

DO AS THE PHARISEES SAY?!

Matthew 23:2-3

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‘The Scribes and Pharisees *have seated themselves* in the Seat of Moses.¹ Therefore, all that they tell you, do and observe, but do not do according to their deeds because they say things and do not do them.’ (Mt. 23:2-3)

There are some people who teach that we must adhere to the doctrines and ways of the Rabbis, the spiritual ‘Sons’ of the Scribes and Pharisees, because ‘Yeshua Himself commanded this’ in Matthew 23:2-3. Their *interpretation* of the passage is not accurate and false. Yeshua wasn’t telling us to walk out our faith in Him by rabbinic teachings, but rather to obey the authorities of the land, which at that time were the Scribes and Pharisees, on the local level (vv. 3, 5, 7, etc.), *in their judicial and legislative capacities*, not their teaching capacity.²

The Seat of Moses was a *judicial* position from which judgments between two or more people were issued. In Yeshua’s day the Pharisees and Scribes *had seated themselves* in the Seat of Moses (Mt. 23:2). This understanding is brought out by both the Greek text and in some Bibles like the NASB,³ and reveals that Yeshua wasn’t pleased with them being in Moses’ Seat. In other words, God hadn’t put them there, but they had usurped God’s authority who was supposed to be there (the Levitical Priests; Dt. 17:12). This wasn’t unusual. It’s conceptually seen in the days of Hosea when the prophet says of Israel:

‘They made kings, but not through Me. They set up princes, but I did not acknowledge them.’ (Hos. 8:4a)

To ‘seat oneself,’ as the Pharisees and Scribes had done, was to usurp God’s authority. Yeshua was saying that since the Scribes and Pharisees were there, obey them in their judicial rulings, and by extension, their legislative rulings. This is what we would call civil authority today.

The ‘Seat of Moses’ is a term taken from the days when Moses would *sit and judge* the people:

“And so it was, on the next day, that Moses *sat to judge the people* and the people stood before Moses from morning until evening. So when Moses’ father-in-law saw all that he

¹ Robert K. Brown and Philip W. Comfort, Translators; J. D. Douglas, Editor, *The New Greek–English Interlinear New Testament* (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 1990), p. 88: ‘Upon the Seat of Moses (have) sat the scribes and the Pharisees.’ The basis for this interlinear is The United Bible Societies’ Third Corrected Edition of the Greek New Testament. This is the same text as the 26th edition of *Novum Testamentum Graece* by Kurt Aland, M. Black, C. Martini, A. Wikgren and Bruce Metzger. With this sense (of sat/have sat themselves) there is the understanding that the Pharisees ‘took over’ (usurped) the Seat, something that was not supposed to be for them, but since they are there, Yeshua says to listen to them in their office as judges and legislators, but not as teachers, as is apparent from what He says about them and their teachings (e.g. Mt. 15:1f.).

² Yes, the Sadducees (priests) were also an authority, but Yeshua is only speaking about the Pharisees and Scribes in this passage (cf. Mt. 16:6) because the priests weren’t at the local level where most of the people lived.

³ The NASB has, “The scribes and the Pharisees *have seated themselves* in the chair of Moses.” (Matthew 23:2)

did for the people, he said, ‘What is this thing that you are doing for the people? Why do you alone *sit* and all the people stand before you from morning until evening?’ And Moses said to his father-in-law, ‘Because the people come to me to inquire of God. When they have a difficulty, they come to me *and I judge* between one and another and I make known the statutes of God and His laws.’” (Exodus 18:13-16; see also vv. 25-26)

Both the Judgment Seat of Messiah⁴ and the Judgment Seat of Caesar⁵ point to the Seat of Moses in Matthew 23:2 as a seat of judgment. Yeshua spoke of following the Rabbis, Pharisees and Scribes in their *judicial* capacity as judges (and legislators), not as teachers of the Law.

The Scribes, Pharisees and Rabbis had authority to adjudicate or to judge legal matters in the *bet din* (the courts of Israel). They could also act as legislators and enact laws for the community. It’s these positions of authority that Yeshua was speaking of for His followers to obey (adjudicative and legislative), not their doctrines.

When a judge-rabbi issued a court ruling involving a believer, or a city made a legislative ruling that affected the community, the believer was to obey it (unless, of course, it caused him to sin). The believer was not to say that it didn’t affect him because he believed in Yeshua. He was not to say that the judges or legislators had no authority ‘to tell him what to do’ because he only recognized Yeshua as his authority. In other words, Yeshua was telling believers to keep the laws of the land, just as believers do in the United States, Bolivia, and Canada, etc., today. They keep the laws of their respective countries (that don’t hinder their walk with Messiah; Acts 4:19-20; 5:27-42, esp. v. 29). In this, Yeshua was following the Law of Moses, which states that all Israel was to obey the decisions of the priests and the judges:

“If a judicial decision is too difficult for you to make between one kind of bloodshed and another, one kind of legal right and another, or one kind of assault and another—any such matters of dispute in your towns—then you shall immediately go up to the place that Yahveh your God will choose, where you shall consult with the Levitical Priests and the judge who is in office in those days—they shall announce to you the decision in the case. Carry out exactly the decision that they announce to you from the place that Yahveh will choose, diligently observing everything they instruct you. You must carry out fully the law that they interpret for you or the ruling that they announce to you. Do not turn aside from the decision that they announce to you, either to the right or to the left. As for anyone who presumes to disobey the priest appointed to minister there to Yahveh your God, or the judge, that person shall die. So you shall purge the evil from Israel. All the people will hear and be afraid, and will not act presumptuously again.” (Deut. 17:8-13 NRSV)

With Moses and Joshua, this law and punishment stood as a powerful incentive for godly obedience, but in the days of Yeshua, the position of the righteous judges had been usurped. In spite of this, Yeshua was telling His followers to obey their legal and judicial decisions. Yeshua was *not* saying that we should do everything that the Rabbis or Pharisees teach about Moses. This is seen from his saying not to do as they did, for what one believes he practices. Yeshua was addressing two of the three ‘keys’ that were given to rabbis (and the priests, who also had an additional key of forgiveness of sin; Lev. 4) upon ordination—the ability to teach authoritatively, to legislate and to sit as a judge. Yeshua addressed their civil authority. Paul conceptually says the same thing in Romans 13:1-2:

‘Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities...Therefore, whoever

⁴ Romans 14:10; 2nd Corinthians 5:10.

⁵ Matthew 27:19; John 19:13; Acts 18:12, 16-17; 23:3; 25:6, 10-11, 17.

resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves.'

Those authorities that Paul spoke of weren't teachers, but governors, etc., with authority to judge and legislate (Acts 18:12f.). The Apostle Paul also taught that each congregation should have its own judges to discipline their people. He rebuked the Corinthians for taking each other to court before the pagan judges (1st Cor. 6:3, 5), and said, 'Aren't there any among you who can judge these matters?' He didn't say they should go to the Rabbis in their cities for a ruling between two believers.

Likewise, the Apostles in Jerusalem didn't run to the Sanhedrin, the Pharisees, Rabbis, or the anti-Yeshua High Priest for advice and counsel when they didn't know what to do concerning what the Gentile needed to do in order to be saved (Acts 15:1-7). They called their own council, and with the help of the Holy Spirit, determined the will of the Lord (Acts 15:1-21f.). They made a decree that all *their* communities followed (Acts 16:4), and Jewish believers were also to obey rabbinic judges and legislation in the days of the Apostles, in the land of Israel, where the Rabbis, Scribes and Pharisees had both religious and civil authority.

Confrontation Over Doctrine

Another biblical perspective that reveals that Yeshua doesn't want us to walk in the teachings of the Rabbis are the many confrontations Yeshua had with them and the Pharisees, the spiritual 'Fathers' of the Rabbis (see Mt. 23:7-8). The Gospels and Acts are filled with accounts of clashes over the very issue of proper interpretation of Scripture between the Scribes and the Pharisees, even the Pharisees who would come to believe (Matt. 15:1-20; 23:1-39; Acts 15:5). Proper interpretation of Scripture leads to the biblical way of walking out our faith in Yeshua. Improper interpretation leads to a sinful lifestyle. In Matthew 15 Yeshua sternly rebuked the Pharisees for both their hearts *and* their teachings:

"And He answered and said to them, 'And why do you transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?! For God said, 'Honor your father and mother,' and 'He who speaks evil of father or mother, let him be put to death.' But you say, 'Whoever shall say to his father or mother, 'Anything of mine you might have been helped by has been given to God,' he doesn't have to honor his father or his mother. And thus you invalidated the Word of God for the sake of your tradition! You hypocrites! Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you, saying, 'This people honors Me with their lips, but their heart is far away from Me. For in vain do they worship Me, *teaching as doctrines the precepts of men.*''" (Mt. 15:3-9)

It's not just the commandment that Yeshua cited that should concern us because He goes on to say that their *doctrines* are 'the precepts of men.' These words from our Messiah form a powerful barrier against any believer seeking the teachings of the Rabbis. There are other admonitions of Yeshua that follow along this same line of thinking, concerning their doctrines, and their stance against Messiah, that still stand today:

'Then they understood that He did not say to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the *teaching* of the Pharisees and Sadducees.' (Mt. 16:11; see also Mk. 7:7-9; 13; 8:15; Lk. 12:1)

'But woe to you, Scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! Because you shut off the Kingdom of Heaven from people! You do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are

entering to go in!’ (Matt. 23:13)

We must be very careful what we ‘take in.’ The teachings of the Rabbis can seem very sweet, as I’m sure they did back then to many people, but are the teachings of the Rabbis today any better than their spiritual Fathers? Are the Rabbis today leading their flocks into the Kingdom of Heaven any more than the Pharisees and Scribes did back then? So, how could Yeshua be commanding us to place ourselves under the Rabbis or their teachings? Some believers don’t understand Mt. 23:2-3 and say that we are to do everything that the Rabbis say, except for maybe renouncing Yeshua? With 2,000 years of history and carnality behind the Rabbis there are far too many perverse, magical, anti-Yeshua and anti-Torah teachings that pervade Judaism. For those who desire to listen to the words of Yeshua, it would be good to stay far away from the Rabbis and their teachings.

Practical Ramifications

Is there any believer today who must follow the Rabbis as judges and legislators? No, not even in Israel today. The Rabbis don’t wield the kind of civil authority over the general population as they did in the days of Yeshua. They are curtailed by the democratic nature of the State of Israel. Their authority is confined to their own sect, except in cases of marriage, divorce and burial, where they have political sway in the Knesset (Congress or Parliament) of Israel, but even in Judah and Galilee in the days of Messiah, no one had to follow the Pharisees. In other words, only Pharisees kept the Pharisaic teachings and ways, and only the Sadducees kept their ways, and only the Essenes kept their ways, etc.

Here, too, we can better understand Yeshua’s words in Mt. 23:2-3. The Sadducees weren’t put in jail because they didn’t follow the Pharisaic doctrine or way. The Essenes weren’t jailed because they didn’t keep the way of the Sadducees, etc. There were more than twenty different religious sects of Jews within Judah and Galilee at the time of Messiah. Each Jewish person was free to practice his way of faith. Consequently, each Jewish believer was also free to walk out his faith as he was led by his community (Acts 2:40-47; 5:33-42; 6:1, etc.), when there wasn’t persecution for it (Acts 8:1-4, etc.). The Jewish believer could live out his faith without breaking any laws of the land. There was no law that said everyone had to believe and act like a Pharisee, or ‘do as they’ said, in terms of religious matters. This is how the believer could be free to believe, but constrained to obey ‘all they tell you, do,’ as authorities in judicial and legislative matters.

Yeshua also wanted His followers to work out those civil differences, or problems with others, beforehand, so that they wouldn’t go to prison for things that didn’t pertain to the Kingdom. Because in prison they would stay until they ‘paid the last shekel’ (Lk. 12:57-59). This refers to the judgement of the *bet din* (‘house of judgment’ or courts). Yeshua said of the judge:

“Come to terms quickly with your accuser while you are on the way to court with him, or your accuser may hand you over to the judge, and the judge to the guard, and you will be thrown into prison. Truly I tell you, you will never get out until you have paid the last penny.” (Matt. 5:25-26, NRSV)

Yeshua was concerned about us becoming entangled in the affairs of this world, to the detriment of the affairs of the Kingdom. He was giving His followers wise counsel that speaks to us today—don’t get caught up in things that are not of His Kingdom. It only wastes our time and energy. There are a multitude of ‘good causes’ out there, and many unrighteous things that need to be made righteous, but we are to follow Him and do those things that He shows us to do.

National authority to adjudicate and legislate was taken away from the Pharisees, Scribes, and Rabbis,

etc., with the fall of Jerusalem and never regained by them in any of the lands where the Lord dispersed His people (except among the Jewish communities). Even in Israel today, the Rabbis only hold a certain amount of civil authority. To illustrate their lack of civil authority in terms of religious matters, the breaking of Shabat (the Sabbath) is not a crime in the eyes of the State of Israel, even though biblically, it's a sin of great magnitude whose punishment is death (Ex. 31:15; 35:2, etc.). Of course, the Rabbis would love to see the Sabbath observed by all Israelis, and enforced, as would I, but they don't have the civil authority to enforce it, and this is a commandment of tremendous importance. They have absolutely no authority to enforce their religious ways or teachings upon any Israeli, believer or not. How much less a believer in another land?

The Rabbis have no authority to imprison anyone for breaking the Sabbath, or not eating kosher food, or not celebrating the Holy Days, etc. The people of Israel do not go to rabbinic courts (unless they are their followers), but even then, the secular courts of Israel can overrule and nullify the rabbinic courts. They have no power to legislate or enact laws or ordinances for the entire population of Israel, but it's in Israel, where their authority is much greater than anywhere else. Why would any believer, then, *voluntarily* place himself under rabbinic authority to a rabbi who does not know, nor want to know, the Messiah of Israel?

The Rabbis were never meant to teach us. They didn't teach Yeshua. They didn't teach the Apostles (but on the contrary, Yeshua warned them against their teachings). Why should they teach us now? This is another reason why their teachings are not binding on us, and why we are not under their authority—and they would agree with me on this! What rabbi would accept a Jew who believes in Yeshua?! What *bet din* would want to have anything to do with such a Jew, let alone not be biased against him?

Another major problem with someone not understanding 'all that they tell you, do,' and trying to follow the teachings of the Rabbis, is that Judaism doesn't speak 'with one voice' (one teaching on all the subjects). It never has. Even in the generation before Yeshua there were two very famous schools that fundamentally differed from one another, like night and day—the Schools of Hillel and Shamai. And the scriptural and *halahic* (how to walk out the commandments) controversies that separated their students are legendary. Today there are many sects within the Orthodox and Hasidic communities, and each has their own rabbis that disagree with the other rabbis. So which sect or rabbi should a believer go to, if they thought that Yeshua was directing them to learn from the Rabbis?

Today within Hasidic Judaism there are the Satmars and the Bretzlavs. There's also the Lubavitchers who proclaim the late Rabbi Schneerson as the Messiah. These three different sects within Hasidic Judaism which has seven. Then there's Orthodox Judaism with its Neo-Orthodoxy and other various shades of 'Orthodoxy.' There's also Conservative and Reform Judaism, as well as the Karaites.⁶

⁶ Nehemiah Gordon, a Karaite Jew who comes against Yeshua as the Messiah, presents a fanciful teaching, which Michael Rood vigorously promoted as 'the find of the ages, comparable to the Dead Sea Scrolls,' that twists Yeshua's words into saying, 'obey Moses, but don't obey the Pharisees and Scribes.' This understanding of Gordon's comes from a Medieval Hebrew manuscript of the Gospel of Matthew called *Shem Tov* that he says is an authentic copy of what the Apostle Matthew originally wrote. It's not an authentic copy and it's known by textual critics to be extremely faulty and anti-Jesus: "The Hebrew Matthews have been known and reviewed by scholars and others for centuries. The supposed 'original' Hebrew Matthews, which are not in agreement with each other, are from the 1400-1500 range CE...The reality is that the sources for Shem Tov or the Hebrew Matthew's anti-Christian writings included the infamous *Toledoth Jeshu* as noted by Dr. William Petersen. It also appears that the *Shem Tov* may also use the Talmud as a guideline for some of the alterations that appear in the text."

The Hebrew Matthew "is known for abbreviations, verse omissions and changes, similarities to the gnostic Gospel of Thomas, and sourcing Dutch, Latin and other writings, Dr. Petersen" stated. It's not an original copy

Let's say that an Orthodox rabbi is chosen by a believer to learn from. First of all, most likely, the rabbi wouldn't want to have anything to do with someone who believed in Yeshua, let alone teach him anything. So how can a Jewish believer even consider this, from a natural point of view? And what would happen if a rabbi consented (most likely in the hopes of winning the Jewish believer 'back to the Fold')? When one voluntarily places himself under a traditional, anti-Yeshua rabbi, they put their spiritual life with Yeshua in tremendous jeopardy. I have known a number of people who have done this, and within a short time, have *renounced* Yeshua to walk in Orthodox Judaism. Spiritual authority is nothing to play around with. You can begin to see the horrific consequences of 'all that they tell you, do,' misinterpreted.

We can glean much from two thousand years of rabbinic thought, but we also must be aware of the tremendous anti-Yeshua spirit that dwells within the Rabbis and their teachings. We also have to realize the religious spirits that have led them to embrace Kabbalah, which is a demonic substitute for the Spirit of the Living God, as well as the Talmud and Gematria, for these ways have truly warped many of the teachings of Moses, as our Lord spoke of.

From a practical point of view it would be impossible to determine which form of Judaism was 'the right one' that Yeshua would have wanted His followers to follow, if Mt. 23:2-3 is misinterpreted, and if any rabbi would honestly want to teach a believer in Yeshua. No, Yeshua does not want us to do what the Rabbis teach.

of Matthew's Hebrew Gospel, but on the contrary, *it's an intentionally falsified document* by a Jewish man who was anti-Messiah and who set out 'to prove' that Yeshua wasn't the Messiah (e.g. Elijah is said to be the Messiah and Yeshua is not resurrected from the dead, etc.).

"Hebrew versions of the Gospel of Matthew have been known to, and used by, New Testament scholars for centuries. Often referred to in scholarship as the 'Old Hebrew Matthew,' Sebastian Münster produced the first edition of such a manuscript in 1537...In 1555 Jean du Tillet edited a different, but similar Hebrew Matthew manuscript...However, in addition to these two, at least five other Hebrew Matthews (mostly fragmentary) are known...(with) a Hebrew Matthew contained in the twelfth...book of the *Even Bohan* (The Touchstone), a Jewish polemical treatise directed against Christians (Howard 1995: pp. 160-161)...The *Even Bohan* was composed in Spain...by a Castilian-born Jew named Shem-Tob ben-Isaac ben-Shaprut in 1380 (ibid: xi). He revised his work at least three times: in 1385, around 1400, and once again, still later" (Petersen). (Quotes taken from www.seekgod.ca/roodnewsflash2.htm.)

This *Shem Tov* Hebrew Matthew is where Gordon takes his perverse translation from. Also interesting to realize is that only two of the nine *Shem Tov* Matthews contain the word that can be translated as 'he' (<http://www.ancientpaths.org/APRNnote1.html> and see note 7). It's from one of those two manuscripts that Mr. Gordon takes his Hebrew word to build his fanciful translation. With this word he interprets the meaning of the phrase in Mt. 23:2 to be that Yeshua was directing His followers to obey Moses, but not the Rabbis. The other seven *Shem Tavs* line up with the Greek text, which has Yeshua commanding His followers to obey the Scribes and Pharisees (i.e. when they are judges and legislators, not teachers of the Word).

Mr. Gordon has an agenda with his interpretation of Mt. 23:3. His teaching on this verse serves a dual purpose. One, it delegitimizes the Rabbis, who are 'mortal enemies' of the Karaites, by saying that Yeshua's followers didn't have to obey the Pharisees and Scribes, who are the Fathers of modern Orthodox Judaism. The Karaites vehemently oppose the Rabbis and their Talmudic authority, but the Karaites are also extremely anti-Yeshua, just like the Rabbis. Two, by casting doubt upon a Greek New Testament text from an alleged 'original Hebrew copy' of Matthew's original Gospel, Gordon seeks to undermine the Greek New Testament, also. Gordon's use of a pitifully corrupt, anti-Yeshua, pseudo-manuscript reveals both a lack of integrity on his part and that he has absolutely no idea Who Yeshua is, nor what Yeshua was saying (1st Cor. 2:14-16).

Unity, Reconciliation and Identification?

When believers speak of following rabbinic teachings so that there can be ‘reconciliation,’ or ‘identifying with the Jews,’ or *unity* among believers and/or non-believing Jews, we’re not dealing with God’s ways, but Satan’s ways. It’s wonderful when believers are reconciled, but not at the expense of God’s Truth. For instance, some try and build a case for following the Rabbinic Calendar because ‘authority was given by God to the governing powers’ (Rom. 13:1f.), and the Rabbis now hold that authority for the Jewish people. Following an authority is fine *as long as the authority does not cause you to sin*. In Acts 4 the governing authority, the Great Sanhedrin of Israel, led by the High Priest of Israel, commanded the Apostles not to speak or teach in Yeshua’s name:

“So they called them (Peter and John) and commanded them *not to speak at all, nor teach in the name of Yeshua*. But Peter and John answered and said to them, ‘Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, *you judge*, for we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.’” (Acts 4:18-20; see also 5:29)

The Apostles respectfully *did not obey* the governing authority’s order to cease using the Name, despite what the authority said because it entailed sinning (not doing what God wanted them to do). This same principle applies to the Rabbinic Calendar. For instance, if Yeshua were alive in the flesh today, many would say that He would follow the Rabbinic Calendar because of rabbinic authority, but Yeshua would *never* follow it because He knows that it would cause Him to sin by *not* keeping the days of the Feasts of Israel on God’s appointed days. Eighty percent of the time the Rabbinic Calendar begins the biblical month a day or two early because they don’t go by the sighting of the new moon over Israel, but an 1800 year old calculated calendar that has long since been outdated.

The first day of the first and seventh biblical months determine *when* the dates for the Feasts will be. That’s why it’s crucial to know when those biblical months begin. Eighty percent of the time, though, the Jewish people following the Rabbinic Calendar, and that includes most Messianic Jews, are not meeting and keeping the Feasts on the dates that God commanded them to meet on. It’s absurd to think that Yeshua would follow the Rabbis in their sin, as some contend, ‘for reconciliation’ and ‘unity,’ or even ‘for identification’ with the Jewish people. If we are not to give up the Name of Yeshua, even if the highest authority in the land demands it of us, why would we voluntarily follow the Rabbis in sinning against God by meeting on wrong dates for His holy Feasts?

In Acts 15 we see that God’s final earthly authority for the believers *rested with the believers*. James issued a ruling that *overturned* the traditional Jewish position on Gentiles coming into, and becoming part of Israel, by saying that the Gentile believers *did not* have to be physically, covenantally circumcised (Acts 15:7f.). This was in direct opposition to Pharisaic and Sadducean thought at that time. Those who want to follow the Rabbis and their Rabbinic Calendar ‘because of their authority,’ line up with the traditional Jewish view, *but oppose the authority, teaching and judgment of James*, the half brother of the King of Israel. In the Greek, Acts 15:19 speaks of James saying, *Therefore, I judge...*(this matter). Yakov (James) had authority from Yeshua to *judge* the matter...to make an authoritative and binding decision, not only for all the Jerusalem believers, but for all the Gentile congregations (Acts. 16:4). Yakov didn’t go to the Rabbis, nor the Pharisees, nor the Sadducees to confer with them, and neither should we, especially in the case of Feast dates, the Rabbis have veered off from the sighting of the new moons to determine the first day of the biblical months.

Holding a position of following ‘the Rabbis’ also negates what our Lord Yeshua said in these instances:

“Then Yeshua said to them, ‘Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the

Sadducees!...How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?—but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees.’ Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the *doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees.*” (Matthew 16:6, 11-12)

“Then the Scribes and Pharisees who were from Jerusalem came to Yeshua, saying, ‘Why do Your disciples transgress the Tradition of the Elders?! For they do not wash their hands when they eat bread!’ He answered and said to them, ‘*Why do you also transgress the commandment of God because of your tradition?*’” (Matthew 15:1-3)

“And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. And I will give you *the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven, and whatever you bind on Earth will be bound in Heaven, and whatever you loose on Earth will be loosed in hHaven.*” (Matthew 16:18-19)

“And when He had said this, He breathed on them, and said to them, ‘Receive the Holy Spirit! If you *forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them*—if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.’” (John 20:22–23)

Here we see that priestly authority was also given to the believers. Before Yeshua, only the Sons of Aaron could forgive sins (Lev. 4–5). With priestly authority also came authority to determine the dates for the Feasts outside the realm of the Rabbis (see Mt. 16:19), and other doctrines of Scripture.

Reconciliation, unity and identity always happen in God’s Truth, but Falsehood always divides and confuses, even when it appears otherwise. The Truth also divides—and reconciles—it’s a Hebraic paradigm.

“And if it seems evil to you to serve Yeshua, choose for yourselves this day whom you will serve! Whether the gods which your Fathers the Rabbis served that were on the other side of the Ocean, or the gods of the Hebrew Roots, Messianics and One Law people, in whose land you dwell, but as for me and my House, we will serve Yeshua—His Way!” (Joshua 24:15 a modern adaption)

Reconciliation, unity and identity are wonderful, but it must center around God’s Truth and His Ways, not Satan’s perversions of Scripture.

CONCLUSION

The Seat of Moses was a term used to denote judgment. In Matthew 23:2-3, Messiah Yeshua admonishes His followers to obey the Pharisees and Scribes in their authoritative roles as judges and legislators, not as teachers of Torah. They had civil authority to judge and so could place anyone in jail and/or have them lashed, who didn’t obey them in those areas that dealt with the issues of the community. Unless there was a ‘faith’ reason not to obey their judgments, the believer was to obey them.

Also, because of the many confrontations that our Lord had with the Pharisees and Scribes over their interpretation of Scripture, it’s clear that Matthew 23:2-3 isn’t speaking of obeying their teachings or the teachings of their spiritual Sons, the Rabbis. Yeshua’s words against them and their teachings (Mk. 8:15, etc.) is a powerful incentive for us concerning anything rabbinic. When a believer voluntarily places himself under the authority of a rabbi he is setting himself up for falling away from the Faith.

Rabbinic authority today, even in Israel, is not as great as it was in the days of Yeshua, but even in His day the Jewish people weren’t required to follow the Pharisees and Scribes in their teachings. There’s no

reason then, from an authoritative perspective, to place ourselves under their authority to teach us. Yet, even if we wanted to, which rabbi would we follow today? Judaism, like Christianity, is very fragmented.

Those that say that believers should obey the teachings of the Rabbis misunderstand Yeshua's admonition, not realizing that the Seat of Moses meant legislative and judicial authority, not theological. There is nothing in Scripture to substantiate or to act as a second witness to the false interpretation of Mt. 23:2-3, that believers in Yeshua should follow the Rabbis (Dt. 17:6; 19:15; Mt. 18:16; 2nd Cor. 13:1). *None of the Apostles ever placed themselves under rabbinic authority or sought their teaching. Why should we?* There is only one Rabbi that we are to follow and to learn from—Messiah Yeshua (Mt. 23:8, 26:25; Mk. 9:5; 11:21; Jn. 1:49; 6:25; 11:8). For only He is able to give us the true understanding of the Word of God and the ability to walk in it.⁷

We're not to bend the God's Word to our way of thinking,
but to bend our way of thinking to God's Word.

⁷ If you still want to learn Talmud, Kabbalah and rabbinic writings, and follow the teachings of the Rabbis, listen carefully to what Messiah Yeshua has to say about the Scribes and the Pharisees of His day, which are the spiritual Fathers of the Rabbis today. Messiah Yeshua issued a blistering and scathing denunciation of them and their *teachings* in Matthew 23. Here are the words that Messiah used to describe them:

Mt. 23:13: Hypocrites!

Mt. 23:14: Hypocrites!

Mt. 23:15: Hypocrites!

Mt. 23:16: Blind guides!

Mt. 23:17: Fools and blind!

Mt. 23:19: Fools and blind!

Mt. 23:23: Hypocrites!

Mt. 23:24: Blind guides!

Mt. 23:25: Hypocrites!

Mt. 23:26: Blind Pharisee!

Mt. 23:27: Hypocrites!

Mt. 23:29: Hypocrites!

Mt. 23:33: Serpents! Brood of vipers!

You can read why Messiah said these things about them in Matthew 23. Yeshua's denunciation of the religious leaders of His day should be a powerful incentive for us not to tamper with the perverse teachings of the Rabbis. Yeshua was not pleased with the religious leaders 2,000 years ago, and it hasn't gotten any better today (see also Luke's account in 11:39-54; 12:1-4 and Matthew 15:1-14f.).

Yeshua *warns* us of the leaven (teaching) of the Pharisees, etc., and we know that a little leaven certainly permeates the entire bread dough. Yeshua was concerned about our very salvation. In other words, one only needs 'a little' of rabbinic teaching to begin to question the deity and messiahship of Yeshua, which can eventually lead to renunciation of the Lord Yeshua. It has happened to a number of believers. In the last 2,000 years rabbinic hypocrisy, blindness and serpentry hasn't gotten any better.

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