

MORDECHAI 104B

MORDECHAI 12:13-17

BESB

Mar 12:13 And they (the chief priests of the Sadducees (Heb. Tz'dukim) and the scribes (Heb. soferim) of the Sadducees) apostolized to him (Yeshua) some of the Soferim and of the household of Herod, to [politically] ensnare him in discourse.

Mar 12:14 And these came, and asked him: Rabbi (Hakham); we know (perceive) that you are true, and that you are not bribed by any man, and you are not afraid (concerned) to face any man, but teach the way (i.e. Torah) of Elohim (Heb. God in His attribute of justice) in truth. Does your teaching allow paying taxes to the Caesar? Is it permissible (allowed) or not?

Mar 12:15 But knowing their deceitfulness, he said to them, "Why do you test (attempt to ensnare) me? Bring me a denarius so that I may see [it]."

Mar 12:16 And they brought [it]. And he said to them, Whose image (icon) and inscription is this? And they said to him, the Caesar's.

Mar 12:17 And answering, Yeshua said to them, Give back the things of Caesar to Caesar, and the things of Elohim to Elohim. And they were astonished by him.

GREEK TEXT

¹³ Καὶ ἀποστέλλουσιν πρὸς αὐτόν τινὰς τῶν Φαρισαίων καὶ τῶν Ἡρωδιανῶν ἵνα αὐτὸν ἀγρεύσωσιν λόγῳ

¹⁴ οἱ δὲ ἐλθόντες λέγουσιν αὐτῷ Διδάσκαλε οἶδαμεν ὅτι ἀληθῆς εἶ καὶ οὐ μέλει σοι περὶ οὐδενός· οὐ γὰρ βλέπεις εἰς πρόσωπον ἀνθρώπων ἀλλ' ἐπ' ἀληθείας τὴν ὁδὸν τοῦ Θεοῦ διδάσκεις· ἔξεστιν κῆνσον Καίσαρι δοῦναι ἢ οὐ

¹⁵ δῶμεν ἢ μὴ δῶμεν ὁ δὲ εἰδὼς αὐτῶν τὴν ὑπόκρισιν εἶπεν αὐτοῖς Τί με πειράζετε φέρετέ μοι δηνάριον ἵνα ἴδω

¹⁶ οἱ δὲ ἤνεγκαν καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς Τίνος ἡ εἰκὼν αὕτη καὶ ἡ ἐπιγραφή οἱ δὲ εἶπον αὐτῷ Καίσαρος

¹⁷ καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς ὁ Ἰησοῦς εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ἀπόδοτε Τὰ Καίσαρος Καίσαρι καὶ τὰ τοῦ Θεοῦ τῷ Θεῷ καὶ ἐθαύμασαν ἐπ' αὐτῷ

DELITZSCH HEBREW TRANSLATION

¹³ וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אֵלָיו אַנְשִׁים מִן־הַפְּרוּשִׁים וּמֵאֲנָשֵׁי הַזִּרְדוּסִים לְתַפֵּשׂ אֹתוֹ בְּדַבָּרוֹ: ¹⁴ וַיָּבֵאוּ וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו רַבִּי יִדְעֵנוּ כִּי־אִישׁ אֱמֶת אַתָּה וְלֹא־תִגּוֹר מִפְּנֵי אִישׁ כִּי לֹא תִשָּׂא פָנֵי אִישׁ וּבְאַמֶּת מוֹרָה אַתָּה אֶת־דָּרְךְ הָאֱלֹהִים הַנְּכוּן לְתֵת מִסְּאֶל־קִיסָר אִם־לֹא הַנֶּתֶן אִם־לֹא נִתֵּן: ¹⁵ וְהוּא יָדַע אֶת־חֲנוּפְתָם וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם מֵה־תִּנְסוּנֵי הֵבִיאוּ אֵלַי דִּינָר וְאַרְאֶה: ¹⁶ וַיָּבִיאוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם הַצֹּרֶה הַזֹּאת וְהַמְּכָתֵב אֲשֶׁר עָלָיו שֵׁל־מִי הֵם וַיֹּאמְרוּ אֵלָיו שֵׁל־קִיסָר: ¹⁷ וַיַּעַן יֵשׁוּעַ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם אֵת אֲשֶׁר לְקִיסָר תִּנְנוּ לְקִיסָר וְאֵת אֲשֶׁר לְאֱלֹהִים תִּנְנוּ לְאֱלֹהִים וַיִּתְמָהוּ עָלָיו:

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INTRODUCTION

WHO'S IN CHARGE

Who's in charge of your life? Who tells you what to do? Who says which choices are valid, and which are silly or self-indulgent?

The astute reader will note that the past several Torah Sederim and Pericope of Mordechai have dealt with issues of authority. The present pericope of Mordechai purports a question never diminishing with time. That question is one of administrative relevance of the government in relation to the Governance of G-d. The Tanakh clearly establishes a Theocratic administration. Yet, the Tanakh also displays what happens when the Theocratic system was unapplied in Yisrael.

I have said in the recent past that all authority is delegated. This Torah Seder and Pericope of Mordechai congeal this very declaration. The Torah Seder is replete this week with dispatches (apostolized) plenipotentiary agents. I will further the statement on authority to say that all authority is from G-d. If we take authority out of the hands of G-d, we diminish G-d's sovereignty. Hence, we must uphold the transcendence of G-d. Hence, all governmental systems have the ability to submit to the authoritative Governance of G-d or rebel against His authority.

SHEMA

Deuteronomy 6:1 Now this is the commandment, the statutes, and the ordinances, which the LORD your God commanded to teach you, that ye might do them in the land whither ye go over to possess it -

² that thou mightest fear the LORD thy God, to keep all His statutes and His commandments, which I command thee, thou, and thy son, and thy son's son, all the days of thy life; and that thy days may be prolonged.

³ Hear therefore, O Israel, and observe to do it; that it may be well with thee, and that ye may increase mightily, as the LORD, the God of thy fathers, hath promised unto thee - a land flowing with milk and honey.

⁴ HEAR, O ISRAEL: THE LORD OUR GOD, THE LORD IS ONE.

⁵ And thou shalt love the LORD thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy might. ^{JPS}

Accepting the Yoke of the Kingdom (Governance of G-d) is a vital part of understanding the Shema. The Ramban has said that the primary function of all the mitzvot is to learn the fear of G-d.^a Fear of G-d is usually understood to be reverential awe. Conversely, the Rambam tells us that fear is multifaceted.

10:1. It is not fitting to serve God in this manner. A person whose service is motivated by these factors is considered one who serves out of fear. He is not on the level of the prophets or of the wise.

10:2. One who serves [God] out of love occupies himself in the Torah and the mitzvot and walks in the paths of wisdom for no ulterior motive: not because of fear that evil will occur, nor in order to

^a Ramban, The Torah; with Ramban's Commentary Translated, Annotated, and Elucidated, Sefer Devarim, Artscroll Series, Mesorah Publications Ltd, June 2008, Devarim p.138

acquire benefit. Rather, he does what is true because it is true, and ultimately, good will come because of it.^a

While we may be subjected to powers that do not participate in the lifestyle of Torah, the challenge that we face is to be Torah observant within the framework of governments that do not reverence G-d. As a matter of fact, I believe that these tests are tests of character.

Pro 1:7 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of knowledge; but the foolish despise wisdom and discipline. ^{JPS}

Hakham Shaul reiterates that authorities are the powers established by G-d.^b Being wise, (a Hakham) means to walk in the things of G-d, which are preeminent to His people. Still, this does not mean rebellion against governmental powers. These matters are different when we are being forced to violate Torah principles. The story of the Maccabees and Purim are an attestation to these issues. Still, I suggest that the Hakhamim are able to discern the “times and seasons” and live righteously within the cultural norms of the governments of the world. If we do not qualify as Hakhamim, we need to consult them in such cases.

PASSING THROUGH THE DESERT

The current book of the Torah we are reading from is called B'Midbar, which is translated “in the wilderness.” Of course, we read the accounts of the Bne Yisrael’s trials as they walked through the desert from this book. But, what does B'Midbar really mean? Why did G-d choose for the Bne Yisrael to follow the route through the wilderness or desert?

The desert is always a hostile place. It is a place not fit for man or beast. The desert is devoid of sustainable amounts of water, food and shelter. The Bne Yisrael’s passing through the desert was a test of their faithful obedience to G-d. The test of being faithful to G-d is paramount in all that we do. When we conduct ourselves as the agents of G-d, the rest of the world watches as we pass by. What was the desert like for the Bne Yisrael? Was the desert a hostile environment of death? Or, was the desert a place of G-d’s provision? This week’s Psalmist^c looks at the vision of the wilderness as an opportunity to show faithfulness to G-d.

The analogy of the desert serves as a hostile environment. This hostile environment is a genuine test of persona. In my past years my father loved to vacation in the desert with the rattlesnakes and cactus. These weekend excursions were sometimes fun yet trying. Good planning was requisite for those jaunts through desolation. We often encountered those who did not plan so well.

The Hakhamim tell us that Avanu Abraham was tested with ten trials.^d I have asked the question of my [Torah Focus](#) students, what happens when you squeeze an orange. Of course, the answer is that you get orange juice. My next question is what happens when you squeeze a human? I ask the question like this because just as it is with oranges so is it with humans. The true character of a person is reflected when exposed to pressure. People reveal their innermost persona when they are tested. They may tell you how faithful and committed they are, yet, when they are under pressure, their true character is exposed. Abraham demonstrated his faithfulness to G-d regardless of circumstance. The desert experience for some of the Bne Yisrael demonstrated a lack of faithful obedience to G-d. This

^a Rambam, Mishneh Torah, Moznaim Publishing Corporation, Hilchot Teshuvah, Chapter Ten 1990 pp. 218-219

^b Cf. Romans 13:1

^c Cf. Psalms 104:10-18

^d Cf. M. Abot 5:3

test caused them to die in a hostile environment. It seems so strange that they repetitively complained about their circumstances. The travels through the desert were under the sustained power and Shekinah of G-d. They walked in the environment of G-d. Jacob Neusner suggests that the mitzvot given at Sinai were a means for reentering Gan Eden.^a The Torah reiterates that the Bne Yisrael were shielded and protected by the Cloud and the pillar day and night. Furthermore, they had manna and a rock that sustained them in a manner like the malakim (angelic messengers) of G-d. The story of B'Midbar serves to teach us that we must submit to the authority of G-d. However, the message is far more reaching than a simple message of submit to G-d's authority. I might extend the thought to say that we must submit to the authority G-d has established. The case of those who passed through the wilderness was that they would not accept hierarchal authority. G-d established a hierarchical system by which Moshe was the agent of G-d to the Bne Yisrael. This system has existed since the time of Adam haRishon. Therefore, we must conclude that part of the teaching that the Bne Yisrael was to learn in the wilderness was that of hierarchal authority. This authority recognizes that G-d is the ultimate sovereign who has stationed in our lives powers which reflect His plan for our lives and generation.

CONFUSING SCRIBES AND P'RUSHIM

Reading the Greek versions of our pericope is somewhat problematic. His Eminence has aptly reported what the Aramaic translations have recorded. I might add that I concur whole-heartedly. Nevertheless, there is a problem to be solved with regard to why the Greek translations say P'rushim. Therefore, I will here give a brief overview of the Scribe, Sofer.

It must be understood that the concept of the "Sofer" most likely developed out of the P'rushim prototype. The most noted Scribe of antiquity was Ezra the Priest and Scribe.^b Scholars generally suggest that the rise of the P'rushim most likely developed out of the συναγωγή γραμματέων (*sunagoge grammateon*) (company of scholars).^c George Foot Moore suggests that the P'rushim later may have been known as a "guild of Scholars" which we now label "Scribes." Here he cites Josephus telling us the first mention of the P'rushim was in 139 B.C.E. He furthers the point that about this time the three sects of P'rushim Tz'dukim and Essenes appeared.^d

The association of the Sofer (Scribe) with the P'rushim is quickly referenced in the Nazarean Codicil. In general the Soferim were likely associated with the P'rushim because of their scholarly attitude. However, it seems plausible that the Tz'dukim also had Soferim.^e Both classes of Soferim enjoyed a particular power and authority within the Nazarean Codicil. They seem to have been the lawyers and teachers of the Law (Torah).^f The Sofer of the P'rushim^g were undoubtedly the Hakhamim of the P'rushim. Furthermore, the Soferim of the P'rushim were most likely the Zekanim (Elders) and possibly the Shofetim (Judges) of the local Bet Din. Beginning with Ezra, the Soferim were the guardians of the Torah (Law) primarily. While the office and occupation of a Sofer came to be an

^a Jacob Neusner, *Recovering Judaism, The Universal Dimension of Judaism*, Fortress Press, 2001 p. 35ff

^b Cf. Ezra 7:11

^c 1 Macc 7. 12ff.

^d George Foot Moore, *Judaism in the First Centuries of the Christian Era*, Hendrickson Publishers, Inc, 1997 Vol 1 pg 57 see also Josephus "Jewish Wars."

^e Matthew 2:4, I will discuss this further below.

^f Luke 5:17

^g It is evident from several passages in the Nazarene Codicil that both the P'rushim and Sadducees seemed to possessed their own Soferim. The dominant use of the Soferim is in conjunction with the P'rushim. This causes us to believe that the Soferim of the P'rushim were most likely the Hakhamim of the P'rushim. These were the maters of the Torah, both Oral and written. They are often referred to as Lawyers (νομικός *nomikos*) in the Nazarene Codicil. Matthew 22:35, Luke 7:30, 10:25, 11:45-46, 14:3 and Titus 3:13

occupation, they were the primary interpreters of the Torah and its halakha. It also remains plausible that there was a specific group of the Soferim who were Shofetim^a. We have evidence of Soferim who were νομικοι (*nomikoi*), those who were especially skilled and knowledgeable in the Torah, Law.^b Emil Schürer labels these νομικοι as “jurists.”^c Josephus refers to them as σοφισταὶ “masters of their craft”^d (Hakhamim). Emil Schürer further notes ...

“Contemporary Scribes are always called סִמְכָרִים in the Mishna.”^e

Consequently, it may be that the Tz’dukim did not actually have Soferim in the same sense as the P’rushim. This not to say that there was not a class of Soferim among the Tz’dukim. As a matter of fact, we must assert that there were in fact Soferim and νομικοι (*nomikoi*) among the Tz’dukim. Whether they actually compared to the level of scholarship and academia as the P’rushim is not fully known. In my professional opinion, I would venture to say that they were very learned but did not match the level of academia possessed by the P’rushim. I say this only because we have enough evidence that they were not able to match the intellect and knowledge of the P’rushim. This is not to say that they were not very intelligent. What this tells us is that they focused their attention elsewhere. If the Soferim of the P’rushim formed a class of Shofetim, those Shofetim would be forced to work with the Tz’dukim from time to time in judging cases of the halakha. Here the Soferim would most likely have been the members of the Great Sanhedrin. I do not believe that this would have been so in every case. However, it is noteworthy to mention that the Shofetim were forced to deal with the Tz’dukim because the Tz’dukim wielded a great deal of power during the first century. It is also noteworthy to note that Josephus tells us that the Tz’dukim thought that the P’rushim were too lenient in their judgments.^f

Consequently, we see that the primary association of the Soferim attributed to the P’rushim. This can account for the usage of P’rushim, when the Soferim (of the Tz’dukim) were intended. Therefore, the original Greek versions most likely contained an original “Soferim” (intending the Tz’dukim) in the text as reflected by the Aramaic translations and contiguity. At some point, the text was copied and changed to “P’rushim,” rather than “Soferim.” This change may have been intentional on the part of a biased scribe. Conversely, we know that not all of the copyists were in fact linguistic scholars. This being true, we must assert that they may not have known exactly what they were copying. Irrespective of whether the change was intentional or mistaken, I must affirm that the change to “P’rushim” is an error.

The Tz’dukim were vehemently opposed to the P’rushim. As one of the P’rushim, Yeshua would have been an ardent opponent of the Tz’dukim. The Tz’dukim stayed harmoniously connected to the Roman officials only because through this mechanism were they able to remain in power.^g

^a Judges who sat on the Great Bet Din, i.e. Sanhedrin

^b We must make note here that the skill in the Torah was not strictly the written Torah. This skill included the Oral Torah as well.

^c Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People, In the Time of Jesus Christ, Second Division, Volume 1*, Hendrickson Publishers, Fourth Printing 2003, pg 314

^d *Antt. *17:152, Bell. Jud. 1:648, 650*

^e Emil Schürer, *A History of the Jewish People, In the Time of Jesus Christ, Second Division, Volume 1*, Hendrickson Publishers, Fourth Printing 2003, p. 315

^f Cf. *Ant. 13: 293-296*

^g Cf. *Ant. 20:197-203*

WHO WERE THE HERODIANS?

*Herodians, A sect or party mentioned in the New Testament together with the Pharisees as opponents of Jesus (Mark 3:6; 12:13; Matt. 22:16). There are differences of opinion as to their identity, and the Church Fathers already put forward various theories all connected in one form or another with the name of Herod the Great. Some recent scholars identify the Herodians with the "partisans of Herod" mentioned by Josephus (Ant., 14:479), though he mentions them as living at the beginning of Herod's rule in Judea. Others connect the name with Herod *Antipas, the son of Herod. In the absence of clear evidence, these must be regarded as mere conjectures. A. Schalit, who identifies the Herodians with the partisans of Herod, is of the opinion that they were his supporters among the Jewish community who urged the people to accept his sovereignty and spread messianic ideas which they applied to Herod and his rule.^a*

According to many interpreters the courtiers or soldiers of Herod Antipas ("Milites Herodis," Jerome) are intended; but more probably the Herodians were a public political party, who distinguished themselves from the two great historical parties of post-exilic Judaism (Pharisees and Sadducees) by the fact that they were and had been sincerely friendly to Herod the Great, the King of the Jews, and to his dynasty (cf. such formations as "Caesariani," "Pompeiani").^b

Many scholars have confused the Mordechai 12:13 to tell us that there was a connection between the Herodians and P'rushim.^c

Josephus does not mention the "Herodians" by that specific title. However, he does mention those of "Herod's party."^d As such, Josephus demonstrates the violent character of Herod and his "Party," which I must conclude is the Herodians.^e Together with the Tz'dukim, the whole of the Temple complex was subjected to constant warfare and fighting.^f I have not inserted the works of Josephus concerning these parties here for the sake of space and time. However, I would suggest reading the cited materials for a positive understanding of just how volatile the political situation really was.

Unlike the Tz'dukim and P'rushim, the Herodians were not a religious party.^g Albeit there may have been Jews in the party, they were partisans of Herod. Other scholars suggest that the Herodians have been equated with the Tz'dukim on other occasions where the Biblical text may have been tampered with.^h If the text of Mark 3:6 were altered to read "Pharisees and Sadducees", it would draw negative light on the Pharisees, whereas the translation of "Sadducees and Herodians" would make better sense. B. W. Bacon has tried to show a positive alliance between the Herodians and the P'rushim based on their both wanting to maintain "status quo." In contrast Josephus views the P'rushim as a group more readily focused on Torah and the Mesorah.ⁱ Consequently, I must argue with Josephus that this was not the precise case with the P'rushim. The P'rushim did not agree with the Roman

^a Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition, Keter Publishing House Ltd Volume 9 p. 38

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

^c James Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible, Charles Scriber's Sons 1909 p. 346, The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible in Five volumes, Regency Reference Library, 1976 Volume 3 p.145

^d Ant. 14:335

^e I am in contest with some authorities and aligned with others. This line of thought bears more research.

^f Cf. Ant. 13:293-296; 20:197-203

^g Society of Biblical Literature, Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis (U.S.), Journal of Biblical literature, Volumes 21-40, American Theological Library Association, JSTOR (Organization) Scholar's Press, 1920 p. 101

^h Cf. The Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia of the Bible in Five volumes, Regency Reference Library, 1976 Volume 3 p.145 "Herodians" Here the Zondervan Pictorial Encyclopedia suggests that Matthew 16:6, Mark 3:6 may have been tampered with (my words) to read Pharisees and Sadducees rather than the possible Herodians and Pharisees. This would suggest that the Mark 3:6 passage should read that the Sadducees and the Herodians went about trying to find a way to kill Yeshua.

ⁱ Society of Biblical Literature, Society of Biblical Literature and Exegesis (U.S.), Journal of Biblical literature, Volumes 21-40, American Theological Library Association, JSTOR (Organization) Scholar's Press, 1920 p. 101

occupation. Albeit, they accepted the sovereignty of G-d as Yeshua demonstrates in our present pericope. Which, I must conclude is the genuine point that Yeshua is trying to make in our present pericope.

The narrative of Acts 5 demonstrates the character of Rabban Gamaliel. As a direct descendant of Hillel, we have noted that his character would have been far more peaceable. This seems to be the case with all the House of Hillel. Albeit, the House of Shammai may have taken a more hostile approach to Gentile government.

MALAKIM MESSENGERS

The Torah Seder is replete with a resounding message this week. “Messengers” of one type or other convey that message. Speaking in P’shat the *malak*^a simply means “messenger.” The lexical information I have cited below will show that the *malak* can be either human or “angelic.” However, we must also note...

“The m^elā’kīm could serve as diplomatic representatives”^b

In review of the present Torah Seder and pericope of Mordechai we should note that the system of G-d habitually employs “Ambassadorial Envoys” or “plenipotentiary emissaries” in His service.

Note the number of times a “messenger” is “sent” in the Torah Seder and associated readings B’Midbar 20:14; 21:6, 21, 32; Psalms 104:10; Judges 11:12-13, 17, 19. In B’Midbar 21:6 the messengers are venomous snakes. Were these “messengers”? Rashi says they were sent because of *lashon hara* or evil speech.

Rashi commenting on B’Midbar 21:5 notes

“against God and against Moses They equated the servant with his Master.-[Midrash Tanchuma Chukkath 19, Num. Rabbah 19:21]”^c

When we look at the number of times that the idea of a “messenger,” “envoy” or “plenipotentiary emissaries” are used in the Torah Seder and accompanying readings we begin to get the idea that G-d is trying to say something.

The use of emissaries is a way of G-d’s doing business per se. When G-d wanted to address the Bne Yisrael He used Moshe. While G-d need not use an emissary in every case, He used this system repeatedly. I will not delve into the Messianic genre except to say that Messiah, like the Prophets is

^a Str. H4397 מַלְאָכִים mal’ak {mal-awk’} 1) messenger, representative 1a) messenger 1b) angel 1c) the theophanic angel TWOT 1068a mal’āk. Messenger, representative, courier, angel. "Messenger" is an inadequate term for the range of tasks carried out by the OT mal’āk. These were 1) to carry a message, 2) to perform some other specific commission, and 3) to represent more or less officially the one sending him. There were both human and supernatural m^elā’kīm, the latter including the Angel of Yahweh (i.e. the Angel of the Lord).

Human messengers. The human mal’āk could be a message bearer (Gen 32:2). The kinds of messages varied. They may have announced good news (1Sam 6:21), threats (1Kings 19:2), or requests (Num 20:14; Num 22:5; Jud 7:24). However, the term was applied to courtiers or retainers sent for other purposes. They could spy (Josh 6:25) or kill (1Sam 19:11; 2Kings 6:32). David sent "messengers" to summon Bathsheba (2Sam 11:4). The m^elā’kīm could serve as diplomatic representatives (Jud 11:12-14; 2Sam 5:11; 1Kings 20:2).

^b Ibid

^c The Torah: With Rashi’s Commentary translated, annotated, and elucidated, The Artscroll Series, Mesorah Publications, Ltd, 2000 p. 252

another mouthpiece for G-d. When we stop to consider all the ways that G-d has spoken, we are reminded of Hakham Shaul's words to the Bereans.

Heb. 1:1 In many portions^a [parshot] and in a variety of ways God having spoken earlier to the forefathers and by the prophets. ² In these final days has spoken to us through the agent of His son...

The redundant theme here is that G-d uses agents as a mouthpiece. When this thought is extended, we will also learn that G-d not only uses agents a mouthpieces He also used agents as a means of government.

Isa 44:24-28 24 Thus says the LORD, your Redeemer, And He who formed you from the womb: "I am the LORD, who makes all things, Who stretches out the heavens all alone, Who spreads abroad the earth by Myself; ²⁵ Who frustrates the signs of the babblers, And drives diviners mad; Who turns wise men backward, And makes their knowledge foolishness; ²⁶ Who confirms the word of His servant, And performs the counsel of His messengers; Who says to Jerusalem, 'You shall be inhabited,' To the cities of Judah, 'You shall be built,' And I will raise up her waste places; ²⁷ Who says to the deep, 'Be dry! And I will dry up your rivers'; ²⁸ Who says of Cyrus, 'He is My shepherd, And he shall perform all My pleasure, Saying to Jerusalem, "You shall be built," And to the temple, "Your foundation shall be laid."' NKJ

How could G-d call a pagan king, a man of bloody conquests, "messiah"? Would G-d use such a man to do His will? The answer is that every creature is an agent of G-d regardless of human perception.

Cyrus is an agent of G-d's will. How could this be? I will reiterate that G-d is sovereign.

It should immediately be apparent that G-d's use of "His anointed" is not as restricted as commonly presumed. The Hebrew word is *mashiah*, which has come down to us as "messiah" and translated as *christos* in Greek. Because this term has been used exclusively for Yeshua HaMashiach, many have failed to realize the breadth of its meaning. Cyrus was "anointed" for a task per se. His assignment was designed by G-d.

Christian scholars look at Cyrus through soiled glasses. Harvard Theological Review^b makes the following observations concerning Christian thought on G-d's use of Cyrus.

According to Isaiah 45:1, Cyrus is the LORD's anointed, his Messiah: Thus says the LORD's to his anointed, to Cyrus whom I took by his right hand. Scholars have long disputed this passage. Many agree with Charles Torrey and argue that all references to Cyrus should be removed as later additions; the prophet himself did not write them.^c Other scholars assert that the name Cyrus is original, but admonish their readers not to interpret the title "anointed" as more than was intended. The act of anointing simply indicates a commission: Cyrus is to perform the office of king.^d Still others take a third position and assert that references to Cyrus are central to the theory of history presented in the Book of Isaiah.^e Cyrus is the promised redeemer of the Jews. Yet, even these scholars

^a In many portions... This is most likely a reference to Torah portions, sections to the Torah.

^b Harvard Theological Review (2002), 95: 373-393 Copyright © 2002 Cambridge University Press DOI: 10.1017/S0017816002000251 (About DOI) Published online: 05 March 2003

^c Charles C. Torrey, *The Second Isaiah* (New York: Scribner's, 1928) 3-52; idem, "Isaiah 41," HTR 44 (1951) 121-36; James D. Smart, *History and Theology in Second Isaiah: A Commentary on Isaiah 35, 40-66* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1964) 115-34; Jurgen van Oorschot, *Von Babel zum Zion* (New York: de Gruyter, 1993) 88.

^d Christopher R. North, *The Second Isaiah* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1964) 150; Roger N. Whybray, *Isaiah 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1975) 104; Karl Elliger, *Jesaja 40,1-45,7* (BKAT XI/1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1978) 492; John D. W. Watts, *Isaiah 34-66* (WBC 25; Waco, Tex.: Word Books, 1987) 156; Antti Laato, *The Servant of YHWH and Cyrus: A Reinterpretation of the Exilic Messianic Programme in Isaiah 40-55* (Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1992); idem, *A Star is Rising: The Historical Development of the Old Testament Royal Theology and the Rise of the Jewish Messianic Expectations* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1997) 173-85; Hugh G. M. Williamson, "The Messianic Texts in Isaiah 1-39," in *King and Messiah in Israel and the Ancient Near East* (ed. J. Day; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1998) 238-70; Brevard S. Childs, *Isaiah* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2000) 353-54.

^e Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66* (OTL; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1969) 10, 159; Gerhard von Rad, *Old Testament Theology* (trans. D. M. G. Stalker; 2 vols.; United Kingdom: Oliver and Boyd, 1965) 2:238-62; John L. McKenzie,

argue that Cyrus's anointing confers a temporary office, and does not evoke a permanent relationship; Cyrus has not converted to Judaism, and the title should not be translated "Messiah."^a Some do admit that the anointing does mean the end of the Davidic monarchy, however. What God once did through David, he now does through Cyrus.^b

I have cited materials on Cyrus to demonstrate that G-d's use of agents is not limited to our preconceived notions. Consequently, when we look at today's world leaders we must assert one final thought. G-d is sovereign! That being the case, we might as well realize that nothing will thwart G-d's plan.

Gundry notes that the idea of the *shaliach* (sent ones) emissaries being sent is consistent throughout this chapter of Mordechai.^c However, concurring with His Eminence Rabbi Dr. Yoseph ben Haggai, I must reiterate that this in no way implies the Sanhedrin or any such idea.

CONCLUSION

Concepts of Jewish "theology" are hard to define. No work is clearly definitive on the concepts of theology as held by Judaism. The Rambam's thirteen Principles serve as the most rudimentary form of theology known to Jews. His Eminence Rabbi Dr. Yoseph ben Haggai has taught me that the book "Everyman's Talmud"^d by A. Cohen was the first real attempt to establish a Jewish theology in 1948.

Judaism holds that G-d is omnipotent, omniscient, omnipresent, and incorporeal. While these terms may sound very Christian, they have Jewish origins, later adopted by Christianity. I have stated these principles because we must realize that Hakham Tsefet wants us to know that the plan of redemption is unfolded in history through the number of characters and persona with infallible precision.

The Caesar does not alarm Yeshua any more than he is alarmed by the pseudo-priesthood of the Tz'dukim. So, what message is all of this supposed to give us? And, what is Hakham Tsefet trying to say? In simplicity, I believe Yeshua's prophetic message resonates from an opening pericope of Mordechai once again.

Mordechai 1:14. Now after John 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).

Second Isaiah (AB; Garden City: Doubleday, 1968) lxvi; Antoon Schoors, *I Am God Your Saviour: A Form-Critical Study of the Main Genres in Is. XL-LV* (VTSup 24; Leiden: Brill, 1973) 270; Rheinhard G. Kratz, *Kyros im Deuterjesaja-Buch* (Tübingen: Mohr, 1991) 15-17; Peter D. Miscall, *Isaiah* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1993) 110; Rainer Albertz, *A History of Israelite Religion in the Old Testament Period* (trans. J. Bowden; 2 vols.; OTL; Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1994) 2:414; John N. Oswalt, *The Book of Isaiah 40-66* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998) 197.

^a Westermann, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 160-61; Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55* (AB; New York: Doubleday, 2002) 248-49.

^b E.g., Westermann, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 160-61; Watts, *Isaiah 34-66*, 156.

Lisbeth S. Fried (2002). *Cyrus the Messiah? The Historical Background to Isaiah 45:1*. *Harvard Theological Review*, 95, pp 373-393 doi:10.1017/S0017816002000251

^c Gundry, R. H. (1993), *Mark: A Commentary on His Apology for the Cross*, Grand Rapids, Michigan: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., p. 692. See verses 2, 3, 4, 5, 6

^d Cohen, A. *Everyman's Talmud*, Schocken Books 1949

Regardless of the king, governor leader or boss, G-d's people have an obligation of faithful obedience to the Kingdom (Governance) of G-d. This faithful obedience is meted out by modeling the Maserot to the kingdoms of the earth.

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

CONNECTIONS TO TORAH READINGS

Torah Seder

Mordechai anchors his Pericope to the Torah seder in the following places B'Midbar 20:14; 21:6, 21, 32 where the same thought of "apostolized" is used.

Tehillim

Mordechai is anchored to the Psalm through the same concept. See Psalms 104:10

Ashlamatah

Like the Torah Seder and Psalm Mordechi connects to the Judges through the use of the apostolized. See Judges 11:12-13, 17, 19

QUESTIONS OR REFLECTION

1. What does B'Midbar really mean?
2. Why did G-d choose for the Bne Yisrael to follow the route through the wilderness or desert?
3. What was the desert for the Bne Yisrael?
4. Was the desert a hostile environment of death?
5. Was the desert a place of G-d's provision?
6. Were the venomous snakes "messengers"?
7. What mechanism does Hakham Tsefet use to anchor His Pericope to the Torah Seder and associated readings?
8. What message is Hakham Tsefet trying to give us in this pericope?