

MORDECHAI 103

MORDECHAI 11:27-33

BESB

Mar 11:27 ¶ And they (Yeshua and his talmidim), came again into Yerushalayim. And as he (Yeshua) was walking around the Temple, the chief priests (of the Sadducees Heb. Tz'dukim) and the scribes (of the Sadducees - Heb. Tz'dukim) and the elders (Zekanim) (of the Sadducees - Heb. Tz'dukim) came to him,

Mar 11:28 and (they) said to him (Yeshua), By (in) what authority do you do these things? And who gave you the authority to do these things?

Mar 11:29 And Yeshua responded and said to them: I will ask of you one question, answer me, and I will tell you by what authority I do these things.

Mar 11:30 The immersion (Heb. Mikveh) of Yochanan, was it from (the) Heavens [God], or from men? Answer Me.

Mar 11:31 And they considered within themselves, saying, If we shall say, From (the) Heavens, he will say, why then did you not believe him?

Mar 11:32 But if we shall say, From men, they feared the people, for all held Yochanan to be a prophet indeed.

Mar 11:33 And they answered and said to Yeshua, We do not know. And Yeshua answering, said to them, Neither do I tell you by what authority I do these things.

GREEK TEXT

27 Καὶ ἔρχονται πάλιν εἰς Ἱερουσόλυμα καὶ ἐν τῷ ἱερῷ περιπατοῦντος αὐτοῦ ἔρχονται πρὸς αὐτὸν οἱ ἀρχιερεῖς καὶ οἱ γραμματεῖς καὶ οἱ πρεσβύτεροι

28 καὶ λεγουσιν αὐτῷ Ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιεῖς καὶ τίς σοι τὴν ἐξουσίαν ταύτην ἔδωκεν ἵνα ταῦτα ποιῆς

29 ὁ δὲ Ἰησοῦς ἀποκριθεὶς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Ἐπερωτήσω ὑμᾶς κἀγὼ ἓνα λόγον καὶ ἀποκριθῆτέ μοι καὶ ἐρῶ ὑμῖν ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ·

30 τὸ βάπτισμα Ἰωάννου ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἦν ἢ ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἀποκριθῆτέ μοι

31 καὶ ἐλογίζοντο πρὸς ἑαυτοὺς λέγοντες Ἐὰν εἴπωμεν Ἐξ οὐρανοῦ ἐρεῖ Διὰ τί οὖν οὐκ ἐπιστεύσατε αὐτῷ

32 ἀλλ' ἐὰν εἴπωμεν Ἐξ ἀνθρώπων ἐφοβοῦντο τὸν λαόν. ἅπαντες γὰρ εἶχον τὸν Ἰωάννην ὅτι ὄντως προφήτης ἦν

33 καὶ ἀποκριθέντες λεγουσιν τῷ Ἰησοῦ Οὐκ οἶδαμεν καὶ ὁ Ἰησοῦς ἀποκριθεὶς λέγει αὐτοῖς Οὐδὲ ἐγὼ λέγω ὑμῖν ἐν ποίᾳ ἐξουσίᾳ ταῦτα ποιῶ

DELITZSCH HEBREW TRANSLATION

27 וַיָּשׁוּבוּ וַיָּבֹאוּ יְרוּשָׁלַיִם וַיְהִי הוּא מִתְּהֵלֵךְ בְּמִקְדָּשׁ וַיָּבֹאוּ אֵלָיו רְאֵשֵׁי הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַסּוֹפְרִים וְהַזְקֵנִים: 28 וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו בְּאֵיזוֹ רְשׁוּת אַתָּה עוֹשֶׂה אֵלֶּה וּמִי נָתַן לְךָ אֶת־הַרְשׁוּת הַזֹּאת לַעֲשׂוֹת אֶת־אֵלֶּה: 29 וַיַּעַן יֵשׁוּעַ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם גַּם־אֲנִי אֶשְׁאַלְהֶם אֶתְכֶם דְּבַר אֶחָד וְאַתֶּם הַשִּׁיבוּנִי וְאִמַר לְכֶם בְּאֵיזוֹ רְשׁוּת אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה אֵלֶּה: 30 טְבִילַת יוֹחָנָן הַמְּשֻׁמֵּם הֲיָתְהָ אִם־מִבְּנֵי אָדָם הַשִּׁיבוּנִי: 31 וַיֹּעֲצוּ יַחְדָּו לֵאמֹר אִם־נֹאמַר מְשֻׁמֵּם יֹאמַר מַדּוּעַ אִפּוֹא לֹא הֶאֱמַנְתֶּם בּוֹ: 32 אוֹ הִנֵּאמַר מִבְּנֵי־אָדָם וַיִּירָאוּ אֶת־הָעָם כִּי־כֹלָם חָשְׁבוּ אֶת־יוֹחָנָן לְנָבִיא בְּאֵמֶת: 33 וַיַּעֲנוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֶל־יֵשׁוּעַ לֹא יָדַעְנוּ וַיַּעַן יֵשׁוּעַ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם אִם־כֵּן גַּם־אֲנִי לֹא אִמַר לְכֶם בְּאֵיזוֹ רְשׁוּת אֲנִי עוֹשֶׂה אֵלֶּה:

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INTRODUCTION

Mar 11:27 ¶ And they (Yeshua and his talmidim), came again into Yerushalayim. And as he (Yeshua) was walking around the Temple, the chief priests (of the Sadducees Heb. Tz'dukim) and the scribes (of the Sadducees - Heb. Tz'dukim) and the elders (Zekanim) (of the Sadducees - Heb. Tz'dukim) came to him,

The Talmud does not specifically identify all the high priests as Sadducees, nor can this be inferred from the disparaging remarks about the high priestly oligarchy.^a

However, from a series of passages one can conclude without hesitation that Sadduceism predominant in the high priestly circles. From this viewpoint, special significance attaches to the tradition that it was the practice to have the high priest take an oath that on the Day of Atonement he would not burn the income outside the Holy of Holies as was the wont of the Sadducean and Boethusian high priests.^b The reason for the oath was that a certain high priest followed the Sadducean practice and met a tragic end as a result.^c Another high priest is mentioned in connection with the burning of the red heifer. The Sadducees, in contrast to the Pharisee, insisted that the ritual must be performed only after sunset.^d The Tosefta mentions an instance in which a Sadducean high priest, hearing waited for sunset after the ritual purification, came to burn the red heifer and met with opposition on the part of Rabbi Johann ben Zakkai.^e There is ground for the assumption that the

^a T. Menahoth 13:21; T.B. Pesahim 57a; T.B. Yoma 9a; T.B. Kerithoth 28

^b J.T. Yoma 1, 39a; T.B. Yoma 19b

^c Cf. H. Graetz, Hesschichte der Juden III, 2, pp. 749-52

^d M. Para 3:8

^e T. Parah 3:8

high priest question belonged to the house of Phiabi.^a If the conjecture is correct, we would have another example of the affiliation of a high priestly family—that of the house of Phiabi with the Sadducees.^b

While the Talmud does not directly record that the high priestly offices were predominately Sadducaic we can derive this information from a plethora of passages in the Nazarean Codicil. Therefore, I have noted that the confrontation between Yeshua and the high priests along with their elders as being Sadducaic.

The high priests continued to enjoy outstanding prestige and official recognition. But the constant change in the office of high priest, and the quarrels and plots within the oligarchy served to undermine respect which the people normally had for their priestly leaders. In addition, the people began to look on the leaders of the Pharisees as the spiritual authorities. And here it was the house of Hillel which guided the Pharisaic movement. For a century, the sages of this family were widely regarded as the leaders of the nation.^c

Personally, I place Yeshua in conjunction with the House of Hillel in education, practice, doctrine and authority. Therefore, Yeshua could not help but appear conflicting to the Sadducaic priesthood and pseudo-authority. Hillel's authority stemmed from his Davidic ancestry, as did Yeshua.^d Those persons of Davidic ancestry must have caused the Sadducees some alarm given the livelihood of the Messianic hope. Hillel is reported to have died sometime between 10-20 C.E.^e Yitzhak Bauxbaum places his death in or about 10 C.E.^f His son, Shimon ben Hillel and grandson, Gamaliel ben Shimon^g are reported to have been Nasi of the Sanhedrin during the first century.^h Consequently, we would surmise that either Shimon ben Hillel or Gamaliel ben Shimon functioned as Nasi of the Sanhedrin during the life of Yeshua. Furthermore, the House of Hillel, in both direct ancestry and those who were of the School of Hillel (his talmidim) were all Pharisees and therefore in direct objection to the Sadducees.ⁱ As heads of the Sanhedrin, I am certain that the House of Hillel had more than one occasion to conflict with and confront Sadducaic authority. Rabban Gamaliel is said to have married the daughter of Nethanel, the priest.^j While this bears further research, I would assume, given the context that this was the daughter of a legitimate priest and not one of the Sadducean sect. Rabban Gamaliel is represented in the book of Acts as opposing the Sadducaic opposition to Yeshua's talmidim.^k This being the case we again see the cause for the nervous attitude of the Sadducees. The descent of David marrying into the Levitical priesthood would have sent distressing signals to the Sadducees.

^a Cf. Jerimias, p.229 n. 30. On Rabbi Yochanan ben Zakkai as a militant Pharisee in the struggle against the Sadducees. See also E. Rivkin, in HUCA 1969-1970, pp. 221-2

^b M. Stern, The Jewish people in the first century: Historical geography, political history, social, cultural and religious life and institutions. Volume 2 p. 611

^c Ibid p. 616

^d Cf. T.B Sanhedrin 5a, Matthew 1: 1

^e Yitzhak Bauxbaum, The Life and Teachings of Hillel, Jason Aaronson Inc 1973 p.9, n.1 p.303

^f Ibid pp. 44-45

^g Rabban Gamaliel of Acts chapter 5, see also M. Gittin 4:2-3; M. R.H. 2:5; T. Sanhedrin 2:6; M. Sotah 9:15.

^h T.B. Shabbat 15a

ⁱ Yitzhak Bauxbaum, The Life and Teachings of Hillel, Jason Aaronson Inc 1973 p.46

^j Cf. T. Kippurim (Yoma), 1:6 M. Stern, The Jewish people in the first century: Historical geography, political history, social, cultural and religious life and institutions. Volume 2 p. 618

^k Cf. Acts 5:17ff.

THE SADDUCEES, AN OVERVIEW

Ant 13:298 And concerning these things it is that great disputes and differences have arisen among them, while the Sadducees are able to persuade none but the rich, and have not the populace favourable to them, but the Pharisees have the multitude on their side. But about these two sects, and that of the Essenes, I have treated accurately in the second book of Jewish affairs.

Jwr 2:119 For there are three philosophical sects among the Jews. The followers of the first of which are the Pharisees; of the second, the Sadducees; and the third sect, which pretends to a severer discipline, are called Essenes. These last are Jews by birth, and seem to have a greater affection for one another than the other sects have.

Jacob Neusner tells us that there was no such thing as “normative Judaism” in the first century.^a As noted above, Josephus notices noticeable differences between the three most popular groups.

As a whole, the sect fulfilled various political, social and religious roles, including maintaining the Temple. The Sadducees are often compared to other contemporaneous sects, including the Pharisees and the Essenes. Their sect is believed to have become extinct sometime after the destruction of Herod's Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, but it has been speculated that later Karaites may have had some roots or connections with old Sadducee views.^b

Jwr 2:164-166 ¹⁶⁴ But the Sadducees are those who compose the second order, and take away fate entirely, and suppose that God is not concerned in our doing or not doing what is evil; and they say, that to act what is good, or what is evil, ¹⁶⁵ is at men's own choice, and that the one or the other belongs so to everyone, that they may act as they please. They also take away the belief of the immortal duration of the soul, and the punishments and rewards in Hades. ¹⁶⁶ Moreover, the Pharisees are friendly to one another, and are for the exercise of concord, and regard for the public; but the behaviour of the Sadducees one toward another is in some degree wild; **and their conduct with those who are of their own party is as barbarous as if they were strangers to them.** And this is what I had to say concerning the philosophic sects among the Jews.

I would note here that in the confrontation between Yeshua and the Sadducees in our present pericope the barbarous character of the Sadducees that is readily seen. Reading the words of Josephus causes us to see that the Sadducees were not a united sect. If the Sadducees acted barbarous to one another, we can postulate that they did not act with any degree of civility towards the Pharisees or any other religious party.

In the discussion of the Parah Adumah, Rabbi Yose states...

“Do not give the Sadducees an opportunity to cavil at us”^c

The Encyclopedia Judaica offered the following information on the Sadducees...

In the rabbinic period the doctrine of the resurrection of the dead is considered one of the central doctrines of Judaism. The tenth chapter of Mishnah Sanhedrin begins, “All of Israel has a portion in the world to come, as it is said (Isa. 60:21) ‘And Thy people are all righteous, at the End they shall inherit the land...’ and the following have no portion in the world to come: one who says, “There is no resurrection of the dead....” George Foot Moore in Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era (2 (1950), 323) asserts “It must be further observed that, except on the single article of the revivification of the dead, there was no dogma and no canon of orthodoxy in this whole field [eschatology].” This dogma was one of the important points of dispute between the Sadducees and

^a Jacob Neusner, First-century Judaism in crisis: Yohanan ben Zakkai and the renaissance of Torah, Ktav Pub Inc., 1982 p. 39

^b <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadducees>

^c Par. 3:3; cf. Tosef., Par. 3:3

Pharisees (see Jos., Wars, 2:163; Ant., 18:16; ARN15, 14). The rabbis included belief in the resurrection in the canonical liturgy – especially in the second of the 18 benedictions of the Amidah.^a

ORIGINS

This point is important to the discussion on the Sadducees (Tz'dukim) because they are believed to have originated out of a misunderstanding concerning the resurrection.

According to a talmudic tradition (ARN1⁵), the name derives from Zadok, a disciple of Antigonus of Sokho who, misunderstanding his teacher's maxim, denied afterlife and resurrection and formed a sect in accordance with those views (see Boethusians). The most probable explanation of the name, however, is that it is derived from Zadok, the high priest in the days of David (II Sam. 8:17 and 15:24) and Solomon (cf. I Kings 1:34ff. and I Chron. 12:29). Ezekiel (40:46, 43:19 and 44:10–15) selected this family as worthy of being entrusted with the control of the Temple. Descendants of this family constituted the Temple hierarchy down to the second century B.C.E., though not all priests were Sadducees. Hence the name "Sadducees" may best be taken to mean anyone who was a sympathizer with the Zadokites, the priestly descendants of Zadok. In the talmudic literature, the designations Boethusians and Sadducees are used interchangeably to designate the same party or sect. Some scholars believe, however, that the Boethusians were a branch of the Sadducees, deriving their name from their leader Boethus. (See L. Ginzberg, in: JE, 3 (1902), 284–5, and Schuerer, Gesch, 2 (19074), 478–9.)^b

Antigonus of Sokho received the tradition from Simon the Just who was the last of the Men of the Great Assembly.

Abot 1:3 Antigonus of Sokho received [the Torah] from Simeon the Righteous. He would say, "Do not be like servants who serve the master on condition of receiving a reward, "but [be] like servants who serve the master not on condition of receiving a reward. "And let the fear of Heaven be upon you."

As can be seen, the statement of Antigonus does not undermine the idea of the resurrection. His point was only that we are not to serve the master on condition of receiving a reward. The Sadducees were in opposition to the P'rushim (Pharisees) until the end of the Second Temple era.

The party was opposed to the Pharisees down to the time of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 C.E. The main difference between the Pharisees and the Sadducees concerned their attitudes toward the Torah. The supremacy of the Torah was acknowledged by both parties. However, the Pharisees assigned to the Oral Law a place of authority side by side with the written Torah, and determined its interpretation accordingly, whereas the Sadducees refused to accept any precept as binding unless it was based directly on the Torah.^c

The contention between the Sadducees and Pharisees was much grander than just an argument on the Oral Torah and the resurrection.

The theological struggle between the two parties, as J.Z. Lauterbach puts it (Rabbinic Essays, 23–162), was actually a struggle between two concepts of God. The Sadducees sought to bring God down to man. Their God was anthropomorphic and the worship offered him was like homage paid a

^a Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition, Keter Publishing House Ltd Volume 5 pg. 654

^b Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition, Keter Publishing House Ltd Volume 5 pg. 654

^c Ibid

human king or ruler. The Pharisees, on the other hand, sought to raise man to divine heights and to bring him nearer to a spiritual and transcendent God^a.

AUTHORITY

Mar 11:28 and (they) said to him (Yeshua), By (in) what authority do you do these things? And who gave you the authority to do these things?

In contemporary language, the Sadducees might have said this a bit differently. They might have said, “What gives you the right to do these things.”

Following Pharisaic thought, we would surmise that all authority is always delegated. This allows for the sovereignty of G-d and man’s subordination to Him as Ascendant. Yeshua understood authority perfectly. However, the Sadducees had a skewed view of authority. As noted above we see the barbarous mentality of the Sadducees. They recognize the fact that their authority was being challenged. However, because the Sadducees were epicurean in their worldview they would not be able to understand Yeshua’s actions. Nor were they concerned with the welfare of the Temple, which was a principle occupation of the genuine priesthood. Yeshua has conducted himself as the agent of G-d. Therefore, I find Yeshua’s actions to be similar to the acts of the Prophets such as Eliyahu who contested the prophets of Baal.^b While the Prophet Eliyahu contested the prophets of Baal on Mt. Carmel, we can see a similarity of action between Yeshua and Eliyahu. As such, the Sadducees must have understood his actions to be more than the typical Pharisaic opposition and contention. The Mishnah tractate Yoma clearly teaches us that the Sadducaic authority was feigned. When the whole of the Temple is considered, we find the Sadducaic authority not only feigned but also minimal. Yoma attests to the Pharisaic influence and authority in the Temple albeit nominal. The other witness of Sadducaic sub-Roman authority sat on the Temple platform in view of all the patrons of the Temple complex, which was the Fortress Antonia. The Fortress Antonia rising from the bedrock of the northwestern corner of the Temple mount stood some fifty cubits above the platform base as a reminder that the Sadducaic authority was not their own. It was here in this Fortress that the Roman Governors stayed when they were in Jerusalem.^c This was usually during the Festivals to insure political stability on the Temple Mount. The presence of the Roman Governors was an attestation to the fact that the Temple mount was a highly volatile local and not strictly governed by the Sadducees. The Priestly garments were housed there as a measure of Roman control.^d Again, making the Sadducees subordinate to Roman overlords.

WHY WOULD YESHUA CHALLENGE THE AUTHORITY OF THE SADDUCEES?

While I believe that there must be a number of reasons that can be attested to, I will suggest one basic reason although Yeshua’s mission is multi-dimensional. However, the challenge against the Sadducees is focused. As I have stated elsewhere the Priesthood of the Sadducees was defunct. While their office was a parody, they did operate with some authority as mentioned above, albeit a mockery of truth and G-d. A possible reason for Yeshua’s contempt for Sadducaic priesthood is that Yeshua represents the priesthood of the firstborn and has come to reclaim the rite of Priestly authority.

^a Ibid

^b Cf. 1 Kings 18:19ff

^c Pierre Benoit, The Archaeological Reconstruction of the Antonia Fortress, page 87, in Jerusalem Revealed (edited by Yigael Yadin), (1976)

^d Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews 18:90-94

Mark (Mordechai) 1:14-15 Now after Yochanan was arrested and put in prison, Yeshua came into Galilee, proclaiming the good news (the Masorot – the Traditions) of the kingdom (governance) of G-d [through the Hakhamim and Bate Din as opposed to human kings], ¹⁵ And saying, The [appointed period of] time is fulfilled (completed), and the kingdom (governance) of God [through Hakhamim and Bate Din] is at hand; repent (have a change of mind and return to Torah wisdom) and faithfully obey the Masorah (Traditions/Oral Law).^a

Whereas until that time Israel had been under kings appointed by G-d, a new dispensation, for lack of a better word, of the governance of G-d was about to be inaugurated after the fall of the Temple and the discontinuance of the Sanhedrin whereby G-d's people would be ruled by judges and Rabbinic tribunals as it was after Joshua. This system of Judges and Rabbinic Tribunals (Bate Din) required a legal tradition (body of oral Law) which is the "good news" that Yeshuah was proclaiming.^b

Yeshua has previously established himself as a prophet.^c We must therefore, conclude that Yeshua must have known that the Temple was destined for destruction. However, His Eminence Rabbi Dr, Yoseph ben Haggai has aptly pointed out that the "Governance of G-d" was fast approaching. This "Governance" was the result of the Rabbis who had labored diligently to establish a system that would not fail. Ezra established eleven *Taknot* (reforms)^d with the "Men of the Great Assembly" that salvaged Judaism in their period. Now it was time for the Rabbis to do the same. Yeshua was as much a part of this movement as were the Rabbis. Yeshua's part was not only the re-instatement of the Priesthood of the firstborn. Yeshua labored as diligently in the establishment of the mesorot as he did in the reconciliation of the firstborn. Our present Torah Seder^e once again deals with the substitution of the Levite for the firstborn. Consequently, I believe we see that the defunct Levitical system is being challenged by Yeshua. At minimum Yeshua is sending the defunct message that G-d would not tolerate this illegitimate behavior much longer.

During the Persian period, the Temple became more than the center of worship in Judea after its reconstruction in 516 BC; it served as the center of society. It makes sense, then, that priests held important positions as official leaders outside of the Temple. The democratizing forces of the Hellenistic period lessened and shifted the focus of Judaism away from the temple and in the 3rd century BC, a scribal class began to emerge. New organizations and "social elites," according to Shaye Cohen, appeared. It was also during this time that the high priesthood - the members of which often identified as Sadducees - was developing a reputation for corruption. Questions about the legitimacy of the Second Temple and its Sadduceean leadership freely circulated Judean society. Sects began to form during the Maccabean reign (see "Jewish Sectarianism" section); The Temple in Jerusalem was the formal center of political and governmental leadership in ancient Israel, although its power was often contested and disputed by fringe groups.^g

The pseudo-Priesthood of the Sadducees had turned into a pecuniary machine. The Temple was no longer about the things of G-d or the things commanded by G-d. This pericope and Torah Seder reflects the decadent leadership that had been untaken by Korah. The necessity to place "rods" in the

^a Translation by His Eminence rabbi Dr Yoseph ben Haggai

^b <http://www.betemunah.org/sederim/heshvan369.html> Commentary note by His Eminence Rabbi Dr Yoseph ben Haggai

^c Cf. Mark 11:1-11

^d Niddah 4.4, 5:1ff; Bava Kama 7.1 (Gemara 82a for Ezra's Taknot) Berakot 3:4-6

See my series on Ezra's Taknot, <http://arba4.com/2008/11/11/ezras-ten-rules-part-1-introduction.html>

^e B'Midbar 17:16-18:32 " And take from each of them a rod"

^f Cohen, Shaye, *From the Maccabees to the Mishnah*. 2nd ed. Westminster John Knox: Louisville, 2006. pp. 153-154

^g <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Sadducees>

“Tent of Meeting” is further evidence of the residual rebellion of Korah from our previous Torah Seder. In the words of the last pericope of Mordechai, the “Mountain” needed to be “cast into the sea.” Or, I might say that the licentious government needed to renew its connection with G-d. The obsolescent Temple was heading for destruction. How would Judaism survive this calamity?

The Prophet Yeshayahu saw the pointlessness of offerings and sacrifices after the destruction of the first Temple.

Yeshayahu 1:11-13 ¹¹ To what purpose is the multitude of your sacrifices unto me? saith the LORD: I am full of the burnt offerings of rams, and the fat of fed beasts; and I delight not in the blood of bullocks, or of lambs, or of he goats. ¹² When ye come to appear before me, who hath required this at your hand, to tread my courts? ¹³ Bring no more vain oblations; incense is an abomination unto me; the new moons and sabbaths, the calling of assemblies, I cannot away with; it is iniquity, even the solemn meeting.

Yeshuayahu 1:19-20 ¹⁹ If ye be willing and obedient, ye shall eat the good of the land: ²⁰ But if ye refuse and rebel, ye shall be devoured with the sword: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.

What good were sacrifices if the heart was divided?

Menakhot 13:10 The priests who served in the House of Onias are not to serve in the sanctuary in Jerusalem. And one need not say [that this applies to those who have served] for another matter^a [idolatry], as it is said, *Nevertheless the priests of the high places came not up to the altar of the Lord in Jerusalem, but they ate unleavened bread among their brethren* (II Kings 23:9)— lo, they are like blemished^b priests, taking a share and eating [it] but not offering up [sacrifices].

From this Mishnah the Sages derived the following...

Menakhot 110a Resh Lakish said, What is the significance of the verse, This is the law for the burnt-offering, for the meal-offering, for the sin-offering, and for the guilt-offering?^c It teaches that whosoever occupies himself with the study of the Torah is as though he were offering a burnt-offering, a meal-offering a sin-offering, and a guilt-offering, Raba asked, Why then does the verse say. For the burnt-offering, for the meal-offering? It should have said, a burnt-offering, a meal-offering! Rather, **said Raba, it means that whosoever occupies himself with the study of the Torah needs neither burnt-offering, nor meal-offering, nor sin-offering, nor guilt-offering.**^d

With the destruction of the Second Temple, the Rabbis tried to console the people of Yisrael. They wanted the people to know that they were not forsaken. What is more, there remained a means of atonement. As noted above the Prophet Yeshayahu had addressed this problem. The Rabbis of the post Second Temple period likewise needed to solace the people. How did they accomplish this? They cited Yeshayahu and demonstrated that repentance, Torah study; acts of charity and prayer were acts of genuine atonement.

The efficacy of true repentance cannot be underestimated neither can Torah Study, the acts of charity and prayer.

REPENT

Mark 1:9-11 And it came to pass in those days, Yeshua came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was immersed by Yochanan the Immerser at the Yarden (Jordan river); ¹⁰. And immediately coming up from the water, he saw

^a A euphemism for idolatry.

^b II Kings XXIII, 9.

^c Lev. VII, 37.

^d The verse accordingly means: The Torah is for, i.e., in lieu of, the burnt-offering, the meal-offering, etc.: the study of the Torah makes atonement like the offering of sacrifice. Another interpretation: vkugk stands for vkug tk ‘no (need for) burnt-offering’; cf. Ned. 11a.

the heavens dividing, and the Spirit as a dove coming down upon him; ¹¹. and a Bat Qol (daughter of a voice) came out of the heavens [saying] (Psalm 2:7 & Isaiah 42:1), “You are My son, My elect in whom My soul delights.”^a

DISCERNING THE MEANING OF YESHUA’S IMMERSION

This problem has bothered me for the longest time. Only recently have I concluded its meaning and purpose. Before we can fully understand the meaning of this event, we need a bit of background information. Prayerfully I have gained a bit of insight through the guidance of my teacher and mentor His Eminence Rabbi Dr, Yoseph ben Haggai.

FIRST QUESTION: WHAT IS A MIKVEH?

This august body should be thoroughly acquainted with the concepts of the Mikveh. However, I will give a brief overview for those who are not acquainted with the Mikveh. To understand the [Mikveh](#)^b in depth would take a great deal of time to explain. I will endeavor to minimize this information for the sake of time and space. I would like to include a simple prayer that is recited when we wash our hands. Hand washing occurs at various times such as before eating ritual foods .i.e. bread and upon exiting the bathroom. Likewise, we wash our hands upon rising from sleep, which is a picture of death. The Kohanim^c washed their hands each morning before entering service at the Bet Mikdash.^d Why was this hand washing done? Were their hands were dirty? Do we wash our hands each morning because they are dirty? Why wash the hands?

The Blessing:

Transliteration: *Baruch A-toh Ado-noi E-lo-hei-nu Me-lech Ha-olom A-sher Ki-de-sha-nu
Be-mitz-vo-tov Vi-tzi-va-nu Al Ne-Ti-Lat Ya-Dayim.*

Translation: Blessed are You, L-rd our G-d, King of the universe, who has sanctified us with His commandments, and commanded us concerning the washing of the hands (lifting of the hands).

Many translation of this blessing render the final words as “washing of the hands.” However, we have translated the passage according to the true intent of the prayers meaning.

1 Timothy 2:8 ⁸ ¶ Therefore I want the men in every place to pray, lifting up holy hands, without wrath and dissension.

What is Hakham Shaul speaking about in this passage? Does he want men to lift their hands in some sort of praise or prayer?

Actually, Hakham Shaul is telling men that when they have washed their hands that they are to be lifted. This is because the lifting of hands (after washing) was a very old custom by the time Hakham Shaul wrote about it. Hakham Shaul maintains the true context of washing hands. Once the hands are washed (immersed), they are raised or I might say elevated. There is a literal practice of raising the hands once they are washed and then reciting the blessing mentioned above. However, we have a question that we are trying to answer. Likewise, we are trying to make a point with regards to Yeshua’s immersion.

Why are the hands elevated upon completion of immersion?

^a Translation by His Eminence Rabbi Dr, Yoseph ben Haggai

^b See the article concerning Baptism and the Mikveh at the Jewish Encyclopedia.com

^c Priests

^d The Temple

This illustration serves to teach us about all mikvot, ritual immersions.

RITUAL

Many people are afraid of ritual practices such as the hand washing mentioned above. However, Christianity is permeated with ritual. Why? Ritual is the physical enactment of a spiritual truth. In other words, every ritual is the realization of some spiritual truth or point. Why do we go through the “ritual” of Marriage, baptism, and funerals? Each of these rituals tells us some spiritual truth. So, what truth are we to learn from hand washing and the mikveh?

WATER

One other point before I begin to sum all of these points up. Why do we immerse in water? (specifically “living water”) Water has a peculiar ability. That ability is the dissolution of form. When we put sugar in water, it dissolves and loses its original form. The spiritual truth behind this point is that when a person enters the water of a mikveh some sort of change is affected. The purpose of the Mikveh will tell us what kind of change occurred.

ELEVATION

Every mikveh accomplishes some sort of elevation. This is why hands are lifted in the above-mentioned blessing. Likewise, this is why I have used this particular illustration to answer this question.

When the woman emerges from the monthly mikveh, she has been elevated to a new status. In some respects, she has been “cut off” from her family and the community. She cannot touch or interact with other people while in her state of impurity. It should be further noted that she did NOT sin and is not in any way guilty of some sort of sin. Upon rising from the mikveh, the woman is elevated to the status of now being able to interact with the community and her family. (This actually needs much more clarification)

Ritual immersion is not about dirt. We do not go to the mikveh because we need a bath. The mikveh, as mentioned, is an enactment of a spiritual truth. Therefore, the mikveh is about elevation not bathing.

Again, EVERY mikveh or immersion is an elevation of status. When the Cohanim begin their service to HaShem they wash their hands and feet as a symbol of their elevation to Holy service. Therefore, every time we wash our hands we are saying that we are dedicating ourselves to Holy activities and service. We have in some way been involved in some mundane activity. Upon washing our hands, we are committing to a higher plane of G-dly service. When we wash our hands after exiting the bathroom, we have devolved (in a manner of speaking) from Holy service. We have been involved in mundane (earthly) matters. Once the hands are elevated, we have recommitted to Holy service. Each mikveh moves the individual from one stage to a higher plane of worship, service and status.

YESHUA AND YOCHANAN

Yochanan’s mikveh was about the kingdom (governance of G-d) and repentance. Did Yeshua need to repent? The point is not whether or not Yeshua needed to repent. I do not believe that he needed to repent in this situation. His immersion by Yochanan was to solve another issue. Why would Yeshua need to be immersed?

REASON #1

The real key to Yeshua's immersion lies behind a genuine understanding of the Kingdom (governance of G-d).

Mark 1:14-15 Now after Yochanan was arrested and put in prison, Yeshuah came into Galilee, proclaiming the good news (the Masorot – the Traditions) of the kingdom (governance) of G-d [through the Hakhamim and Bate Din as opposed to human kings], ¹⁵. And saying, The [appointed period of] time is fulfilled (completed), and the kingdom (governance) of God [through Hakhamim and Bate Din] is at hand; repent (have a change of mind and return to Torah wisdom) and faithfully obey the Masorah (Traditions/Oral Law).

Keeping in mind that immersion is an elevation to a higher purpose or office we can see that Yochanan was calling for a change status. Yochanan was not calling for repentance simply because people had sinned. Yochanan was calling for a “turning towards”^a a new system that was dawning and about to demonstrate itself in Eretz Yisrael. That system was the governance of G-d through the haHkamim. (The Sages). Therefore, one reason Yeshua submits to Yochanan's immersion is that he is now devoting himself strictly to this purpose and cause.

The opening pericope of Mark should be translated as follows.

Mark 1:1-3 ¶ The beginning {The choicest or chief part} of the Masorah (Tradition/Oral Law) is Yeshuah the Messiah, the Son of G-d (i.e. Ben Elohim = the Judge); ² As it is written in the prophets, Behold, I send my messenger before your face, which will prepare your way (Hebrew: Derekh/Halakha) before you (Exodus 23:30;& Malachi 3:1).^b

Here my point is that the “governance of G-d” will be by the Mesorah (Oral Tradition) as taught and decided upon by the Bate Din's that would have to take authority in Diaspora.

REASON #2

The core of every mikveh is some type of elevation as we have mentioned. We must ask ourselves what other elevation Yeshua might have experienced at his Mikvah? We must confess that Yeshua was born to the mission and occupation of Messiah. I do not believe that we have yet fully fathomed the depths of that mission. However, he did not always occupy this mission in the same capacity. In the final years of his life, we see his commitment to that mission on a level that was not previously demonstrated. I say this with some reserve because it seems that Yeshua was ever striving to please the Father (G-d). Therefore, we must surmise that this mikveh was an elevation to strict occupation of the Messianic mission per se. With regard to our present pericope, it would seem that Yeshua was elevated as a firstborn to challenge the authority of the ineffectual priesthood.

A CARPENTER OR MESSIAH

We are told that Yoseph (Yeshua's Father) was a carpenter. I have discussed and argued this occupation with others suggesting that he was not a carpenter. My thesis was based upon the idea that both Yeshua and his brother Yaakov (James) were both Hakhamim. (Men of extreme wisdom). Yoseph himself must have been a Hakham. However, it is not a problem that Yoseph was some sort of stonemason or carpenter. Nevertheless, it is not plausible for Yeshua to remain a stonemason and

^a The Hebrew word for repentance is “teshuvah.” This word is based on the idea of turning. Teshuvah can mean return to G-d because one has fallen into sin. However, it's simple meaning is to “turn towards”...

^b <http://www.betemunah.org/sederim/heshvan369.html>, Translation by His Eminence Rabbi Dr, Yoseph ben Haggai

Messiah at the same time. Hillel the Elder was able to be a carpenter and the Nasi at the same time. Therefore, I believe that the mikveh marks a transition between the mundane and the Holy (set apart to G-d's service) in Yeshua's life. At this point Yeshua would have become a fully ordained Rabbi. While there is some contention as to when this type of ordination actually initiated it is easy to see that there was a definite transition from carpenter to Rabbi.^a At this point, He is fully and exclusively committed to G-d's service as an agent of the Divine. This mikveh marks the elevation from carpenter to Messiah. This marks a new status in his life and ministry.

Therefore, it would appear evident that Yeshua did not go through Yochanan's immersion for the sake of repentance. He went through the Mikvah as a symbol to demonstrate that from this point forward he was solely committed to his life's calling and mission. He was elevated from the status of a mundane carpenter to that of Rabbi and G-d's anointed.

CONCLUSION

As I stated above all authority is delegated. The place and position of authority would therefore depend on the source of delegation. If authority is deputized by G-d its authority is genuine and of the heavens (i.e. G-d). If authority is not subbed by G-d, it is not genuine. The Sadducaic priesthood functioned like the authentic Priesthood. However, they did not guard and protect the Temple as this Torah Seder commands. The authentic priesthood operated with Divine approbation. However, that authority was temporal. Yeshua provided reconciliation and atonement for the firstborn. Yeshua's actions might be viewed as a precursor to two things.

Firstly, to the coming system of G-d's governance which would circumvent the Temple. Secondly, the restoration of the priesthood of the firstborn, which would be secured by Yeshua's future activities.

BS"D (B'Siyata D'Shamaya)
Aramaic: With the help of Heaven
Pakid Dr. Adon Eliyahu ben Abraham

CONNECTIONS TO TORAH READINGS

Torah Seder

The Lord appointed the priests who were to keep charge of the Sanctuary, B'Midbar 18:5 The Hebrew word "Shamar" meaning guard or protect. The Priests were to guard the Sanctuary, the altar and thereby protect the Bne Yisrael from wrath. In Mordechai we see that the pseudo-priests will not protect the Temple. They are more concerned with their livelihood and reputation than protecting the Temple.

Tehillim

Mordechai and Tehillim are verbally connected through the word "Heavens" Mordechai 11:30, 31 and Tehillim 103 11, 19. There seems to be a thematic connection based on verse 22 of Tehillim, which speaks of the L-rd's place of dominion. This was the Temple and its courts while the Temple stood.

^a Cf. H.L. Strack and Gunter Stemberger, Introduction to the Talmud and Midrash, Fortress Press pp. 13-14

Ashlamatah

While the “Holy Mount” could be other places it is connected with the pericope of Mordechai through the Temple. Yeshayahu 11:9 and Mordechai 11:27

MITZVOT

Torah Add	M#	Mitzvah	Oral Torah
B'Midbar 18:4	388	Precept of Priests guarding the Temple	M. Tamid and Middot
B'Midbar 18:3	389	Levites are not to engage in the Divine labor	Aaachin 11b, Eruvin 3a B.B.24b
B'Midbar 18:4	390	No non-Kohen should work in the Sanctuary	
B'Midbar 18:5	391	Not to put an end to guarding the Sanctuary	Eruvin 96a
B'Midbar 18:15	392	Precept of redemption of firstborn	Niddah, Berakhot 46a-47b
B'Midbar 18:17	393	Not to redeem the firstborn of pure kosher animals	B'chorot 6a
B'Midbar 18:23	394	Precept of the Levite serving at the sanctuary (as gatekeepers ect.)	Berakht 30b Aarichin 11a-b
B'Midbar 18:24	395	The precept of first tithe for the Levites	Masser, Masser sheni
B'midbar 18:29	396	The obligation of the Levites to give a tithe of the tithe.	Masser and masser sheni
