentials"; because if they mean anything at all, then Sha'ul feels as though he is the best of men:

Phil 3:4-9: *4 though I too might have trust in the flesh. If anyone else thinks to trust in the flesh, I more. 5 circumcised the eighth day, of the race of Yisra'El, of the tribe of Binyamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews, according to Torah a Pharisee, 6 according to ardour, persecuting the assembly; according to righteousness that is in the law, having become blameless. 7 But what might have been a gain to me, I have counted as loss, because of Messiah. 8 What is more, I even count all to be loss because of the excellence of the knowledge of Messiah Y'shua my Master, for whom I have suffered the loss of all, and count them as refuse, in order to gain Messiah, 9 and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is of the law (i.e. man's law codes), but that which is through belief in Messiah, the righteousness which is from Elohim on the basis of belief,*

As a Pharisee, Sha'ul lived according to the law (their law): the law of the Pharisees. Not according to Elohim's Law. (Do not be mistaken about what he is saying here.) Sha'ul is talking about "human credentials." As living by human law, he was blameless. (But according to Elohim's Law, he was a murderer! because he participated in the unlawful execution of Steven.)

As for living **according to the law as a Pharisee, he was the best.** But he came to understand that there is no value in living according to even the **best of human standards** and man's **very best law code.** In Messiah, he considers all of that "rubbish" or "dung" (Phil 3:8); or in today's vernacular, all man's achievement based on man's laws is "a pile of rubbish" or "hogwash"! Now that he belongs to Messiah, he has discovered that the righteousness that comes from Elohim is based on Messiah's faithfulness. Thus, the faithfulness to the written Scriptures which Messiah modeled in his life for His disciples is the only true way to live for Elohim. This is Elohim's righteousness: walking as Messiah did in obedience to the written Law of Moshe.

Yet, all of Sha'ul's own human achievement accomplished for him nothing. **His entire Pharisee commandment-keeping amounted to nothing.** Human credentials are worthless in the sight of YHWH. It is only in living in faithfulness to YHWH's commandments that Sha'ul finds contentment.

The Way of the Pharisees

Sha'ul testifies of himself that he "progressed in Judaism" because he was more passionate than his peers. The life of a Pharisee was a stark contrast to the walk of the Messiah and the walk of faith which he taught His disciples. Sha'ul claims in Gal 1:14 that he was *"more exceedingly ardent for the traditions of my fathers."* What are these *"traditions of the fathers"* he is speaking of?

For centuries now, Christianity has misunderstood and has been misrepresenting what Sha'ul is teaching in Galatians and in his other letters; thus major confusion surfaces when his words are interpreted!

Sha'ul was comparing and contrasting the Torah (the Law of Elohim as stated in Scripture) with the Torah of the Pharisees (the man-made laws, traditions, customs and practices which men made up!). The Pharisees' Torah came to be called "the Oral Law". So Sha'ul is drawing from his own experience of being taught Pharisaic Law to show the stark differences between Pharisaic law and Scriptural Law.

The "*traditions of the fathers*" which Sha'ul is referring to here are not the teachings of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob as many Christians think. The "*traditions of the fathers*" were the teachings and laws of the Pharisees, the concoctions of men's imaginations. The "*traditions of the fathers*" are man-made laws known as the "Oral Torah" – not what Moshe wrote down in the five Books of the Torah. Thus, Sha'ul is not teaching that the Torah of Scripture is worthless and done away with in Messiah. Sha'ul's point is that the Oral Torah (man-made laws) of the Pharisees is being done away with in Messiah. This is **not to say** that there is much wrong with the Oral Torah. However, the problem arises when the "tradition" of the Oral Torah is **placed above** that of the written Torah, Father's Torah.

The fact that there are actually two Torahs (the Written Torah and the Oral Torah) is well known by the Jewish Rabbis, but not understood **at all** by most Christians. The famous Pharisee Shammai said so:

*A certain Gentile came to Shammai: The Gentile said to him, How many Torahs do you have? (Shammai) answered: **Two**. The Written Torah and the **Oral Torah** (Torah She-Be'al Peh) (Babylonian Talmud, Sabbath 31a).*

Thus, most Christians and those opposing Sha'ul's teachings do not have the foggiest idea what this is all about that Sha'ul is speaking of when he talks about the "law". We must discern between the two Torahs which Sha'ul was trained in.

But in his former life as a Pharisee, Sha'ul was zealous (exceedingly ardent) for the man-made laws and traditions of the religion of Pharisaic Judaism. And the righteousness that he had then, which he calls, "*my own righteousness derived from the law*" is the righteousness of following the commandments of men (Pharisaic Judaism), the Oral Torah! In Messiah, all of men's own righteousness based on the keeping of their own made-up commandments, amounts to nothing at all. The righteousness of YHWH, on the other hand, is based on doing what YHWH has commanded. And he said, "*do not add to what I have commanded, and do not take away from it*" (cf. Deut 4:2 and Deut 12:32 KJV).

Categories of the Oral Law

The Pharisees had so many of their own made-up laws that it is easiest for us to understand them by separating them into several categories:

- 1) The first is the "**halacha**" or the Pharisaic law based upon their interpretation of Scriptural law.
- 2) The second is "**minhagim**" or Pharisaic customs that have become law.
- 3) The third is "**takanot** and **gezerot**" or enactments and decrees of the Pharisees that take on the authority of law.
- 4) And the fourth is the "**ma'asim**", which are deeds or works of the Pharisees which through their repeated exercise become law for all Yisrael.

Halacha:

The word halacha (halachot in the plural) means "to go, to walk". It is a common metaphor for the "way one conducts himself" or "the manner in which one lives his life". The metaphor of walking transcends many languages and is understood in many tongues as referring to one's lifestyle. The halacha, then, are the commandments and instructions of Scripture which YHWH has commanded us to do. Thus, when Yochanan tells us:

1 John 2:6: *The one who says he stays in Him ought himself also to walk, **even as He walked.***

We understand that he means we who belong to YHWH **should live our lives as Messiah lived his**, doing the very things that Messiah did. Our walk or behaviour should be the same as Messiah's walk and behaviour. For example, if Messiah kept the Sabbath day (and he did!), then we should also keep the Sabbath day.

It is one thing to "walk" according to the Scripture commandments, and quite another to "walk" according to Pharisaic commandments. The Pharisees then, and the Rabbis of Judaism since then and to this day, establish their own halachot based on their own (private) interpretations of Scripture. The **Pharisees and Rabbis, and even Christian theologians** throughout "Church history", have made a habit of taking a simple Scripture commandment or statement and **twisting, distorting, re-interpreting or outright changing or adding to the plain meaning of a statement of writ.**

An example of Pharisaic halacha: The Scripture commands us that no work (occupational labour, chores, everyday busy-ness tasks) is to be done on the Sabbath. The Rabbis break "work" down into 39 different categories and additional subcategories which one is not allowed to do on the Sabbath, to the point of being absurd. From the re-interpretive twisting of the intended meaning of "do no work", they regard flipping a light switch as

building (because you are connecting a circuit), and forbid it on the Sabbath.

Another example is taking Exod 35:3, "*do not kindle a fire on Shabbat*", and reinterpret it to mean that one should not start a fire on Shabbat; but as long as you start the fire before Shabbat, the burning of a fire is okay.

A classic example of a Rabbinic halacha is where they take Exod 23:2:

Do not follow a crowd to do evil, nor bear witness in a strife so as to turn aside after many, to turn aside what is right.

This is clearly an instruction not to pervert justice just because the majority of others pervert it, and snatch out the phrase "*incline after the majority*". They ignore all else, including the context in which these words were spoken; and they rip out that single phrase, "*incline after the majority*". They interpret this phrase to mean a halacha which instructs men to do what the majority of the Rabbis consent on. Thus, if the majority of Rabbis agree that one should change his underwear twice a day, then it is law in Israel. (This is an absurd example, but it accurately illustrates the thinking of the Rabbis.)

There are many hundreds of other such halachot of the Pharisees and Rabbis which are derived from the twisting, distorting, adding to or taking away from the written Word of YHWH. Even though YHWH emphatically commands us, "*do not add to what I have commanded, and do not take away from it*" (cf. Deut 4:2 and Deut 12:32), this is precisely what Oral Rabbinic Law does. Is it any wonder why Sha'ul, who came out of this religious system, says that all of that is "rubbish" or "a pile of dung" (see Phil 3:8)?

Minhag:

The word minhag (plural is minhagim) means "custom". Customs, while not commanded by Scripture, are the common way of life and the accepted practice of people based on the repeating of a behaviour induced by some circumstance. The historical record of Scripture references some customs:

Judges 11:39-40: 39 *And it came to be at the end of two months that she returned to her father, and he did to her as he had vowed, and she knew no man. And it became a statute in Yisra'El* 40 *that the daughters of Yisra'El went every year for four days to lament the daughter of Yiphtah the Gil'adite.*

And another:

Esther 9:26-28: 26 *Therefore they called these days Purim, after the name Pur. Therefore, because of all the words of this letter, what they had seen concerning this matter, and what had come upon them, 27 the Yehudim established and imposed it upon themselves and upon their seed and all who should join them,*

*that **without fail they should observe these two days every year**, according to their writing and at their appointed time, 28 and that these days **should be remembered** and observed throughout every generation, every clan, every province, and every city, and that these **days of Purim should not fail from among the Yehudim**, and that the **remembrance of them should not cease from their seed**.*

Not to be outdone, and to further establish their own authority to make law and control all Israel, the Rabbis concocted their own customs for all Israel and made them binding upon all. The requirement upon all Jewish males to wear a kippah (also called a yarmulke or skull cap) is an accepted minhag. Males not wearing the kippah are considered to be transgressing the Law. This Law for Jewish males also stipulates that one may not walk four cubits without covering his head, nor can one make a blessing without wearing a kippah.

Another example of a minhag is the conflicting custom of eating beans and rice during the feast of Unleavened Bread. The Ashkenazi Jews forbid the eating, while the Sephardic Jews permit the eating during the Feast. Members of each sect of Judaism are required to obey the custom of the sect they belong to. The absurdity of declaring this custom to be "Law in Israel" is self-evident.

Such customs gave rise to a common saying in among the Rabbis in Israel, "*minhag Yisrael torah hi*" which translates as, "*a custom of Israel is Torah*". Even though the TaNaCh (Old Covenant) lists the commandments and sayings of YHWH as "Torah", the Rabbis have added to "their torah" any of their own established customs!

Takanah and Gezerah:

The word takanah (plural is takanot) means, "to become straight, to make right, to put in order, to fix, to repair, to arrange, to establish, to enact." The word gezerah (plural is gezerot) means, "decree." Thus, the "takanot and gezerot" are the enactments and decrees of Pharisaic law. They are "the commandments of the Rabbis".

The Scribes and Pharisees before the time of Messiah (and the Rabbis afterward) saw a need to construct additional commandments. As they assumed the role of authoritarian leadership in Israel, the Scribes and Pharisees enacted their own laws for all Israel; which were designed to enforce their own right of authority to interpret and apply law – and even create new laws for Israel. Under the guise of "guarding" the Torah which the Scriptures command, they began to "guard" the Torah by enacting additional laws in an act which they termed, "making a fence around the Torah".

In an article entitled, "*Adding, Uprooting, and Rabbinic Authority*," Rabbi Baruch Paz wrote:

*Some rabbinical ordinances were enacted not for the purpose of protecting the laws of the Torah, but because the Rabbis saw an independent need to enact them; others, though, were enacted as preventative measures, safeguards to prevent people from violating actual commandments of the Torah. **At times the Rabbis even saw fit to uproot a Torah law in order to erect one of these safeguards...*** (Cited from Galatians by Avi ben Mordecai, pg. 67).

These "commandments of the Rabbis" were often in conflict with the written Word of YHWH. The Scripture commands us to guard the Torah:

Deut 4:6: *And **you shall guard and do them**, for this is your wisdom and your understanding before the eyes of the peoples who hear all these laws, and they shall say, 'Only a wise and understanding people is this great nation!'*

Deut 4:40: *And **you shall guard His laws and His commands** which I command you today, so that it is well with you and with your children after you, and so that you prolong your days on the soil which YHWH your Elohim is giving you for all time.*

The meaning here is that one should guard the Torah by practising it and by teaching it. The Pharisees, however, intentionally misinterpreted this by suggesting that it meant that they should construct additional laws around the Torah to insure that the Torah would not be transgressed. This they did in clear transgression of another instruction of Scripture:

Deut 4:2: *Do not add to the Word which I command you, and do not take away from it, so as to guard the commands of YHWH your Elohim which I am commanding you.*

Thus, in some cases, the very act of "building a fence around the Torah" in order to "guard the Torah" was a transgression of the Torah, as it was adding to the Torah, or in some cases, removing from the Torah to erect the fence. The takanot and gezerot, or "commandments of the Rabbis" are these transgressions of YHWH's Word.

Messiah Y'shua rebuked the Pharisees for their commandments which contradicted the Word of YHWH. The commandment to wash one's hands before eating is a Pharisaic takanah. It is **not** a commandment of Scripture. They taught that one could cause food to become "unclean" by transference of substance from unwashed hands to the food. Thus, they required a ceremonial washing of hands before eating.

Matt 15:1-3: *Then there came to Y'shua scribes and Pharisees from Yerushalayim, saying, 2 "Why do You taught ones transgress the tradition (Hebrew, takanot) of the elders? For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread." 3 But He answering, said to them, "Why do you also transgress the command of Elohim because of your tradition (Hebrew: takanot)?"*

The word "tradition" used here, in the Shem Tov Hebrew Gospel of Matthew, is takanot.

So it is critical to the correct understanding of Y'shua's message that we understand He is talking about the "commandments of the rabbis" here. This is a direct rebuke of the Pharisees who made up their own law; which in their view **superseded the Scriptures**.

Mark's account of this saying cites an additional detail of interest:

Mark 7:13: *"...nullifying the Word of Elohim through your tradition which you have handed down. And many such traditions you do."*

Y'shua is suggesting here that the Pharisees commonly practiced this error of replacing the Written Word of Elohim with their own commandments. And we see over and over again how the Pharisees had laid a heavy burden upon Israel by requiring them to obey Pharisaic Law.

Y'shua concluded the matter of washing of hands by saying:

"Not that which goes into the mouth defiles the man, but that which comes out of the mouth, this defiles the man" (Matt 15:11).

Washing one's hands before eating may be a good suggestion. But it certainly is not a requirement of ethical proportion. It is **not** commanded by YHWH.

Ma'aseh:

The word ma'aseh (plural is ma'asim) means, "work, do." This word is used in the TaNaCh to reference any work, action or deed done by YHWH or by man. For example:

Deut 30:9: *And YHWH your Elohim shall make you have excess in all the work (Hebrew, ma'aseh) of your hand, in the fruit of your body, and in the fruit of your livestock, and in the fruit of your ground for good...*

In the New Covenant, its Greek equivalent (ergon) has a similar usage. It could be used of man's works or of YHWH's works:

James 2:26: *For as the body without the spirit is dead, so also the belief is dead without the works.*

Rev 15:3: *And they sing the song of Mosheh the servant of Elohim, and the song of the Lamb, saying, "Great and marvellous are Your works, YHWH El Shaddai! Righteous and true are Your ways, O Sovereign of the set-apart ones!"*

However, the Pharisees (and after them, the Rabbis) attributed to this term special nuance. Another Pharisaic invention – the ma'aseh – is a law created for all Israel based on the repeated actions of a Pharisee. The thinking goes something like this: if one so pious as a Pharisee (and later, a

Rabbi) consistently performs an action, said action must have great merit. Therefore, this action of the Pharisee becomes law for all in Israel.

A ma'aseh, in Pharisaic thinking, is an action, work or deed of a Pharisee; which by its repetition has become law for all of Israel. These works were common among Pharisees and Rabbis. In their thinking, Pharisaic authority (and rabbinic authority) does not need the agreement of Scripture; **because Pharisaic authority supersedes the authority of Scripture!**

There were many ma'asim in the Oral Law of the Pharisees. These ma'asim (the deeds, actions or works of the Pharisees which became law in Israel) became known as ma'asim hatorah or "works of the law". Not to be mistaken for the "works of YHWH", the phrase "works of the law" as used by the Pharisees and Rabbis today (and as used many times by Sha'ul in his letters of the New Covenant) are a reference to the made-up laws of the Pharisees.

Pharisees, and Sadducees' Observances of Traditions

The Jewish historian Flavius Josephus explained the difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees by the observance of man-made traditions:

*What I would now explain is this, that the **Pharisees** have delivered to the people **a great many observances** by succession from their fathers, which are not written in the Torah of Moses; and for that reason it is that the **Sadducees reject** them and say that we are to esteem those observances to be obligatory which are in the written word, but are **not to observe what are derived from the tradition of our forefathers**... (Book of Antiquities 13.10.6).*

For all their failures, at least the Sadducees had it right about not being waylaid by the Oral Traditions of the Pharisees!

The Term "Law" Used in at Least Three Different Ways

There is a great deal of confusion among New Covenant Scholars and Preachers when it comes to Sha'ul's usage of the term "*law*" and his usage of others phrases such as "*works of the law*" and "*under the law*". Most of those unlearned New Covenant "Scholars" **haven't a clue** that Sha'ul uses the term "*law*" in **at least three different ways** in his letters:

- 1) When he speaks of the "law" as righteous, spiritual, good and holy (set-apart), he is referring to **the Law of Moshe** as written in Scripture.
- 2) When he speaks of the "**law of my members**" and similar phrases, he is talking about the "law of sin" or the controlling effect of sin on mankind.
- 3) But when he speaks of the "**law**" as something that has no merit and is worthless and contrary to the work of Messiah, he is talking about the Pharisaic Oral Law, which he was trained in and

which when he came to know Messiah he came to realize is worthless.

So when Sha'ul writes that *"as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse"* (Gal 3:10), he is speaking about the laws based upon the actions or deeds of a Pharisee which were a part of the Oral Tradition of the Pharisees. Thus, those who are placing their confidence for salvation in the works of man truly are "under a curse" because in doing so, they are rejecting the true righteousness which YHWH has revealed in the commandments which He has given. And when Sha'ul writes, *"a man is not declared right by works of the Torah"* (Gal 2:16), he is speaking about the Pharisaic man-made commandments; not the Law of YHWH, because it is clear that man's law has no merit toward salvation.

Sha'ul's Encounter with Messiah

The encounter Sha'ul had with the resurrected Messiah profoundly changed his thinking. But because of his intense and detailed training as a Pharisee, Sha'ul did not consult with the Apostles of Messiah for guidance. **They were not equipped to understand and handle all the issues with which Sha'ul had to then rethink.** The "unlearned" followers of Messiah **did not have the education and training background to understand and refute the false teachings of the Pharisees.** So, Sha'ul's response to the revelation was to go to Arabia.

Gal 1:17: neither did I go up to Yerushalayim, to those who were emissaries before me. But I went to Arabia, and returned again to Damascus.

Why Arabia?

He realized that the only source of answers to his many questions was the Scriptures. It was at Mount Sinai in Arabia (Gal 4:25) that the **Instructions of Scripture, the Torah**, were given to Israel through Moshe. This, for Sha'ul, was the logical place to go to get clarity. Mount Sinai would provide the setting and atmosphere where Sha'ul could petition Y'shua for understanding of the Scriptures of YHWH, and then immerse himself in the Written Word.

Fear of Sha'ul in the Assembly:

*Gal 1:18-24: 18 Then **after three years** I went up to Yerushalayim to learn from Kepha⁴, and remained with him for fifteen days. 19 And I saw no other of the emissaries except Ya'aqov, the brother of the Master (Y'shua). 20 And what I write to you, see, before Elohim, I do not lie. 21 Then I went into the districts of Syria and of Kilikia. 22 And I was still not known by sight to the assemblies of Yehudah which were in Messiah, 23 but they were hearing only that, "The one*

⁴ Peter.

who once persecuted us now brings as Good News the belief which he once ravaged." 24 So they were esteeming Elohim in me.

Following his stay at Mount Sinai, Sha'ul paid a visit to Jerusalem to meet with Kepha and the other emissaries of Messiah.

If you were trained in isolation for three years by YHWH/Y'shua, would you not be the **best Scholar of Torah** in the history of man and write such intriguing mysteries and teaching that the average man would hardly understand unless **thoroughly grounded in the Written Torah of YHWH?**

Sha'ul and the Oral Law

Sha'ul's training as a Pharisee taught him that doing the works, traditions, teachings and practices of the Pharisees was the proper way to righteousness and salvation. But when he met Messiah Y'shua on the road to Damascus, his mind and his way of thinking were drastically changed (Gen 15:6; Eph 2:8). He realized not only who the true Messiah is, but that all of his training in Judaism was worthless **toward salvation**; and worse yet, that the way of the Pharisees actually leads to bondage and loss of salvation because their "works" have no value in YHWH's sight **for any righteousness**. Abraham was first saved by faith.

Why? Because they placed the traditions of men, the Oral Torah at a higher value than YHWH's.

Yes Sha'ul as well as Y'shua kept the Oral Torah but they **never** ever made it **more important** than the Written Torah. Further, it never contradicted the Written Torah, let's look at the facts...

Y'shua, Sha'ul and the Oral Law

We will now work systematically through the various customs in Judaism to prove that Y'shua, Sha'ul as well as the rest of the writers of the Messianic Writings⁵ observed many of the Oral Torah traditions.

1) The Amidah Prayer⁶:

Y'shua used and taught the traditional prayers that were instituted by the ancient Rabbis such as the Amidah. The "Our Father" prayer in Hebrew is called Avinu (Matt 6:9-13), which is a shortened form of the Eighteen Benedictions of the Amidah. The Amidah is an element of halachah (protocol to keep YHWH's Torah). This combination of the Amidah is indicated by the ancient Rabbi and is recorded in the Talmud⁷, and there

⁵ Also known as the new covenant.

⁶ Special thanks to Yashanet for the teaching *Yeshua, the Oral Torah and the Talmud*
<http://www.yashanet.com/library/articles/yeshua.htm>

⁷ "For the majority of the rabbinic period, when the Mishnah, Talmud, and other early rabbinic sources refer to 'tefillah,' they are always specifically referring to the Amidah prayer." Origins of the Daily Prayer Services,
http://www.myjewishlearning.com/texts/Liturgy_and_Prayers/Siddur_Prayer_Book/weekdayprayer.shtml

were other formulations of the Amidah by other ancient Rabbis as well. The point is to show that Y'shua observed this which is an element of Oral Torah.

2) The Blessings over Food:

The Written Torah says nothing about what we do with food before we eat. The Written Torah says:

Deut 8:10: *And **you shall eat and be satisfied, and shall bless YHWH your Elohim** for the good land which He has given you.*

Y'shua complies here with the Written Torah:

Matt 26:26: *And as they **were eating**, Y'shua took bread, and **having blessed**, broke and gave it to the taught ones and said, "Take, eat, this is My body."*

However, the Oral Law commands us to bless YHWH, for our food, **before** we eat, this of course almost all Christians do:

Berachot 33a: ***R. Akiba says: he says it as a fourth blessing, etc. R. Shaman b. Abba said to R. Johanan: Let us see: It was the Men of the Great Synagogue who instituted for Israel blessings and prayers, sanctifications and Havdallah.***

This is exactly what Y'shua did, He recited the halachic blessings over matzah⁸ and wine when He gave thanks at meals:

Luke 22:19-20: *19 And taking bread, **giving thanks**, He broke it and gave it to them, saying, "This is My body which is given for you, do this in remembrance of Me." 20 Likewise the cup also, after supper, saying, "This cup is the renewed covenant in My blood which is shed for you." (Also Matt 15:36.)*

These are elements of Oral Torah. Y'shua, therefore, followed that oral law.

3) Carrying a Bed on Sabbath:

Many people love to point out the moments where it seems as though Y'shua is full-out attacking, disobeying and discrediting the Oral Torah and halachot of the ancient Rabbis, such as the Shabbat, the washing of hands, etc... but they do not realize that the Talmud gives instances that support Y'shua's position in each of the cases that it was brought up. These same instances reveal very clearly that Y'shua surely upheld and respected the Oral Torah (traditions of Israel) in every way.

Carrying on the Sabbath argument: When Y'shua told the man to pick his bed up and carry it on Shabbat he was not denouncing the Oral Torah, He was in accordance to the Rabbinic authority and the Oral Torah. The "laws

⁸ Unleavened bread.

of Eruv" is part of the Seven Rabbinic laws by which the issue at hand proves that Y'shua was in accordance to these laws.

The Oral Torah permits carrying within an enclosed "private" area on Shabbat and other Holidays. This area can either be physical or symbolic. Such an area enclosed and considered "private" may vary in size from a small home to an entire community depending on various circumstances and specific situations. The Talmud specifies both the definitions of an enclosure and how to render an entire area a private domain from a small home to an entire community. This is normally done with strings that are fastened around the "private domain." This string indicates where the people may walk and carry on the Shabbat.

In a Jewish community, especially where this instance occurred in the Messianic Writings, the Pool of Bethesda, indicates the location of where this sick man of many years, with his mat (bed), and Y'shua were, there would have been "Eruv strings" fastened around the domain. We know that by historical records and by traditions that are still practiced to this very day. To think that only in this moment, that the people ran and took down the Eruv string so that Y'shua would break the Shabbat is not a reasonable assertion.

So we clearly see here that Y'shua did not violate the Sabbath, nor did He teach others to violate the Sabbath. The people who accused him, were ignorant of the Torah's laws. The people who questioned the man and Y'shua were uneducated on the subject and made statements and judgments that were incorrect.

Another case can be argued. The man who carried his mat on Shabbat was not breaking the Eruv laws because his home was his bed. He was homeless. The Talmud says in the Shabbat portions that if a person is homeless or cannot afford to set up an Eruv or is unable to do it himself and has no one else to help him... The Eruv becomes himself and his belongings because he is unable to have an enclosed private area... Therefore, Y'shua was not at all violating the Sabbath.

4) Leaving Your Home on Sabbath:

There are claims that the Torah in Exod 16:29 tells us it is forbidden to leave one's home on Shabbat:

*See, because YHWH has given you the Sabbath, therefore He is giving you bread for two days on the sixth day. **Let each one stay in his place, do not let anyone go out of his place on the seventh day.***

Many love to use this verse as a way to say Y'shua abandoned the laws of Shabbat. This assertion is false.

Talmud Bavli - Erubin 42a: "R. Nahman stated in the name of Shmuel: If a man was walking and did not know where the Sabbath

*limit ended **he may walk a distance of two thousand moderate paces**; and this constitutes for him **the Sabbath limit.**"*

The Messianic Writings says that Y'shua attended Shabbat gatherings outside of His home, hence He supported Oral Torah halachot which permits one to leave one's house on Shabbat but no more distance than 2,000 medium steps. Also, you know of the stories of many people walking around the street on Shabbat recorded in the Messianic Writings.

For further proof of this in the Torah, Lev 23:3 even says Shabbat is a day of holy gathering:

*Six days work is done, but the seventh day is a Sabbath of rest, a **set-apart gathering**. You do no work, it is a Sabbath to YHWH in all your dwellings.*

The synagogues that Y'shua visited on Shabbat were obviously local gatherings at places that did not take a great deal of effort to reach.

Therefore, staying in your "place" is referring to the neighbourhood (village) where one lives, not one's home in the literal sense.

The fact is the Sabbath day's journey is not found in the TaNaCh, yet it is clearly part of the Oral Law, and it is mentioned in the Messianic Writings:

*Acts 1:4-12: 4 And meeting with them, He commanded them not to leave Yerushalayim, but to wait for the Promise of the Father, "which you have heard from Me – 5 because Yohanan truly immersed in water, but you shall be immersed in the Set-apart Spirit not many days from now." 6 So when they had come together, they asked Him, saying, "Master, would You at this time restore the reign to Yisra'El?" 7 And He said to them, "It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority. 8 But you shall receive power when the Set-apart Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be My witnesses in Yerushalayim, and in all Yehudah and Shomeron, and to the end of the earth." 9 And having said this, while they were looking on, He was taken up, and a cloud hid Him from their sight. 10 And as they were gazing into the heaven as He went up, see, two men stood by them dressed in white, 11 who also said, "Men of Galil, why do you stand looking up into the heaven? This same Y'shua, who was taken up from you into the heaven, shall come in the same way as you saw Him go into the heaven." 12 Then they went back to Yerushalayim from the Mount of Olives, which is near Yerushalayim, a **Sabbath day's journey**.*

5) Healing on the Sabbath:

When Y'shua healed people on the Sabbath, and the people including certain Pharisees / Sadducees were in opposition. They were:

a) uneducated on the matter (the people) and

b) were relying on the ignorance of the people to control them (the corrupted Pharisees/Seducees⁹).

According to the Oral Torah or the Talmud... you would find that it is permitted to heal or save a life or tend to any emergent situation on the Shabbat. **All laws are *suspended to save a life* or to tend to a dire emergency**¹⁰. Here, we see that Y'shua was in accordance to the laws of the Oral Torah.

The phrase, "*the Shabbat was made for man, not man for the Shabbat*," appears in the Rabbinical material of the Talmud (Mekilta 103b, Yoma 85b). This statement was a teaching by many Rabbinic scholars of Y'shua's day. The Pharisee School of Hillel was famous for that quote. Y'shua was not saying anything separate from Judaism, He was upholding the teachings of Judaism.

The ancient Rabbis frequently use the verse from Hosea 6:6, that helping people was of greater importance than observing the rituals and customs (Sukkah 49b, Deuteronomy Rabbah on 16:18, etc.), just as Y'shua did. In fact, they used the same examples Y'shua presented, David's eating the Tabernacle bread and the Temple offerings made on the Shabbat, to demonstrate the same general principle, that the needs of life **override** the Sabbath restrictions (Y'lomm'denu, Yalkut II, par. 130, Tosefta Shabbat 15b).

We can clearly see now that the Pharisees and Seducees who were accusing Y'shua were corrupted in their judgments against Him. We also can tell very clearly that these particular Pharisees were heretical in the fact that they associated with the Seducees who Rabban Hillel, a Pharisee himself, stated were heretics.

6) The Washing of Hands Ritual:

This is an argument that people love to use against Y'shua's adherence to Rabbinic law and to use against Judaism.

When the certain Pharisees questioned Y'shua about His disciples not doing the hand washing ritual it is important to note that they didn't question whether or not he washed His hands, they questioned his disciples. It is more than likely that He did wash His hands, but the disciples did not. What does this mean?

The Talmud states that the ritual of hand washing (Netilat Yadayin) is invalid if the mind and heart are not also "cleansed." In the Talmud, Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai, stated:

⁹ The Seducees (Tzadokim) were Hellenistic Jews that only accepted the literal Torah in a very harsh manner and rejected the Oral Torah.

¹⁰ This clearly excludes Y'shua's death on the stake.

"In life it is not the dead who make you unclean; nor is it the water you wash your hands with, but rather the ordinances of the King of Kings that purifies." Much later, Rabbi Maimonides (Rambam) made a similar comment, "For to confine oneself to cleaning the outward appearance through washing and cleaning the garment, while having at the same time a lust for various pleasures and unbridled license ... merits the utmost blame."

The Pharisees had judgment in their hearts instead of compassion, and therefore Y'shua contested their teachings because they were breaking commandments in their statements against them. They were not following their own teaching, and therefore were disgracing the laws of YHWH. It was by this reason that Y'shua responded that it is not that which goes into your mouth that makes you unclean, but rather that which comes out. He basically held a mirror in front of their faces. Contrary to the teaching that Y'shua was teaching against the laws of Kashrut (kosher dietary law), he was doing nothing of the sort, rather He was not even discussing the topic of food at all. The passage in Mark 7 has been grossly taken out of context.

The tradition of ritual purity; namely, washing the hands; is valid, however, invalid if your mind and your heart are not cleansed. These Pharisees were doing things to look pious and special, so others would see... yet they were filthy on the inside. The disciples didn't wash their hands possibly 'because they didn't feel they were clean inside or maybe they forgot, and therefore didn't do it in that instance. But we should consider the other verses that reveal that they certainly did observe this ritual of washing the hands.

James 4:8: *Draw near to Elohim and He shall draw near to you. **Cleanse hands**, sinners. And cleanse the hearts, you double-minded!*

The Pharisees taught that the Torah had been given to the community for the purpose of community... and therefore **any competent person** was capable of interpreting it, but that Rabbinical authority was paramount:

Deut 17:9-12: *9 and shall come to the priests, the Levites, and to the judge who is in those days, and shall inquire. And **they shall declare to you** the word of right-ruling, 10 and you shall do according to the word **which they declare to you** from that place which YHWH chooses. And you shall guard to do according to **all that they instruct you**. 11 Do according to the Torah in **which they teach you**, according to the rightruling **which they say to you**. You do not turn to the right or to the left from the word **which they declare to you**. 12 And the man who acts arrogantly, so as not to listen to the priest who stands to serve there before YHWH your Elohim, or to the judge, **that man shall die**. So you shall purge the evil from Yisra'El.*

7) Why do You Break Your Own Traditions?:

The "traditions of the elders" or also "customs" (minhag or mesorah) that were instituted were not to be taken as Biblical Command, only secondary in that a tradition or a custom instituted in the community cannot supersede a Biblical Commandment, the Torah. Hence, one of the reasons why Y'shua said *"Why do you ALSO transgress the commandments of Elohim because of your tradition?"* Y'shua was not defending the disciples, He said *"why do you ALSO"* indicating that the disciples DID transgress against the rabbinic authority, however, the Pharisees ALSO **improperly used** that Rabbinic instruction when they violated the Written Torah by not judging your brother favourably.

In other words Y'shua was using their own teachings against them because they were violating the chain of command. A Rabbinic enactment (agreement) or a tradition or custom **cannot ever be above a Written Torah Mitzvah**¹¹, it can only serve as an enrichment of the Biblical command and must ALWAYS be treated as secondary authority. And this is what the Pharisees taught.

8) Y'shua's Open Air Teachings:

Y'shua's way of life reflected other Jewish customs as well. He followed the custom of not only teaching in the synagogue, but in the **open air** like the Rabbis who taught everywhere. The frequent use of **Tevilah** (immersion) associated with His ministry was also quite common to His time, as the Talmud itself testifies in Sanhedrin 39a.

9) Y'shua's Way of Life:

Perhaps, most significant was His relationship to the Torah and traditions, which clearly describes as entire orthodoxy. He said the blessings over wine, and the reciting of the Rabbinic instituted prayer, the Hallel¹² at the Passover Seder¹³.

Mark 14:22-23, 26: 22 And as they were eating, Y'shua took bread, having blessed, broke it, gave it to them and said, "Take, eat, this is My body." 23 And taking the cup, giving thanks, He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. 26 And having sung a song, they went out to the Mount of Olives.

Please note that the Passover Seders' fifteen steps as how to conduct the meal is not in the Written Torah at all, yet Messianics have no problem

¹¹ Instruction or Commandment.

¹² Hallel (Hebrew: הלל, "Praise") is a Jewish prayer—a verbatim recitation from Psalms 113-118, which is used for praise and thanksgiving that is recited by observant Jews on Jewish holidays. Hallel consists of six Psalms (113–118) which is recited during the first night of Passover.

¹³ Commonly known as the the Covenant Meal or the Last Supper.

doing this Rabbinical enactment. Moreover, the Hallel that they sang is also not a Written Torah requirement.

10) Y'shua and the Feast of Chanukah:

Another interesting point was Y'shua's observance of Chunakah¹⁴, which is another Rabbinic enactment and not found written in the Torah as a mandated observance.

John 10:22-23: *22 At that time **the Hanukkah came to be in Yerushalayim, and it was winter.** 23 And **Y'shua was walking in the Set apart Place, in the porch of Shelomoh.***

This again shows that He observed Oral Torah. It is interesting to note that the observance of Chanukah appears only in TWO sources... the Messianic Writings and the Talmud. This is a profound fact indeed!

11) Y'shua's and the Sermon on the Mount:

The "Sermon on the Mount" which is viewed often as an overview of Y'shua's teaching, reflects concepts familiar to the ancient Writing of His day, consistent with the Oral Torah and Rabbinical teachings found in the Talmud. Also, His teachings of *"you have heard it said.... but I tell you"* were typical Rabbinic arguments, in fact He was referring specifically to the Seducees (Tzadokim) who were Hellenistic Jews that only accepted the literal Torah in a very harsh manner and rejected the Oral Torah, the Prophets and the Writings! His opposition to the Seducees reflected the same arguments made against them by the Pharisees.

It is clear that His teachings consist of magnificent illustrations of the proper understanding of the Torah, spelling out **its wider implications** just as the many commentaries and debates amongst the ancient Rabbis recorded in the Talmud. His words were all so common in comparison to the ancient Rabbis. He uses a Midrashic style (parables) which is an interpretation of the Scriptures, just like it is in the Talmud. The famous Sermon on the Mount was mostly commentary against the heretical doctrines of the Saducees, and upholding the doctrines of the Pharisees.

The widely known phrase to *"turn the other cheek"* passage (Matt 5:38-48) is often cited as an example of the radical newness of Y'shua's teachings. The same is said of His teaching of *"Love your enemy"* (Matt 5:43) is found in the Talmud: Yoma 23a, Gitin 36b, Shabat 88b. Or His teaching of lustfully looking upon a woman (Matt 5:28), is found in Kallah, Ch.1, *"One*

¹⁴ Hanukkah (Hebrew: חנוכה, a transliteration also romanized as Chanukah or Chanukkah), also known as the Festival of Lights, Feast of Dedication, is an eight-day Jewish holiday commemorating the rededication of the Holy Temple (the Second Temple) in Jerusalem at the time of the Maccabean Revolt against the Seleucid Empire of the 2nd century BCE. Hanukkah is observed for eight nights and days, starting on the 25th day of Kislev according to the Hebrew calendar, which may occur at any time from late November to late December in the Gregorian calendar.

who gazes lustfully upon the small finger of a married woman, it is as if he has committed adultery with her." But it is the same Spirit which inspired the best teaching of the ancient Rabbis.

A person is not to seek retaliation but should endure the insult humbly. This the ancient Rabbis agreed with, and counseled that a person struck on the cheek should forgive the offending party even if he does not ask forgiveness (Tosefta Baba Kanima 9:29). The Talmud commends the person who accepts offense without retaliation and submits to suffering and insult cheerfully (Yoma 23a). In fact, one can find parallels in the Rabbinical material to almost all of Y'shua's statements.

12) Y'shua on Circumcision vs. Shabbat:

Does the command to keep the Sabbath take precedence over the command to circumcise a boy on the eighth day? The ruling on Circumcision verses the Sabbath conflict is found only in the Talmud and Y'shua is saying the exact same thing:

John 7:21-23: 21 Y'shua answered and said to them, "I did one work, and you all marvel. 22 Because of this Mosheh has given you the circumcision – though it is not from Mosheh, but from the fathers – and you circumcise a man on the Sabbath. 23 If a man receives circumcision on the Sabbath, so that the Torah of Mosheh should not be broken, are you wroth with Me because I made a man entirely well on the Sabbath?"

13) Fasting and the Written Torah:

The Written Torah, except for Yom Kippur, never commands you to fast, but the Oral Law says that fasting is required. There are four fast days: Tammuz 17, Av 9, Tishri 3, and Tevet 10. The entire Talmud tractate of Taanit contains the details of these fasts. The TaNaCh records these fasts **as though they were** contained in the Written Torah:

Zech 7:2-5: 2 Now Beyth El had sent Shar'etser, with Regem-Melek and his men, to pray before YHWH, 3 speaking to the priests who belonged to the House of YHWH of hosts, and to the prophets, saying, "Should I weep in the fifth month and fast as I have done for so many years?" 4 Then the word of YHWH of hosts came to me, saying, 5 Speak to all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, 'When you fasted and lamented in the fifth and seventh months all these seventy years, did you truly fast for Me – for Me?'

None of these four fasts is mentioned anywhere in the TaNaCh, except here in Zech 7:2-5. Yet **no one disputes** that they are required to fast on these four days, because they understand the validity of the Oral Law.

The only fast in the Torah concerned Yom HaKippurim in the seventh month. Note how HaShem will change the meaning of this oral law:

Zech 8:19: **Thus said YHWH of hosts**, 'The fast of the fourth, and the fast of the fifth, and the fast of the seventh, and the fast of the tenth months, **are to be joy and gladness, and pleasant appointed times** for the house of Yehudah – and they shall love the truth and the peace.'

Thus we see that the oral law is accepted by the Jewish people and that these fasts are assumed to be true by the prophet Zechariah.

14) Y'shua and Swearing by the Temple:

The Pharisees found a way to deny certain oaths (those sworn by the Temple) and to allow others (those sworn by the gold of the Temple), cf. M. Nedarim 1.3, 4; b. Tem 32a-33b. Y'shua argues that the Temple actually sanctifies the gold. This is not found in the Written Torah:

Matt 23:16-17: *16 Woe to you, blind guides, who say, 'Whoever swears by the Dwelling Place, it does not matter, but whoever swears by the gold of the Dwelling Place, is bound by oath.'* *17 Fools and blind! For which is greater, the gold or the Dwelling Place that sets the gold apart?*

This is not in the Written Torah, the swearing by the Temple is however in the Oral Law.

15) Y'shua and Parashah Readings:

Y'shua followed the Oral Law when He read the section from the Prophets (Haftarah) in the synagogue in Nasareth:

Luke 4:14-20: *14 And Y'shua returned in the power of the Spirit to Galil, and news of Him went out through all the surrounding country. 15 And He was teaching in their congregations, being praised by all. 16 And He came to Natsareth, where He had been brought up. And according to His practice* (Lev 23:2 – Shabbat must be a setapart gathering), *He went into the congregation on the Sabbath day , and stood up to read. 17 And the scroll of the prophet Yeshayahu was handed to Him. And having unrolled the scroll, He found the place where it was written: 18 "The Spirit of YHWH is upon Me, because He has anointed Me to bring the Good News to the poor. He has sent Me to heal the broken-hearted, to proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to send away crushed ones with a release, 19 to proclaim the acceptable year of YHWH."* *20 And having rolled up the scroll, He gave it back to the attendant and sat down. And the eyes of all in the congregation were fixed upon Him.*

The Haftarah or Haftorah is a series of selections from the books of Nevi'im ("Prophets") of the TaNaCh that is publicly read in synagogue as part of Jewish religious practice, even today. The Haftarah reading follows the

Torah reading portion on each Sabbath. Typically, the haftarah is thematically linked to the Torah reading portion that precedes it. Y'shua read Isaiah 61:1-2 portion of the Haftarah.

This was the exact Haftarah (Prophet) portion of the triennial cycle of Torah readings (today the Torah is read through in a year cycle by Believers globally).

The Oral Law says this about the cycle which Y'shua read:

*Megilah 29b: The following was then cited in objection: 'If it [the New Moon of Adar] falls on the portion next to it [the portion of Shekalim], whether before or after, they read it and repeat it.' Now this creates no difficulty for one who holds that 'When thou takest' is read because [the regular portion containing this passage] falls about that time. But according to the one who says that 'My food which is presented to 'me' is read does [the portion containing that passage] fall about that time? Yes, for the people of Palestine, **who complete the reading of the Pentateuch** (Torah, the first five Books) **in three years**.*

So, we know that Yeshua followed the Oral Law in His reading and in His fulfillment of the Scripture (Isaiah 61), but Sha'ul also followed the Oral Law in this regard:

Acts 19:8: And having **gone into the congregation** (into the Synagogue on the Shabbat) he **spoke boldly** for three months, reasoning and persuading concerning the reign of Elohim.

If Sha'ul was allowed to speak in the synagogue, he would have had to observe many parts of the Oral Law. He would have read the Torah according to the triennial Torah cycle. He would have worn his tallit. The tallit could only have been made in accordance with the Oral Law because the manufacture of it is not described in the written Torah, etc.

16) Y'shua and the Water Libation Ceremony:

The Sukkot Water Libation ceremony was obviously going on when Y'shua said these words:

*John 7:37-38: 37 And on **the last day, the great day of the festival** (Sukkot), Y'shua stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me, and let him who believes in Me drink. 38 As the Scripture said, out of His innermost shall flow rivers of living water."*

What does this Sukkot event have to do with Oral Law? The water libation ceremony which Y'shua identifies Himself with is from the Oral Law (Succoth 4:9) not the Written Torah. The Mishna has this to say about the water libation:

Succah 4, Mishna 9: The water-libation; How so? A golden flagon holding three log was filled from the pool of Shiloah. When they

arrived at the Water Gate they sounded a prolonged blast, (and) a quavering note, and a prolonged blast. He went up the ramp and turned to his left where there were two silver bowls. R. Judah says, They were of plaster, but their surfaces were blackened because of the wine. And they each had a hole like a narrow spout, one wide and the other narrow, so that both were emptied out together, the one to the west was for water and that to the east for wine. If one emptied out that for the water into the one for wine or that for wine into the one for water, it is valid. R. Judah says, With one log they could carry out the libations all the eight days. To him who performed the libation they used to say, 'Raise thy hand!', for on one occasion he poured it over his feet and all the people pelted him with their citrons.

17) Y'shua and the Temple Tax:

The half-shekel Temple tax was another Oral Law which is described in the Talmud:

Beitzah 39b: *[if he said,] Behold, thou art herem, to thee, the vower is forbidden; [if he said,] Behold, I am [herem] to thee, and thou to me, both are forbidden to benefit from one another; but [to both] is permitted the use of things that belong to them that came up from Babylon, but the use of things that belong to the citizens of that town is forbidden to both. And the following are the things which belong to them that came up from Babylon: The Temple Mount, the [Temple] Chambers, the [Temple] Courts, and a well in the middle of the road. The following belong to [the citizens of] that town: The market-square, the Synagogue, and the bath-house. Now if you say that a well is held jointly, then why is it permitted? Surely we have learnt: Partners who vowed not to derive benefit from one another may not enter their [common] court-yard to bathe in the well! — To bathe in it is indeed [not allowed], but we are treating here of drawing [water]; the one draws of his own and the other draws of his own. Does then R. Nahman hold the rule of bererah, but we have learnt: Brothers who are [also] partners, when they are liable to surcharge they are exempt from cattle-tithe, and when they are liable to cattle-tithe they are exempt from the surcharge. And in this connection R. 'Anan said: This was taught only in the case when they divided goats for lambs and lambs for goats; but if they divided goats for goats and lambs for lambs, we say, each receives his share which was designated for him at the very beginning. While R. Nahman said: Even if they divided goats for goats and lambs for lambs, we do not say each receives his share which was designated for him at the very beginning! Rather, all agree that the well is ownerless, but they dispute here with respect to the case of one who picks up a lost article on behalf of his neighbour; one is of the opinion that he [the neighbour] acquires title [to it], and the other is of the opinion that he*

*does not acquire [it]. **Mishnah. if one has his produce in another town, the inhabitants of which have made an 'erub¹⁵ in order to bring to him some of his produce, they may not bring it to him; but if he himself made an 'erub, his produce is like himself.***

Y'shua paid this tax as per the custom of the Oral Law which is not in the Written Torah:

*Matt 17:24-27: 24 And when they came into Kephrah Nahum, **those who received the tax** came to Kepha (Peter) and said, "**Does your Teacher not pay the tax?**" 25 He said, "**Yea.**" And when he came into the house, Y'shua spoke to him first, saying, "What do you think, Shim'on? From whom do the sovereigns of the earth take toll or tax, from their own sons or from the strangers?" 26 Kepha then said to Him, "From the strangers." Y'shua said to him, "Then the sons are exempt. 27 But, lest we cause them to stumble, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you shall find a piece of money. **Take that and give it to them for Me and you.**"*

Such attitudes of Y'shua reflect not only his obedience to the Written Torah but His agreement with the social customs (Oral Law) of His day.

Modern Scholars view on Y'shua

Yehezkel Kaufmann, a famous Jewish author on Jewish thought, said:

*"The **attitude of Yeshua to the Torah is the very same attitude one finds among the masters of halakhah and aggadatta who followed in the Pharisaic tradition.**" Yehezkel Kaufmann also wrote: "Jesus (Yeshua) represents a point of development running unbroken from the Hebrew Bible and linked to it through an interpretive supplement that is characteristic of the great literary device of the Rabbis, the Oral Torah. The attitude of Jesus to the Torah is the very same attitude one finds among the masters of halakah and haggadah who followed in the Pharisaic tradition."*

An Orthodox scholar and Rabbi, Pinchas Lapide, described Y'shua as a traditional, observant Jew. He wrote:

*"Jesus never and nowhere broke the Law of Moses, **nor did he in any way provoke its infringement - it is entirely false to say that he did...** In this respect you must believe me, for I know my Talmud... this Jesus was as faithful to the Law as I would hope to be.*

¹⁵ An erub (Hebrew: עירוב mixture, also transliterated as eiruv or eruv) is a ritual enclosure that some communities construct in their neighborhoods as a way to permit Jewish residents or visitors to carry certain objects outside their own homes on Sabbath and Yom Kippur. An eruv accomplishes this by integrating a number of private and public properties into one larger private domain, thereby countermanning restrictions on carrying objects from the private to the public domain on Sabbath and holidays.

But I suspect that Jesus was more faithful to the Law than I am - and I am an Orthodox Jew."

B.Z. Bokser. p 194. wrote:

*"In fact, even the Sermon on the Mount, often viewed as the essence and epitome of Yeshua's teaching, **reflects concepts familiar to the Jews of his day and consistent with rabbinic teaching**. To begin with, it is quite similar in style. Much of the sermon consists of illustrations of the proper understanding of the Law, or Torah, **spelling out its wider implications and describing its broader principles**. Many of the illustrations he used were common to the "rabbis" of his day, and the whole is carried out in the style of a midrash - an interpretive supplementing of Scripture - much as is exemplified in the Oral Torah which later became the Talmud. Much like Yeshua these teachers felt that **the morally sensitive must go beyond mere conformity to the Torah** (cf. Baba Mezia 88a; Mekilta on Ex. 18:20)."*

Rabbi John Fischer, Ph.D. Th.D wrote:

*"The Gospels provide sufficient evidence to the effect that **Jesus did not oppose any prescription of the written or oral Mosaic Law**."*

Finkel; G. Friedlander wrote:

*"In effect, Yeshua built a "fence around the Law" - as indicated by the Aramaic and Hebrew underlying "fulfill" - much as the earlier sages cited by the Talmud did (Pirke Avot 1.2). And, **his fence is remarkably similar to that of the sages**."*

Tim Hegg wrote:

*"**Yeshua certainly follows the halachah of the Sages** in spite of the fact that such traditions¹⁶ are not explicitly stated in the Written Torah."*

Shemayah Yardin wrote:

*"There is no evidence that suggests the Netzarim abandoned their Orthodox Judaism, and **there is no evidence that proves the Netzarim rejected the Oral Torah**. There is however, ample evidence in scripture and history, as shown extensively, that **Rebbe Yeshua, his Shlichim (Apostles) and all his followers (the Netzarim) all supported, endorsed, taught and lived according to Written and Oral Torah, and the halachot, customs and traditions of the Sages**."*

¹⁶ Customs + Traditions + Interpretation of Written Law = Oral Law.

David Stern wrote:

"Based on all of my research, myself and my colleagues, have found without any doubt, that Yeshua's teachings and life style was closer to Hasidic Judaism than any other form of Judaism."

To conclude, as we have factually proven, no evidence exists that Y'shua ever said not to adhere to the Oral Law¹⁷. On the other hand, substantial Scriptural evidence exists proving that Rabbi Y'shua did indeed uphold the Oral Law.

Basic History of the Oral Law Authority

The Oral Law reaches back to Moshe for its beginnings:

Exod 18:13-16: 13 *And it came to be, on the next day, that Mosheh sat to rightly rule the people. And the people stood before Mosheh from morning until evening. 14 And when the father-in-law of Mosheh saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit by yourself, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" 15 And Mosheh said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to seek Elohim. 16 When they have a matter, they come to me, and I rightly rule between one and another, and make known the laws of Elohim and His Torot."*

Moshe is telling the people about YHWH's Laws and Decrees before the Written Torah is given. This is the origin of the Oral Law. The Written Torah will be given in Exodus 20 only. That which Moshe began is made sure in the Written Torah:

Deut 17:8-13: 8 *When any matter arises which is too hard for you to judge, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, or between stroke and stroke – matters of strife within your gates – then you shall rise and go up to the place which YHWH your Elohim chooses, 9 and shall come to the priests, the Lewites, and to the judge who is in those days, and shall inquire. And **they shall declare to you the word of right-ruling**, 10 **and you shall do according to the word which they declare to you from that place which YHWH chooses. And you shall guard to do according to all that they instruct you.** 11 *Do according to the Torah in which they teach you, according to the rightruling which they say to you. You do not turn to the right or to the left from the word which they declare to you. 12 And the man who acts arrogantly, so as not to listen to the priest who stands to serve there before YHWH your Elohim, or to the judge, that man shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Yisra'El. 13 And let all the people hear and fear, and no longer do arrogantly.**

¹⁷ When the Oral Law takes authority over the Written Law.

That Oral Law which Moshe began, is perpetuated in the Oral Law delivered by the Levites and the judges. Somehow, YHWH has guaranteed that what our Rabbis decide in line with YHWH, is what YHWH already has decided!

Now, Moshe is burdened day and night making Oral Law rulings, YHWH relieves this burden by setting up a council of 70 Elders who have the authority of Moshe:

Exod 18:13-24: 13 *And it came to be, on the next day, that Mosheh sat to rightly rule the people. And the people stood before Mosheh from morning until evening. 14 And when the father-in-law of Mosheh saw all that he did for the people, he said, "What is this that you are doing for the people? Why do you sit by yourself, and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?" 15 And Mosheh said to his father-in-law, "Because the people come to me to seek Elohim. 16 When they have a matter, they come to me, and I rightly rule between one and another, and **make known the laws of Elohim and His Torot.** 17 And the father-in-law of Mosheh said to him, "What you are doing is not good. 18 Both you and these people with you shall certainly wear yourselves out. For **the matter is too heavy for you.** You are not able to do it by yourself. 19 Now listen to my voice. Let me counsel you and Elohim be with you: Stand before Elohim for the people, and you shall bring the matters to Elohim. 20 **And you shall enlighten them concerning the laws and the Torot, and show them the way in which they should walk and the work which they do.** 21 But you yourself, **seek out from all the people able men**, who fear Elohim, men of truth, hating unfair gain. And place these over them to be rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, rulers of fifties, and rulers of tens. 22 And **they shall rightly rule the people at all times.** And it shall be that they bring every great matter to you, but **they themselves rightly rule every small matter.** So, make it lighter for yourself, for they shall bear with you. 23 If you do this word, and Elohim shall command you, then you shall be able to stand and all this people also go to their place in peace." 24 And Mosheh listened to the voice of his father-in-law and did all that he said.*

YHWH has confirmed this:

Num 11:16-17, 24: 16 Then YHWH said to Mosheh, "**Gather to Me seventy men of the elders** of Yisra'El, whom you know to be the elders of the people and officers over them. And bring them to the Tent of Meeting, and let them stand there with you. 17 And I shall come down and speak with you there, and shall **take of the Spirit that is on you, and put on them.** And they shall bear the burden of the people with you, so that you do not bear it yourself alone. 24 And Mosheh went out and spoke to the people the words of YHWH, and

he gathered the seventy men of the elders of the people and placed them around the Tent.

Deut 17:8-12: 8 *When any matter arises **which is too hard for you to judge** (to make a decision alone), between blood and blood, between plea and plea, or between stroke and stroke – matters of strife within your gates – then you shall rise and go up to the place which YHWH your Elohim chooses, 9 and **shall come to the priests, the Lewites, and to the judge who is in those days, and shall inquire** (in other words Moshe must ask the scholars). And **they shall declare to you the word of right-ruling**, 10 and you **shall do according to the word which they declare to you from that place which YHWH chooses. And you shall guard to do according to all that they instruct you.** 11 Do according to the Torah in which **they teach you** (Moshe), according to the rightruling which **they** say to you. **You do not turn to the right or to the left from the word which they declare to you.** 12 And the man who acts arrogantly, so as not to listen to the priest who stands to serve there before YHWH your Elohim, or to the judge, **that man shall die**. So you shall purge the evil from Yisra'El.*

Later on the Israelites were taken in exile and upon their return Nehemiah re-establish the council of Elders:

Neh 7:25-28: 25 *And you, Ezra, according to the wisdom of your Elah that is in your hand, **appoint magistrates and judges to judge all the people who are beyond the River**, all such as know the laws of your Elah. And **teach those who do not know them**. 26 And whoever **does not do** the law of your Elah and the law of the sovereign, **let judgment be promptly executed on him**, whether it be death, or banishment, or confiscation of goods, or imprisonment. 27 Blessed be YHWH Elohim of our fathers, who has put this in the sovereign's heart, to embellish the House of YHWH which is in Yerushalayim, 28 and has extended kindness to me before the sovereign **and his counsellors**, and before all the sovereign's mighty princes. So I was strengthened, as the hand of YHWH my Elohim was upon me. And I gathered heads from Yisra'El to go up with me.*

In Neh 10:10-17 we see that Nehemiah the priest selected men who were family heads, one from each family division, and all of them designated by name, and they investigate the cases.

At the time of Y'shua the Sanhedrin still existed and Y'shua endorsed it:

Matt 5:21-22: 21 *You heard that it was said to those of old, 'You shall not murder,' and whoever murders shall be liable to judgment. 22 But I say to you that whoever is wroth with his brother without a cause shall be liable to judgment. And whoever says to his brother,*

'Raka!' shall be liable to the Sanhedrin. But whoever says, 'You fool!' shall be liable to fire of Gehenna.

Matt 23:2-3: 2 saying, "The scribes and the Pharisees sit on the seat of Mosheh. 3 Therefore, **whatever they**¹⁸ **say to you to guard, guard and do.** But **do not** do according to **their works**, for they say, and do not do.

Note that Matt 23:3 is a paraphrase from:

Deut 17:9-10: 9 and shall come **to the priests, the Lewites, and to the judge** who is in those days, **and shall inquire.** And **they shall declare to you the word of right-ruling**, 10 and **you shall do according to the word which they declare to you** from that place which YHWH chooses. And you shall **guard** to **do according to all that they instruct you.**

That is why Y'shua gave Oral Law authority to His Talmidim¹⁹, the 70 of the Elders in Jerusalem, and they utilized it to make Halachic decisions as can clearly be seen in Acts chapter 15. We also see that Y'shua distinctly teaches the concept of the Assembly of Elders to make decisions and to sort Torah problems out:

Matt 18:15-18: 15 And if your brother sins against you, go and reprove him, between you and him alone. If he hears you, you have gained your brother. 16 But if he does not hear, take with you one or two more, that 'by the mouth of two or three witnesses every word might be established.' (Torah Mitzvah – Deut 19:15.) 17 And if he refuses to hear them, **say it to the assembly** (of Elders). And if he refuses even to hear the assembly, let him be to you like a gentile (dog) and a tax collector. 18 Truly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be having been bound in heaven, and whatever you loosen on earth shall be having been loosened in heaven.

Y'shua according to Torah also appointed seventy elders:

Luke 10:1: And after this **the Master appointed seventy others**, and sent them two by two ahead of Him into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.

This seventy elders principle was still intact, in the format of Messianic Elders, even after Y'shua ascended. It was YHWH's and Y'shua's only way of ensure right-ruling:

Acts 15:1-2: 1 And certain men came down from Yehudah and were teaching the brothers, "Unless you are circumcised, according to the

¹⁸ I understand that Shem Tov's Hebrew Translation of Matthew distinctly says "he" here which then implies what "Moshe" says, but taking the full council of Scripture this verse according to Y'shua could well also mean what "they" the "Pharisees" says. Why? Because verse 3 is a paraphrase from Deut 17:9-10.

¹⁹ Disciples.

*practice of Mosheh, you are unable to be saved." 2 So when Sha'ul and Barnabah had no small dissension and dispute with them, they arranged for Sha'ul and Barnabah and certain others of them to go up to Yerushalayim, **to the emissaries and elders**, about this question.*

Sha'ul Also Obeyed the Oral Law

Sha'ul also never did anything against the **customs of our fathers** [Halachah]. This would have included obedience to the Oral Law:

*Acts 28:16-17: 16 And when we came to Rome, the captain delivered the prisoners to the captain of the guard, but Sha'ul was allowed to stay by himself with the soldier guarding him. 17 And it came to be after three days that Sha'ul **called the leaders of the Yehudim** (Jews) **together**. And **when they had come together**, he said to them, "Men, brothers, though I have done none at all against our people **or the practices of our fathers**, I was delivered as a prisoner from Yerushalayim into the hands of the Romans,"*

Sha'ul states he has kept the customs of the Jews. Strong's number for the word translated "customs" is #1485. Thayer's definition is a "*custom or a usage prescribed by law, institute, prescription or rite.*" From a Jewish point of view, he is talking about the Oral Law.

At the end of his life, Sha'ul reiterates that he has not done anything against the law of the Jews. The Rabbinical Jews considered the Oral and the Written Law to be of equal validity:

*Acts 25:8 while Sha'ul said in his own defence, "**Neither against the Torah of the Yehudim, nor against the Set-apart Place, nor against Caesar did I commit any sin.**"*

The Oral Law provides the details or fine points of how to perform a Commandment. The Oral Law will not be found in Torah. An example would be how to keep the Sabbath. YHWH says, "*do no work*" on the Shabbat, with no further explanation (Deut 20:10). It was up to the Oral Law to define work. Defining what work is would be an example of the Oral Law, but no instruction from the Oral Law can EVER carry more weight or supersede the Written Torah of YHWH. If the Torah says you must wear tzitziyot (tassles) and you wear a tallit (Jewish prayershawl) in your assembly, you are not violating the Written Torah although the tallit is not mentioned in the Written Torah.

Sha'ul **did not teach against** the Halachah, in fact he agreed with it:

*Acts 21:17-26: 17 And when we had arrived in Yerushalayim, the brothers received us gladly. 18 And on the following day Sha'ul went in with us to **Ya'aqov**, and **all the elders came** (the seventy). 19 And having greeted them, he was relating one by one what Elohim had done among the gentiles (lost sheep of the House of Israel*

scattered into the nations) *through his service.* 20 *And when they heard it, they praised the Master. And they said to him, "You see, brother, how many thousands of Yehudim there are who have believed, and all are ardent for the Torah.* 21 *And they have been informed about you that you teach all the Yehudim who are among the gentiles to forsake Mosheh, saying not to circumcise the children nor to walk according to the practices.* 22 *What then is it? They shall certainly hear that you have come.* 23 *So do this, what we say to you: We have four men who have taken a (Nazarene) vow.* 24 *Take them and **be cleansed with them, and pay their expenses** (give an offering at the Temple) **so that they shave their heads.** And all shall know that what they have been informed about you is not so, but that **you yourself also walk orderly, keeping the Torah.*** 25 *But concerning the gentiles who believe, we have written and decided that they should keep themselves from what is offered to idols, and blood, and what is strangled, and whoring."* 26 *Then Sha'ul took the men on the next day, and **having been cleansed with them,** went into the Set-apart Place to announce the completion of the days of separation – until the offering should be presented for each one of them.*

Sha'ul taught the Oral Law to the lost sheep of the House of Israel with unrestrained effort and even instructed them to obey them:

2 Thess 2:15: *So, then, brothers, **stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught,** whether **by word or by our letter.***

Again, Strong's number for "traditions" is #3862. Sha'ul is writing to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matt 15:24) cities of Corinth and Thessalonica. He is addressing synagogues that included many Ten Tribers. Notice that he particularly mentions traditions that were delivered by "**word of mouth**".

What instructions did Sha'ul give regarding dealings with people who did not keep the "traditions" or Oral Law:

2 Thess 3:6 *But **we command you, brothers, in the Name of our Master Y'shua Messiah, that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which you received from us.***

You are absolutely right... Again the word for traditions is the same as Strong's number above.

Sha'ul makes it clear he not only kept the Written Law **but the Oral Law as well:**

1 Cor 11:1-2: ***Become imitators** of me, as **I also** am of Messiah (as Y'shua did). 2 *And I praise you, brothers, that you **remember me in every way and keep the traditions** as **I delivered them to you.****

Strong's number for the word translated "traditions" is #3862. Thayer's second definition states *"of the body of precepts, esp. ritual, which **in the opinion of the Jews were orally delivered by Moshe and orally transmitted in unbroken succession to subsequent generations**, which precepts, both illustrating and expanding the Written Law, as they did, were to be obeyed with equal reverence."*

What does Sha'ul say to Believers about those who try to prevent people from observing the traditions of the Jews?

Rom 16:17: *Now I call upon you, brothers, **watch out for those who cause divisions and stumbling, contrary to the teaching which you learned, and turn away from them.***

Have we not learned what Sha'ul has been teaching? Is it not the **traditions and laws of the Jews**? Beware of those who state the Law is not to be obeyed! Keep away from them, it is an instruction from YHWH via Sha'ul to you and me.

Sha'ul, in his second letter to Timothy, quotes from the oral law to name those who opposed Moshe:

2 Tim 3:8: *And as Yohane and Mamre opposed Mosheh²⁰, **so do these** (modern day teachers) **also oppose the truth** – **men of corrupt minds, found worthless concerning the belief;***

Thus we see that not only was Sha'ul conversant with the Oral Law, but that he used this Oral Law to teach about Y'shua!

Sha'ul told the people to follow his example as he follows the Messiah's example²¹. Does not the Messiah have to be a Law-observant Jew? If He was not an observant Jew, then he would be disqualified from being the Messiah. Since the Messiah was observant and Sha'ul followed His example, then Sha'ul was instructing all Believers to keep the Law. Sha'ul is misunderstood repeatedly because he wrote in Jewish terms and at a high level of presumptive understanding. Sha'ul wrote with the assumption that the person reading his letter knew Written and Oral Torah.

Conclusion

While we in the beginning of this booklet come across strongly as against the Oral Torah, the truth is that the Oral Torah isn't all bad. In fact, much of it is quite useful and much of it is educational. If the Oral Torah (or any other tradition) does not contradict the Written Torah or supersede the Written Torah, then there is nothing wrong with it. After all, it gives us the details and explanations of many Written Mitzvot. However, the moment it does contradict Torah, **it should be rejected**.

²⁰ Exod 7:11-12.

²¹ 1 Cor 11:1.

The golden rule is that it must **never** take a place in a community where it is **equal or greater than YHWH's Torah**, written down by Moshe. It must always be **a tradition** that is **superseded by Torah**.

Y'shua, Sha'ul and the other Messianic Writings writers, mostly, adhered to all customs and traditions of His time, **where they did not contradict Torah**. All altercations with Y'shua and the Pharisees or the Scribes concerning the Oral Law, were all about His disciples, **not Him**.

The Oral Law is by no means needed in the life of a Believer, yet, **if** you do read it and choose to adopt **some** of the instructions in there, as your own tradition (there are many good things in there), then there is no problem with that, **as long as you always test it against the Torah**.

Final thought: Whether one accepts it or not, it is a fact attested to by Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, that even in His final hour, Y'shua did not stop practising the Halachic rites of Orthodox Judaism. Even educational Jewish learning books, such as the Encyclopedia Judaica, says that **"the New Testament provides us with undeniable evidence that Yeshua did not oppose any prescription of the Written or Oral Torah."**

*Something mind-boggling is happening right now before our eyes!
What can only be seen as a sovereign work of the Ruach HaKodesh is breaking forth as Christians around the world are working to **return** to their **historical Hebrew foundation**. After being **stained** for more than eighteen centuries by Judaeophobia, anti-Judaism, and anti-Semitism, many Christians are being impacted by an unprecedented revolution of restoration. Scholars, clergy, and laity from virtually every nationality, ethnicity, and denomination are reconnecting their faith in Messiah Y'shua with its historical Hebraic Roots in the **Torah**. **HalleluYAH***

We inform – You choose²²

Never be guilty of: **"By your traditions you make the Word of God of non-effect"²³**

²² The truth of the Torah makes you see the mistranslations in the New Covenant. It's amazing how you can look at the epistles of Rabbi Sha'ul one way and it looks like he's leading the body of Messiah away from Torah; when in reality, he's leading them **to** Torah. A paradox of vantage point. Let us remember, the intent of the law maker constitutes the law. We need to walk a mile or two in our Hebrew Messiah's shoes.

²³ **Matt 15:3** But he answered and said unto them, Why do ye also transgress the commandment of God by your tradition? **Matt 15:6** And honour not his father or his mother, he shall be free. Thus have ye made the commandment of God of none effect by your tradition. **Mark 7:9** And he said unto them, Full well ye reject the commandment of God, that ye may keep your own tradition

As cold waters to a thirsty soul, so is good news from a far country. Prov 25:25

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