

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 1

by Joseph Shulam

It is a common misconception both in the Jewish world and the Christian world, that the New Testament belongs to the Church and not to the Jewish people, and that Jesus established a new religion, a new faith. That the old concept is not valid that the Judaism is the religion of truth and the only true God of the Jewish people who are the elect people of God. Concept speaking about the new Israel or about the spiritual Israel reflect this idea, which is very prevalent in the Christian world, that the Church has taken the place of Israel and the Jews, and that if they (the Jews) want to be saved, they need to become Christians, by implication to leave Judaism behind.

When we examine the Biblical material and the post Biblical material in Judaism, we see that the New Testament, it's teaching, it's person and it's message, is deeply rooted in the world of the first century, in the Land of Israel, and in the Jewish heritage, both the Biblical heritage of the Old Testament, and of course, the rabbinical heritage of the contemporaries of Jesus Christ in the first century.

This series of lectures is intended to bring the knowledge and experience that rabbinical Judaism has on the issue of the Messiah, and more specifically, to deal with how these literal passages from the Talmud and from the Mishnah effect our understanding of the world of Jesus Christ and of the New Testament itself.

There are a number of definitions that we need to define and clarify before we actually will get into the material. The first definition is what is the New Testament. Is the New Testament the document of the Church or is it a historical document of the Jewish

people. First let us deal with term New Testament. In Christianity, it has being ingrained that there is a New Testament and there is an Old Testament.

The term New Testament of course is not from the book that we call today the New Testament. The term New Testament comes for the first time from the mouth of Jeremiah the Prophet. In Jer chapter 31 verse 31, the prophet says in the name of the Lor-d, that G-od will make a New Testament, New Covenant, a new contract with the people of Judea and with the people of Israel. The term there certainly does not imply a book. It refers to the covenant, just like the covenant that was made with Israel on Sinai, or like the covenant that was made with Abraham on Mount Moria.

Calling these books Old Testament and New Testament, is a misnomer. The books are really libraries that contains material that was written over a period of a thousand years by, some people might say, over 40 different writers, that were compiled to make up the Bible. Just considering the vast amount of time and cultural settings in which the Bible was written, such as during the period of wilderness wandering with Moses, the beginning of the house of David in the kingdom of Israel, then under the divided kingdom influenced strongly by Assyria, and later Babylon later, then during the return from the exile by Ezra and Nehemiah. Hundreds of years and spanning those periods, and different languages have made their impression upon the people of Israel. These languages are reflected in the documents of the Bible.

The New Testament is the same way. It was written over a period of a hundred years from the time that Jesus, Yeshua, was crucified, until the end of the century. New Testament writers, some Israelites, some immigrants to Israel, visitors, foreign students, like the apostle Paul who was originally from Tarsus, but he came to Jerusalem to study in the school of Gamaliel. Some that came were gentile doctors, like

Luke. In other words, we have here a library of books inspired by the Holy Spirit, written over a thousand years, and it would be a great oversimplification to refer to these compilations as the Old Testament and the New Testament.

Yes! The book that we call the Old Testament or in Hebrew the TaNaH includes **Torah, Neveem u-Ktuvim** which means Torah, Prophets and Writings. These are the three major divisions of the book that in English we call the Old Testament, within there are many different kinds of literature. It is not only a question of a legal covenantal document or a testament, but it also has poetry, like the Song of Songs, beautiful love poems. It has the song of Deborah, which is the war monument to the victory of Deborah and Barak over the Cananites. Also the psalms of David that are deeply devotional and emotional hymns of praise or requests for help from G-od. It includes historical documents like portions of the book of Samuel, and 1st and 2nd Kings, and 1st and 2nd Chronicles. There are prophesies, like the classical prophets Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Micah, Amos and Habakkuk. This book is a very broad piece of literature that deals with everything from the legal documents to stories told around the camp fire, poetry and historical documents.

One can not just lump the whole thing and say, the whole thing is just the Old Testament, and then say - well, this is the Law. In the New Testament, as well we've have a very similar spread of literature types. Some legal, there are laws in the New Testament. Paul speaks a number of times, and the apostles speak in Acts number 15, actually make legal demands, laws that are abiding upon the Church and upon the followers of Jesus Christ, whether they be Jews or Gentiles, each one having their specific requirements that the apostles, by the power of the Holy Spirit, make. So one can't say as traditional Christianity has said, that the Old Testament is law, and the New Testament is grace. No! There is grace in the law, and there is

law in the grace that we receive from Jesus Christ. Lumping these things together and saying, Old Testament and New Testament misses the point.

This is not terminology that is biblical. This is terminology stems from Christian tradition attributed to the books that we call the Bible, the book. The Bible means the book. The book of all books. Now, when we talk about the New Testament, the question that needs to be asked is, is it a book of Christianity, or is it a Jewish book. When one examines Christianity, even in the second century or in the 20th century, he immediately sees that issues the New Testament deals with, are non-Christian issues. It doesn't deal with the Ecclesiastical problems, it doesn't deals with the issues of the Holy seed, or the Pope, or archbishops, or cardinals, none of these things, that are all the marks of Christianity. Neither the holidays, nor the politics, nor the basic tenets of Christianity are really addressed in the New Testament. All the issues mentioned are issues that are involved within the Jewish world of the first century. For example, one of the main issues which Paul discusses in a number of the letters, was what to do with the Gentiles. Should the Gentiles keep the law of Moses, or not. Should they be circumcised, or not. This is not a problem of the church, Jews asked these questions and Jews gave the answer to these questions by the inspiration of G-od and the Holy Spirit.

The New Testament framework is the framework of Judaism, the early church is a Jewish church. G-od had to actually, with the supernatural vision, convince the apostle Peter that he had to go and preach to Gentiles, to Cornelius and his household in Caesarea. G-od did not make it clear before that vision to the apostles that the Gentiles are part of there mission. This had to take place only at the end of Yeshua's ministry, before he ascends to heaven and after his resurrection. He sends the apostles to all the nations. In other words, the three years that he taught the apostles, the people of Israel, argued with

the Pharisees and with the Sadducees. During these three years, we have no Biblical record that Yeshua told them: Listen, the prophet of Israel - Isaiah says - *my house will be a house of prayer of all the nations*. We do have the very different story of a Syropheonician woman that comes to Yeshua to be healed. He tells her, one doesn't give the food of the children to the little puppy dogs. Only after she presses him and impresses him with her humility and with her hunger to be healed in the name of the G-od of Israel, Yeshua healed her daughter. There is no impression from his ministry that the Gentiles have a part in the domain of salvation. And that domain of salvation for Yeshua and the apostles is the Jewish world, the Torah world, the world of the Land of Israel in the first century, from which Yeshua never left. He never went to school in Rome, and he didn't graduate from Harvard.

The issue is, is the New Testament the Jewish book, yes or no? If it is a Jewish book, then in order to understand it, we need to put it back in it's place in life, back to it's historical, linguistic, cultural, religious background. I believe that this is the only way that we can understand the New Testament and what its real meaning is for us today. If we will take it back into it's first century contexts, and in that context of the 1st century, which is the Jewish context, you could say it has touches of Hellenistic Judaism, but it is not of Hellenism in itself, but only of Hellenistic Judaism, these were some of the cultural constrains in which the Land of Israel was engulfed at that time. However, still it is a Jewish book, a Jewish message.

It starts with the words: *'This is the book of the generations of Yeshua the Messiah, the son of David, the son of Abraham'*. This verse alone puts the whole context of the Gospel squarely within Judaism. In the first place, the writer says this is the book of the generations. If one checks the terminology, he will find something very interesting in that passage. There

is only one more place in the Bible that this phrase is used, and that is in Genesis chapter 5, verse 1: *'This is the book of the generation of Adam'*. The writer of Matthew by inspiration started the Gospel with these words in order to remind the reader that G-od created man. He created him out of the dust of the earth. He breathed into him the breath of life and the G-od, who created man has no problem of inseminating a woman supernaturally, and bringing His Son into the world in the flesh, as he promised would come the Messiah to King David and to Abraham.

King David and Abraham are the two figures in the Israelite history that received a covenant of grant from G-od, an unconditional covenant that included salvation for the people of Israel and a blessing for all the nations. And therefore, these two figures, Abraham and David, are mentioned in the first verse of the Gospel of Matthew to remind the reader that what we are going to read, and the story of the Messiah, of Yeshua, of Jesus, is the story of Israel's history.

It is not the story of Rome, not the story of Protestantism, not the story of Calvin or Luther, it is the story of the Jewish people, and Jesus is the typical Messiah that our forefathers have waited for. And that waiting, that anticipation of the Messiah, is, has been and always will be the hope of Israel. This is not the hope of the world, because the world at that time and still today, most of the world is idolworshipping. They are worshipping a multiplicity of gods, not the one and only G-od, that we say: **'Shma Yisrael, Adonay Eloheynu, Adonay Echad'**. - 'Here or Israel the Lor-d you G-od is One'. The majority of the world does still not worship that G-od. However Yeshua, the Messiah, came into the world to bring Israel into what the prophets anticipated, and that is to make Israel the light to the nations, through the seed of Abraham.

Therefore it is important, and most important for us if we really want to know the truth and to

understand what the will of G-od is, we have to understand that what we are dealing here with is with a Jewish book. We are dealing with a book, that in it's depth, in it's language, in it's theology, in it's conceptual world is a Jewish book. For one to understand it, we have to go back to the first century, and try to understand what these teachings, what these parables, what these statements of Yeshua, what the stories and the conflicts with the Pharisees and with the Sadducees really mean in the historical context of the Jewish people during the first century. Only then can we be sure that we really have a Biblical concept of faith, grace, hope, eternal life, and salvation.

Now what tools do we have, that can help us to see the world of Yeshua HaMashiach, the Jewish world of the first century? What tools do we have at our disposal to enable us to do this? First and fore most, we have what we said earlier of the Old Testament. This was the holy book, that Yeshua used as the book that he read from in the synagogue in Nazareth. The book, that he quoted over and over again in front of his opponents, the book that the apostle Paul says: *'All scripture is inspired of G-od, and is profitable for reproof and correction and teaching and instruction.'* (1 Tim 3:16), we find this statement of the apostle Paul. It is this book that was the book that he used to show in the synagogues in Thessalonica, in Berea, in Corinth that the Messiah was to come. When Paul went to teach quoted from the Old Testament, from the Torah, that he was to suffer, he was to be buried, he was to rise from the dead and sit at the right hand of G-od. He did not have Matthew, Mark, Luke and John at his disposal. He did not even have the letter to the Galatians, since he hadn't written it yet. And he didn't have the book of Romans when he was going around Lystra and Perga, and Iconium and Ephesus and Colossi and teaching both Jews and Gentiles that Yeshua is the Messiah. What he had was the five books of Moses, and perhaps some of the

prophets at his disposal - that's what he had.

So, the first source for the understanding of the New Testament, of course, is what we call the Old Testament, but there are the other sources. In the New Testament itself, we have quotations from many of the most popular books of the time of Yeshua HaMashiach. We have quotations from Enoch, we have quotations from the book of Ecclesiastics, or ben Sira in Hebrew. We have quotations from rabbinical material, and we have a number of sources that are quoted clearly from the Jewish world of that period and show that Yeshua is the Messiah.

In addition to these materials from the intertestamental period, that are partly quoted in the New Testament by the apostles and in the gospels themselves, we have Josephus - Josephus Flavios, Yosef ben Mattityahu in Hebrew. He was a general of the resistance army against the Romans, but he was captured, taken to captivity, and adopted by the house of Flavius, the house of the Emperors. Titus and Vaspasian adopted Josephus and he became a kind of house historian for them. As a part of his reaction to the Roman war, he wrote the two most important books for understanding the first century, the Antiquates of the Jews and the Jewish Wars.

After Josephus, we have of course a lull in time, but Juda haNasy, a Rabbi from the Land of Israel who lived in the Galilee, collected in the end of the second century the deliberations and the discussions of the rabbis from the first century BC and the first century AD and into the second century. He collected them for the purpose of preserving the deliberations and discussions and the explanations of how the rabbis came to the conclusions of the practical aspects of keeping the law in the post Temple reality. As you know the Temple was destroyed in 70 AD in Jerusalem, and has never been rebuilt since. After the destruction of the Temple, the Bar Kohba revolt occurred and the Jewish people were sacked by the

Romans pretty badly. For that reason, Rabbi Juda thought that it was important to collect these legal deliberations which he put in a binder that is called the **Mishnah**.

The **Mishnah** comes from the Hebrew word "**lishnot**" which means to study, or the discussions, the studies of the Rabbis, concerning these laws, especially in post-Temple Judaism. Many of these legal deliberations go back to the first century BC and are recorded from Rabbis that lived in the time of Yeshua in the land of Israel during the first century AD. We have records of rabbinical discussions on legal matters that belong to that period. That's the **Mishnah**. In beginning of the 4th century there was a collection made of material that the Rabbis discussed over the **Mishnah**, in other words, the Rabbis continue their discussions in trying to understand and come to a fuller implementation of the laws, brought about in the **Mishnah**. This was done both in Babylon, and also in the Land of Israel, producing two **Talmuds** (**Talmud** is the rabbinical deliberations over what Rabbi Juda haNasy wrote in the **Mishnah**). The two sections of the Talmud are the Mishnah, and the discussion over the Mishnah is called the **G'mara**.

G'mara in Aramaic dialect means the Study. The **Mishnah** also means the Study, but that's in Hebrew, and it's become attributed to the earlier studies of the Rabbis, which are called **tannaim**. The Rabbis that were discussed in the **Mishnah** are called the **tannaim**, and the Rabbis that are in the **G'mara** are called the **ammoraim**. The **tannaim** are often quoted by the Rabbis in the **G'mara** since they are the older Rabbis, and they have also passages or the discussions that belong to the first centuries, for the **tannaitic** period. These are called the **Baraita** - an outside the **Mishnah** passages that have been preserved in Jewish tradition mostly orally, but not all of them orally alone.

So we have, in the Talmud, many passages that belong to the time of Yeshua. They are not all a 100%

reliable, but we have critical methods of distinguishing by language, and by content, whether these passages really do belong to the time of Yeshua and to the first century AD, or whether they are fabricated later on, and attributed to earlier writers and earlier Rabbis. However, this should not disturb us or our understanding of the **Talmud**, as a valued document for understanding the background of the New Testament. That is, of course, when we take into consideration the possibilities of different usages and interrelations hips of the Rabbis of the Talmud. So, in the Talmud, we find relevant passages, relevant discussions describing realities, that were contemporary with the apostle Paul and with the world of Yeshua HaMashiach in the first century. That is the reason that if we want to understand the New Testament we'll need to look into all these materials and try to understand the New Testament in it's historical context. The historical context that we have, is the Jewish literature of that period, the Jewish literature that sheds light on what was going on in the world of the New Testament. I'll give you just one short example, before we end this first introductory lesson.

Apostle Paul. We are told in the Book of Acts that the apostle Paul participated, by holding the coats of the people that condemned the deacon, Stephanus, Steven, and then took him out of the city and stoned him. The impression is left on the readers of the Book of Acts that the apostle Paul was a kind of hat-check boy. The people check their coats and their hats in his hands and put them at his feet and then went out to stone Steven. However, later on we read that Paul called himself the chief of the sinners. Here he calls that event of stoning Steven a very traumatic event that attributed to him deep guilt, that never really alleviated itself fully from Paul's own conscience. Years later he still mentions this event. Just being a hat-check boy should not make a person that guilty. In order to understand what this means, we need to look at the Talmud, that tells us how a person was taken

out of the city to be stoned, the procedure that it involved, and the job that this hat-check boy really had during the act of prosecution and execution.

The Babylonian Talmud in the tractate Sanhedrin, p. 42 a, b, and also p. 43 a, b describes the process of execution. It tells us that when they took a person to be stoned to the court house in Jerusalem, outside the walls of Jerusalem, there was a man sent on a horse, or positioned on a high hill, between the place of execution, which was usually in some place down low, below in a valley, presumably where a person could be thrown off a cliff. This man on a horse or the one who is positioned on a cliff was given, the Talmud says, **sudar** - we used the word sweater, from the Greek word **sudarus**. We have the word sweater, we wear sweater, and he was given this sweater this kind of a scarf, and positioned on a horse, and put in between the place of execution and the court house, and he usually was the prosecutor of the case. The reason that he was positioned, in this way is because they didn't have cellular phones in those days, and it was the quickest way to communicate in case some new witness or new evidence arrived at the court house before the execution took place. In other words, the Jewish court was sensitive to the fact that at the last minute some witness could come and perjure himself, and say: listen I lied, you are executing this person innocently. Or somebody could come and bring some new defense, to defend the person who is being executed. The Talmud describes this in details of how this prosecutor could stand there on the horse or on a high place and wave the sweater, wave this coat, wave a cloth, and stop the execution instantly, before it actually took place.

That was Paul's job, that's why he felt so guilty, Since he was actually the execution attorney. He was the prosecutor of the case. He knew in his heart, that Steven was being executed not for a crime against the Temple, not for a crime against the Jewish people, but because he believed that Yeshua of Nazareth rose from

the dead, that he is the Messiah, whom the prophets spoke of. He is the Messiah, that is the only hope of salvation for the Jewish people, and in fact for the world. That guilt, that Paul could have stopped the execution, that Paul knew, that it was a false accusation brought by false witnesses, and didn't stop the execution of Steven, that guilt is what made him feel like chief of all sinners. Without knowing these small details that are revealed to us in the Talmud, we would be left in the dark to the real reasons why Paul felt so guilty. There are many other details that in the subsequent lessons we are going to use to clarify the texts, and try to understand the background and the setting of the Gospel, the Good News that is recorded for us in the book, that we call the New Covenant.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 2

by Joseph Shulam

In the first lesson we gave the introduction and some definitions of what the Talmud is. Now it may surprise many Christians, but actually the Talmud, which is made up of rabbinical writings, dating to the third, fourth, and fifth century, has in it ancient material, that speaks of Yeshua, Jesus, and actually mentions him by name. One of these interesting stories that deal with Jesus and even mentions the crucifixion of Jesus, is found in the Talmud, the Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin, page 43 a. The context of this passage is how a convicted criminal was to be executed. The **Mishnah** actually says, and I am reading the English translation of the Sonsino edition;

If then, they find him innocent, they discharge him, but if not, he goes forth to be stoned and a herald precedes him [crying]: so and so, the son of so and so

is going forth to be stoned because he committed such and such an offense and so and so are his witnesses, whoever knows anything in his favor let him come and state it.

It is interesting that even after the declaration of guilt, and after the court pronounces the sentence on a person, the court gives the opportunity until the last moment before the execution for a witnesses to come forth and to change the verdict. It is also interesting that the witnesses that witnessed against the person are publicly proclaimed in the streets of the city, before the execution takes place. In other words, if you are a witness that has brought condemnation of a person, then you could not hide and be an anonymous witness. The sources, that condemned the person have to be made public, lest somebody from the community know something about a plot, or about a situation in which the witness was falsely accepted as a kosher witness. In Jewish law, not everybody can be a valid witness. You have to be an upright, upstanding, honest person that has the respect of the community before your witness can be accepted. In fact, the situation got to the point to where, oftentimes, the witness of a woman was not accepted, since they did not think that a woman could be a reliable witness. Today, of course the situation has changed in the world. The reputation that the women's lib movement and other such movements have even entered the Church and the believing community and has changed this perception about women. However, in the ancient Talmudic world in the Byzantine period, it was not considered that the witness could be a women, only a man, and even then he had to have a reputation of being a godly upright man to be able to be a kosher witness. So, the witnesses were publicly proclaimed, and then if somebody came and either made it clear that the witnesses were not kosher or that there was new evidence that ought to be considered then they stopped the execution midway.

Now in this context, the Rabbis in the Talmudic period

have discussion. One of the Rabbis by the name of Abaye, who lived in Babylon in the fourth century said: It must also be announced on such and such a day, and such and such an hour and in such and such a place [the crime was committed]. In other words, it is not just an abstract crime, but the crime has a place and a time and therefore the condemnation has to be for the specific witnesses in a specific place in a specific time. Abaye continues to say, that in case there are some who have facts to the contrary, so they can come forward and prove that the witness is **jomemim**. **Jomemim** means that in this context this person is a perjured witness, or witness, who has plotted against the person to condemn him.

Now the Talmud proceeds with the discussion and brings the Mishnah statement and the herald precedes him etc. The herald precedes the convicted man crying: so and so has committed such and such a crime and so this is what the Talmud says about this, and what the **Gemara** says about this.

This implies, only immediately before [the execution] but not previous thereto. [In contradiction to this], it was taught: On the eve of the Passover Yeshu (meaning Jesus) was hanged. For forty days before the execution took place a herald went forth and cried: 'He is going for to be stoned because he was practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy.

Here is the context. The Talmud says normally, when a person is executed the herald goes forth and proclaims his crime and who the witnesses are, and the time and the place and the execution immediately before the execution. However, Jesus was an exception according to this story of the Talmud. Forty days before his execution a herald went forth and proclaimed in the streets of the city and said: He is going to be stoned because he practiced sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy, anyone who can say anything in his favor let him come forth and plead on his behalf. These were the words that the Talmud states that the herald said

forty days, for forty days every day before the execution of Jesus.

The Talmud continues and says: But since nothing was brought forward in his favor, he was hanged on the eve of the Passover. Very interesting thing, first of all, here you have a rabbinical source, a Jewish source, that admits that Jesus was hanged by a decision of a Jewish court. Second, you have here a source that admits that Jesus was hanged on the eve of Passover, these two facts are very important in Jewish history, because over the centuries the Jewish community denied that Jesus was crucified by decision of a Jewish court, in fact over the centuries, Jewish Rabbis and Jewish scholars denied that Jesus ever existed. And here you have within their sources, within the rabbinical sources themselves a clear admission of these two points: Jesus existed, he was tried by a Jewish court, and that he was executed on the eve of Passover by a Jewish court.

These admissions within themselves are very important, but as you can see, the story is a polemic story, not a historical story, it does not come to state a historical fact, it comes as a piece of propaganda against Christianity and against Jesus, and we are going to see this in the continuation of this passage. Of course, the story itself does not fit the Biblical, New Testament sources. First of all, Jesus was tried on the night before his execution, according to the New Testament, not forty days earlier. Second, this phrase that he was being stoned because he was practicing sorcery and enticed Israel to apostasy, this is a standard phrase in the Talmud, that is attached to almost every heretic. It is not precisely the accusations of which Jesus was accused, but about every heretic is said that he enticed Israel to apostasy and practiced sorcery. It'll be interesting for us in subsequent lessons to ask why is this phrase was attached to Jesus also.

Another interesting polemic that is added in this

passage, is that all these forty days the herald went forth crying according to this story, and asking for anybody that has something to plead on behalf of Jesus, and that nobody came forth for forty days. It's an interesting polemic technique, in other words it comes to justify the crucifixion of Jesus, to say, you see, we gave him a chance, we gave the public a chance to come and defend him, but nobody came for forty days. In other words we went over and above our obligation to be fair in the trial of Jesus. That's the polemic purpose of this story up until here.

Now, another Rabbi from the fourth century by name of Ulla, retorts to the statements that was made in the name of Abaye. Ulla retorted: Do you suppose that he was one for whom a defense could be made? In other words, why did they go forth forty days and send the herald, they should have known according to Ulla, who lived also in Babylon in the fourth century, that for such a man as Jesus no defense could be made. And Ulla asked the question: Was he not an *Mesith* [enticer], concerning whom Scripture says: '*Nether shall thou spare, nether shall thou conceal him*', this is a passage from Deuteronomy chapter 18 verse 9, attached to a false prophet and to a sorcerer, that neither shall you spare nor shall you conceal such a person.

The Talmud retorts to Ulla's question. With Yeshu [with Jesus] however it was different, for he was connected to royalty [in Hebrew - *mekurav le malchut.*] This is a very strange and very laconic statement. What the Talmud implies by this statement is possible to understand in a number of different ways. One of the ways traditional medieval Jewish Rabbis understood it, was that he was influential, he was connected with the government, meaning here a Roman government, the government of Herod, Herod Anthipas, in whose days he was crucified. So, because he was such an important person, according to this interpretation of medieval rabbis, they had to go carefully when executing him. They had to take this

into account, and then cover themselves carefully so that nobody will accuse them of having executed him unjustly. That's why they gave so many chances and for forty days sent a herald to go before Jesus and announce if there was anyone with a defense for him.

However, this statement in the Talmud may have a different meaning. What does it mean, that with Yeshu it was different, because he was connected to royalty, **mecurav le malhut** in Hebrew. Literally this means that he was close to the Kingdom, which kingdom it doesn't spell out. Medieval Rabbis, who already had encounters with Christianity in its ugliest form, could not imagine that somebody in the fourth century would say that he was connected to the kingdom. However, I think that there is more to it than meets the eye, when the Talmud says that Jesus was related to the kingdom. That some Rabbis thought that Jesus being connected to the kingdom really means that he was from the household of David. In other words, in this case being connected to the kingdom is an issue of being related to the Davidic lineage, the kingdom of Israel, and that's why they couldn't go quickly and execute him without going through this extra forty day period and seeking for anyone who might have some defense for him. There is not only a polemic purpose, that might be hiding behind this statement but also a tradition that Jesus was from the house of David and that's why he was connected to the kingdom. In my opinion, this makes more sense than him being close to the government of Rome or to the government of Herod Anthipas. There is no other historical source that would imply such closeness.

Joseph Klausner in his book Jesus of Nazareth that was published near the turn of the century, says about this passage in the Talmud, that mentions Jesus and that he was close to the kingdom (p. 27 of Klausner's book): "The Talmud authorities do not deny that Jesus worked signs and wonders, but they look upon them as acts of sorcery. We find the same in the Gospels: *'And the Scribes which came down from*

Jerusalem said, He hath Beelzebub, and, By the prince of the Devils he casteth out devils' (Mark 3:22 and in Matthew 9:34; 12:24) where the Pharisees speak in similar terms.

That it was as a seducer and beguiler that Jesus was put to death was clear to the **tannaim**, for in their days his disciples had become a separate Jewish sect which denied many of the religious principles of Judaism; therefore their teacher, Jesus, according to the Rabbis at least, had beguiled them and led them astray from the Jewish faith. But it is noteworthy that the **Baraita** stresses the fact that they made no haste in putting Jesus to death in spite of his being a beguiler, and that they delayed the execution of his sentence for forty days, in case anybody should come to plead on his favor [a matter of surprise to the **amora** Ulla].

This is exact opposite to the Gospel accounts, according to which the trial of Jesus before the Sanhedrin was finished very hurriedly and the sentence hastily carried out by the Roman Procurator. In the opinion of the present writer the statement about the herald has an obvious 'tendency', and it is difficult to think that it is historical".

So Klausner, in his very diplomatic way of stating things, says that it is difficult for him to imagine that this statement in the Talmud is a historical statement, and we have already stated that it is a clearly propagandic statement which is found in this Talmudic source.

I want to return again to this issue that the Talmud proclaims Jesus not only crucified on the eve of the Passover and not only crucified by decision of the Jewish court, the Sanhedrin, but that they understood that he was related to royalty. As related to royalty, there are opinions that state that it means that he was from the household of David. Since he was from the household of David, they had to be doubly

careful about how they executed him, and therefore according to the Talmud , in spite of the fact that this story is totally propagandic, they had to justify, at least in the mind if this fourth century Babylonian Rabbi, that they took these precautions, which are unhistorical, because he was related to King David. A tradition was transferred within the Jewish camp that Jesus was not just anybody, but he was related to royalty. Another way of looking at it is, that it was clear in their tradition, in their mind, both in Jewish tradition and in Christian tradition, that Jesus was crucified as the king of the Jews, and that is another reason why they considered him to be related to royalty.

Now the Talmudic text continues to talk about Jesus and his disciples, and I believe that we are going to have to leave the continuation of this passage for the next lesson. But I want to return and reiterate some of the importance of looking at these outside sources that spoke of Jesus. Of course for us, the closer they are to the time of the first century, the more important they are. This **Baraita**, outside the **Mishnah** statement that is incorporated on this passage in which we dealt with, originated probably sometime in the second or third century, but it's brought to us by the mouth of fourth century Rabbis. It retains in it this important tradition of points of contact with the Biblical account, which for us, ought to strengthen us and reaffirm some of these Biblical truths. Not that we need the affirmation from rabbinical sources, because our faith is really based on God and on the Word of God only, and the Talmud is not a part of the Word of God, it is a collection of the rabbinical statements and arguments, back and forth, but it does contain an important cross reference that show two things. Shows how the Jewish people approached the Gospel, and sometimes even why, and they show the basic facts of the Gospel can not be denied even by the Jewish Rabbis in the darkest hours of Christianity.

Now, this idea that Jesus was accused or condemned for practicing sorcery and enticing Israel to apostasy is an interesting idea within itself. The idea that Klausner mentioned our quote from his book, that even in the New Testament the Pharisees tried to accuse Jesus of casting out demons in the name of Beelzebub, in the name of the devil. They can not deny that these events actually took place, that miracles took place, that Jesus cast out demons, but they have to explain it away by saying that he did it by the powers of sorcery. Now, they tried to say that it was an act of the devil, but it didn't stick in the New Testament. During the Talmudic period, they already had their memory of the fact that it didn't stick, and so they invented all kinds of stories to explain how Jesus came by these powers. We are going to deal with some of these stories in the subsequent lessons, but let me just mention this one idea that Jesus actually did it by the power of the Name of the Almighty, the tetragramaton, the four letters that make the name that is translated often times in English as Jehovah.

As the story goes which is found in the book called **Toldot Yeshu**, or The History of Jesus, is that Jesus, when he was a child at his **Bar Mitzva**, and came to Jerusalem with his parents and argued with the Rabbis and with the Priests in the Temple, that he snuck into the Holy of Holies, and heard the angels pronounce the name of God and use it. As he was a precocious kid, and smart, he knew, that as he lived, the angels would wipe away his memory. So he took and scratched the pronunciation of the Name of God on a piece of leather, cut himself and put this piece of leather under his skin. He then used the Name of God to heal his wound. And so, when he went out of the Holy of Holies, according to this fantastic and unbelievable story, the angels did wipe away his memory, and he did not remember the Name of God, and how to pronounce it, but he did remember that he cut himself and stuck something under his skin, and of course he opened it up again, and he had the power of the Name of God.

Now in such a story it is interesting that it explains two things. It explains that Jesus actually did the miracles, which they could not deny. The second thing it explains, is that they could not explain away the fact that he did it by another power, by another source, because he did good things. He healed people, he raised them from the dead, he opened the eyes of the blind, he purified the lepers from their leprosy, etc. Who could say that is something bad. So, if it is something good, it had to be done by the Name of God, and this explains how he got the Name of God.

The fact that they couldn't deny these things, and in history they had to explain them away in this fantastic story, ought to be for us an encouragement, to know that even today we can not deny the power of God in Jesus Christ.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 3

by Joseph Shulam

In this lesson, we will be dealing with the section that deals about Yeshua found in Sanhedrin p. 43a. We failed to mention, when dealing with this text in lesson two, that this section is actually a part of the censored text of the Talmud. During the medieval period, the Jewish community in Europe was under the control and rule of the Catholic Church. As a result of the people living in Christian countries and afraid of the consequences of

such passages as the ones we will discuss, there were sections about Yeshua in the Talmud that they censored, removed. Therefore, the printing of the Talmud, until recently, did not include these sections, they were in **hasronot hashas**, [deletions from the Talmud] in a separate booklet that was secretly handed down within the Jewish community, from **Yeshiva** to **Yeshiva**.

In recent years, since the establishment of the State of Israel, most editions of the Talmud have already reincorporated these texts back into the normal text of the Talmud. The only edition that has been delayed in its publication is the Adin Steinsaltz's edition of the Talmud, which is a Hebrew-English. The final edition will have included the revisions in both in the English and the Hebrew. The Artscroll version of the Talmud has included these sections. In the Soncino edition, it is included in the English translation, that they diplomatically mention as a footnote or as an annotation that sends the reader to **hasronot hashas**, but the footnote doesn't appear in the Hebrew text. I am going to be reading from the Soncino English addition of the text. As you may remember from the last lesson, we dealt with the issue of Yeshua's execution being unusual. A herald went forth for forty days and announced that anyone may rise to the defense of Yeshua or bring any evidence to absolve him of the crime that he was accused of. The story goes that during those forty days nobody came. In the end, a rabbi named Ulla from Babylon, in the Babylonian **amora**, asks the question, why did they treat Yeshua so specially since he was **mesith umediah**, in other words an enticer? The answer that the Talmud gives to Ulla's question is that Yeshua was different since he was connected to royalty or government [**mecurav le malchut** in Hebrew]. Then the editor of the Talmud brings another interesting **Baraita**, which we are going to read and try to analyze and dissect a bit for better understanding.

Our rabbis taught, Yeshua had five disciples: Mattay,

Nakai, Nezer, Buni and Todah. From this point on, the Talmud presents an interpretation of scriptures in the form of a duel, verses that seem to defend these disciples and then bringing an objection that condemns them, and condemns them not only plainly, but unto death. So, we'll start with these scriptures in spite of the fact that when you deal with them in English translation it's a lot more difficult to understand the connection. A lot of these verses have plays on words, they are built on a play of words, and so the English translation may not do justice to the text, but we'll try to do it in English in any case.

When Mattay was brought [before the court] he said to them [the judges], Shall Mattay be executed, is it not written, *Mattay* [when] *shall I come and appear before God?* [This is a text from psalms 42, verse 3]. The play on word is because ***mattay*** is the word - when, and so it says: '*When shall I come and appear before God?*' So they bring this verse as a defense. To say Mattay, which in English would be pronounced Matthew, from the Greek. It was a name /that came from the Maccabian period, and was actually the father of Judas Maccabbi, his name was Mattitiah, and from that the short form, Mattay. And so, the Talmudic writer supposedly brings this defense from the psalms that Mattay will come and appear before G-d. Of course, if he would appear before G-d, that means that he is not guilty, that he is righteous. Since only the righteous appear before G-d. The Talmud retorts and says. Yes, Mattay shall be executed, since it is written: *When Mattay will die, and his name will perish.* [a verse from psalm 41, verse 6]. In other words, there is a sparring of texts. They are playing with two texts, one text says don't kill him, because Mattay shall appear before G-d, while the second text says Mattay shall die, and his name will perish.

The same sparring goes on with Nakai, Talmud says. When Nakai was brought in [into the courtroom], he said to them, Shall Nackai be executed, is it not written, *Naki and the righteous slay thou not?* [a

quotation from Exodus chapter 23, verse 7]. In other words, to understand what the Exodus passage really means, we have to understand what the word **nakai** means here. Nakai means clean, pure and so the Exodus passage says in it's context: '**Naki** [the innocent] *and the righteous slay thou not*'. Again the Talmud retorts, playing on these word nakai. Nakai shall be executed, since it is written, *In secret places does Naki* [the innocent] *slay*. [It is a quotation from two passages, well actually, from Psalm 10 verse 8]. We see here again a verse referred to that says not to kill, and then the verse is brought that uses the same word saying he should be executed.

We are going on with the other three disciples before we analyze it more in depth. The next disciple after Nakai is **Netzer**. **Netzer** means a twig, a shoot. When Netzer was brought in he said: Shall Netzer be executed? Is it not written, *A Netzer* [a twig] *shall grow forth out of his root*? [This passage comes from Isaiah chapter 11 verse 1]. Yes, they said, Nezer shall be executed, since it is written, *But thou art cast forth away from thy grave like netzer* [an abhorred offshoot]. That is from Isaiah chapter 14, verse 19, where the context there is the king of Babylon who is cast out of the grave like a shoot.

The fourth disciple that is mentioned in this context is **Buni**, which is a play on word for my son. Buni was brought to the courthouse and it was said. Shall **Buni** be executed? Is it not written, *Beni* [my son] *my firstborn*. [This passage is taken from Exodus chapter 4, verse 22, talking about Israel. Then the Talmud retorts. Buni shall be executed, because it is written, *Behold I will slay Bine-ka* [thy son] *thy first-born*. [The passage is taken from Exodus verse 4, chapter 23: '*I will slay your son, your firstborn*', in the context of the circumcision of the Moses's son in the wilderness].

The last one of these disciples is called **Todah**. And when Todah was brought in, he said to them: Shall

Today be executed? Is it not written, A psalm for Today [thanksgiving]. [The passage is taken from psalms 100, verse 1] The Talmud retorts again and says. Today shall be executed, since it is written, *Whoso offereth the sacrifice of **Today** [thanksgiving] honoured me,* [taken from psalm 50, verse 23].

Now, we have seen this fencing with scriptures, the verses brought with the same word, to absolve the disciple, and then a verse is brought to execute. The whole context, the whole picture of this text seems to be in the context of a courtroom. In other words, Jesus is tried and executed, and now the Talmud shows a court room scene with his disciples. His disciples are brought into the courtroom, one by one and a defense is brought in their behalf, then a verse is brought in order to condemn them, to execute and kill them.

There are many problems with this text. The first problem that we need to notice immediately is that the only name that fits any of the disciples of Jesus, is the name Mattay, the first one. The other four names Buni, Nezer, Nakai and Today have almost no historic relationship, unless you want to look at the name Today as one of the apostles by the name of Taddeus, Levy. You could say, if you'll stretch it a little bit, that two out of the five names we could recognize from other records, but three other names we have no clue of who they are, and if they were disciples of Yeshua.

Now, this in itself is a problem, but there are bigger problems than this, such as dealing with the beginning of the text. The Talmud reads in Hebrew - **chamisha talmudim haiu lo le Yeshu ha Notzri** - Jesus from Nazareth had five disciples (lit. teachings). However, **talmud** is not a disciple, it's a teaching. The modern versions of the Talmud have the word **talmidim**, which means disciples, but it is a well-known fact that in the words **talmudim** and **talmidim**, the ם [vav] and the ך [yud] are often

exchanged in the ancient manuscripts of the Talmud, and it could have been meant either way. However, since we don't have any evidence of such a replacement by Jewish rabbinical courts, and since the passages of this Baraita, a section not included in the Mishnah that is brought in here has stylistic brothers and sisters in Talmudic literature, we can be sure of the interpretation. Two of the greatest scholars on this subject have interpreted it in their books, dealing with Jesus in the Talmud. Joseph Klausner in his book Jesus of Nazareth, says that this section is a polemic fabrication during the **Amoraic** period, desiring to justify the alienation of the early church from its Jewish context. Heretofore he puts it in these words, we can only regard this sensing of this text as a **joe de pri**, occasioned, no doubt by some actual event. (**joe de pri** in French means - a spiritual play.)

I have discovered that the Talmud often does similar things, the sparring and fencing with texts at other occasions. We see on page 33b, ג' b in the Babylonian Talmud, an interesting use of the same passage dealing with Nakai, using the same sparring found in our text. Our rabbis taught: Whence [do we infer] that if the accused leaves the **Beth din** [the courthouse] guilty, and someone says: 'I have a statement to make in his favor,' he is to be brought back - Scripture reads: *The guiltless [the naki] slay thou not.* [taken from Exodus, chapter 23 verse 7]. And whence [do we infer] that if he leaves the **Beth din**, not guilty, and someone says: 'I have something to state against him,' he may not be brought back?- From the verse, *And the righteous, slay thou not.* [from Exodus 23:7 again]. Now, the same context is here to be found with the same verses, and the same sparring, dealing with a context that is not related to Jesus and his disciples. So we see, this technique of sparring with the verses, or fencing, is a known technique in the Talmudic era.

Now, how can we resolve this passage? There is a

number of ways that we can relate to this passage. The first way is to say that the whole thing is a fabrication in the Byzantine period by Babylonian rabbis that have a memory of some Baraita, that was a part of the polemics against Christianity in the second century, or in the early part of the third century. However, that does not explain the names used. It doesn't explain, where they get these names: Mattay, Naki, Nezer, Buni, and Todah. It's hard to believe that they simply fabricated those names. Like Herd said, it must be related to an actual occasion or to some event, or some text that was before them.

I propose, not only in front of this group, but in academic circles as well, that what we have here is an ancient Jewish/Christian hymn, that did not talk about disciples, but spoke about teachings. A credo hymn, that talks about five points, that the early Church believed about Jesus. They are: **mattay** - when. When did the Messiah come? He came in the fullness of time. The second name is **naki**, which means clean, pure, innocent. He died innocently, without sin. The third name is **netzer**, from which we have the Hebrew name of Christians - Nazarine, and as you know in Acts chapter 24, verse 14. Paul is accused of being the head of the sect of Nazarines - **Notzrim**. This means that the New Testament is familiar with this Jewish appellation for early Christians, for the Jewish Christians, the Nazarine sect. Also, **netzer** has long been related to Isaiah 11, verse 1, as well as to other passages of Isaiah, from which we've gotten this idea of Nazareth, Nazarines, notzrim. In other words, he was the **netzer** or the scion of the house of Jesse, he was the seed of David. The fourth one - **buni**, which means my son. He is the Son of G-d. The fifth one - **todah**. He is the sacrifice of thanksgiving. I believe that what the original text of the hymn was, **hamisha talmudim haia lo le Yeshu hanotzri**. Five teachings Jesus the Nazarene had, about himself: 1) that he came in the fullness of time, 2) that he was

innocent and sinless, pure, 3) that he was the Son of G-d, 4) that he was the seed of David, and 5) that he was the sacrifice of thanksgiving to G-d. And this hymn was taken by the rabbis, and used as a polemic, answering each line with a verse in it.

The claim that he came in the fullness of the time. When shall I come and appear before G-d - mattay, and it means that Jesus had come in the fullness of time and now he is sitting in front of G-d. The second - naki, righteous, pure or innocent, and the righteous shall thou slay not. Then netzer - the verse was: the netzer will grow out of his root, out of the root of Jesse - Davidic lineage. The fourth - buni - my son, my son is my firstborn, first born from among the dead. The resurrection, and also the monogenesis, the only one of his kind, the first begotten of G-d. The fifth one is toda - the sacrifice of thanksgiving, psalm of thanksgiving, a hymn, a praise to G-d. So the rabbis were relating to a hymn of the Messianic Jews. The rabbis went verse by verse and gave a counter to negate each claim. They put all that into the context of a polemic between Judaism and the Church during the Byzantine period.

What can we learn from this that is positive for us as believers? First, if my theory is right, and I must admit, that it is only a theory. Of course, I am not willing to dismiss it as purely Rabbinic nonsense. The way Klausner says it: there is nothing historical about this position. However, I believe that there is something to it. I believe that they had a hymn of the early church, that presented these five teachings about the Messiah and that they used this hymn as the polemic instrument to negate it, with the normal tactic of fencing with verses.

There are other occasions, but it is out of the scope of this lesson, that we can see this fencing with texts, which brings you a text on behalf somebody, and then a text against that person. So we see here,

that there is a preservation of this proposed early hymn, there is the rabbinical response to it and then it is taking out of it's original context and put in a context of a trial. A courtroom condemnation of the disciples of Jesus, and not only of Jesus himself, which could only happen sometime during amoraic Byzantine period in Babylon. The most important thing for us to realize, is that the Talmud does not ignore the question of Jesus totally, that there are vestiges of early conflicts between the church and the synagogue preserved in the Talmud.

Now, in the Jewish community, until recently, the majority of that community did not believe that Jesus actually ever existed or that he was a historical figure. They thought it was the figment of the imagination of the church, created in order to justify anti-Semitism. Now we see, that the Talmud has some mention of Jesus if only in the context of his trial and his execution. We see that the Talmud also brings these polemics against Christianity by using some ancient Hebrew material in this Baraita, to justify their hatred or their condemnation of early Christianity. This, by itself, is a valuable lesson. From here on, in the fourth lesson forward, we are not going to deal with the passages about Jesus. We are going to deal with passages about the Messiah in general. I felt that it was important to show that the Talmud does recognize the historicity of Jesus, even out of it's polemic context during the Byzantine period and has ancient memory of the person of Jesus as somebody **mekurav le malchut**, who is connected with royalty. That alone should be an encouragement to us.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 4

by Joseph Shulam

We are moving now from the section in the tractate Sanhedrin that deals with Yeshua and the crucifixion and the different attitudes or treatment of the issue of the disciples that we went through in the previous lessons. We will now address the actual theme of this series - the Messiah in the Talmud. I would like to reiterate the fact that the whole concept of the Messiah is a Jewish concept, that deals with the aspirations and the promises of G-d to the nation of Israel to have an era of redemption, that will bring world wide redemption to all humanity. It evolved from the need that is both visible and Biblical, to bring salvation into G-d's creation that seemingly, at least for a while, has gone awry and has brought humanity to a state of alienation and separation from the Creator who created the heavens and the earth.

As we had said in the introduction, Jewish literature is full of alluding passages and texts that deal with the Messiah. In the Bible itself, at least in the Hebrew Scriptures, the concept of the Messiah is present. But to some degree it is a mystery and not overly open and exposed in the texts. You have to look into them with an understanding that the Messiah is a mystery in the Old Testament. Although it is clear that the concept of redeemer is present, but it is not so clearly delineated. It starts already with the Garden of Eden after the fall where G-d promises that the seed of a woman will crush the head of serpent, as recorded in Geneses chapter 3 verse 15, and continues all the way to the last prophet that prophesied in what we called Old Testament.

The Rabbis over the years before Jesus, during Jesus' time and of course, in the Rabbinical literature that we have been dealing with in the Talmud, tried to

decipher, to understand, to define, and to refine the whole concept of the Messiah. Now we come to a block of text that starts from the tractate Sanhedrin from p. 96 b that deals with the Messiah. I think that most Christians will be amazed to read these texts and to try to put them into perspective. The discussions on p. 96 b, at the bottom of the page, start after dealing with the prophet Zechariah.

R. Nahman said to R. Isaac: 'Have you heard when **Bar Nafle** will come?' 'Who is **Bar Nafle**?' he asked. 'Messiah', he answered, 'Do you call Messiah **Bar Nafle**?' - 'Even so', he rejoined, as it is written: *In that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David ha-nofelet [that is fallen].*

Notice that it is the play on words between the word **Nafle** and the Hebrew word for fallen **nofelet** in '*Sukkat David ha-nofelet.*' Let's stop here, and go back and understand what is going on here in the context. Two Rabbis are sitting and discussing prophetic passages, or the Talmud edits it that way at least, within the context of the Rabbinical discussion of prophetic promises to Israel in Zechariah, in Isaiah, and in Ezekiel. Then this question is brought by Rabbi Nahman, who said to Rabbi Isaac: 'Have you heard when **Bar Nafle** will come? You must know the word **Nafle** is not an easy word. It is a word that means cloud in Aramaic, which is taken from the Greek - **nefelei**, which means cloud. In Hebrew it comes from the root of fallen, at least in this context. So **Bar Nafle** could mean the son of the fallen or could mean the son of the clouds, as it is taken and translated from Daniel chapter 7 verse 13, '*There came with the clouds of heaven one like the son of man.*' That's the connection that Rabbi Nahman gave in the Hebrew, in other words, he asked when the son of the clouds will come? And, of course, Rabbi Isaac never heard of it and asked, who is the son of the clouds, and the answer is - he is the Messiah. The verse that is brought to prove it, from the Hebrew, not from the Aramaic, is one from Amos, chapter 9 that talks about,

in verse 11: *'In that day I will rise up the tabernacle of David, that is fallen'*. Fallen is **ha-nofelet**, which plays on word with **Nafle**. That's what Rabbi Nahman replied, and in Hebrew is another passage to prove his point.

Thus hath R. Johanan said, In the generation when the son of David [i.e., Messiah] will come, scholars will be few in number, and as for the rest, their eyes will fail through sorrow and grief, multitudes of trouble and evil decrees will be promulgated anew, each new evil coming with haste before the other has ended.

He is bringing now an answer to the first question: 'Have you heard when **Bar Nafle** will come?' The answer is brought from Rabbi Jonathan, who is probably a first century Rabbi, because we have a number of Johanan's, and the Talmud doesn't say which Johanan. However, it is a section in Hebrew, not in Aramaic, which tells us that it is a **Baraita**, which means an outside source, ie outside of the Mishnah. So it is a passage that is not in the Mishnah, and is attributed to Rabbi Johanan, probably the same Rabbi Johanan who during the fall of Jerusalem escaped and left Jerusalem with his disciples to establish the academy in Jamnia [modern Javne].

So, here is Rabbi Johanan's answer to when will come the Son of **Nafle**, the son of the clouds? It will be in a generation, where scholars will be few. The Rabbis, in other words, will be few, the rest of the population will cry so much that their eyes will fail from sorrow and grief, much trouble will be brought by the political system, evil decrees will be promulgated, and each new evil or trouble will come before the other one is ended. In other words, when it rains, it pours trouble. That is the answer that Rabbi Johanan brings as to when the Messiah will come. Later, the Talmud brings the official position with the phrase - 'Our Rabbis taught', that is the

tradition.

Our Rabbis taught: In the seven year cycle, at the end of which the son of David will come - in the first year, this verse will be fulfilled: And I will cause it to rain upon another city; in the second the arrows of hunger will be send forth; in the third a great famine, in the course of which men, women and children, pious men and saints will die, and the Torah will be forgotten by it's students, in the fourth - partial plenty; in the fifth - great plenty, when men will eat, drink and rejoice, and the Torah will return to it's disciples; in the sixth - [Heavenly] sounds; in the seventh, wars; and at the conclusion of the septenary the son of David will come.

This is the official tradition, talking about the seven-year cycle. Now, where did the Rabbis get the seven-year cycle idea? They got it, of course, from the prophet Daniel, who talks about seventy years, and the last seven years are the cycle. They divided this cycle into two halves of three and a half years, and at the end of the last three and a half years, redemption will come and the Messiah will come. One half of the cycle, famine, and the second half is of plenty, at the end of which will be a war and after the war at the end of the seventh year, the son of David will come. We know from the New Testament also that it is alluded, however, this allusion has caused a lot of division in the Christian world on the whole concept of the millennium, pre- and post-, and in dispensationalism that as caused sects to emerge all over the Christian world. Discussing this issue of when the son of David will come, when will the Messiah come, can cause these divisions, but we see here, the Rabbis include in the cycle suffering, even for the righteous, wars, famines, things that Jesus in the New Testament himself alluded to at least will be present and existent in the world until he comes. Rabbi Joseph, a later Rabbi, retorted to this official Rabbinical position.

R. Joseph demurred: But so many such centenaries have passed, yet he has not come!

In other words, Rabbi Joseph says: 'Hey, we have seen seven- year cycles like this over and over and over in history, and yet we haven't seen the Messiah come. Over the generations, people have run around and said here he comes, this is a sign of the time, this is a sign of the time, this is what's going to happen, that is what's going to happen and he hasn't come. Our Rabbi Joseph is questioning this ruling. Abaye, a Rabbi that lived in the fourth century in Babylon retorts answering this question of Rabbi Joseph.

Abaye retorted: When are there [Heavenly] sounds in the sixth and wars in the seventh? Moreover, have they [sc. troubles] been in this order?

In other words, Abaye, a Rabbi living in Babylon, is retorting to Rabbi Joseph's statement saying: Listen, yes, there's always trouble in the world, but has this trouble been in the order that we are talking about? Has it been in the order that is prescribed in this case for the seven years? Has there been the Heavenly sounds in the sixth and wars in the seventh? Has there been a cessation of rain in the first year on some cities and on other cities, has it been sorrow and hunger in the second year? In the third and fourth years famine, with even the righteous experiencing the famine, because the issue of the righteous experiencing famine is an issue of Biblical promises. It says, you know in the book of Psalms: 'I have never seen righteous men hungry and stretching his hands for bread'. However, it says, that the righteous and the saints will experience hunger. We know that G-d blesses the righteous, and there are many passages of blessing for the righteous.

Now we have to explain what it means that in the sixth year there will be a heavenly sound. Heavenly sound here is taken from Isaiah 27, verse 13. The same

concept is found in the book of Revelation, that when the Messiah comes, the heavens will announce his advent by the blast of the great trumpet. We read about this in the book of Revelation many times, of the angels blowing a great trumpet and announcing the advent and the appearance of the Messiah. Well, of course, the Talmud doesn't satisfy itself with this response by Abaye and continues to deal with the issue.

Where with Thine enemies are reproached O Lord, where with they have reproached the footsteps of Thine anointed.

A quotation is brought from Psalms 89, verse 52. That quotation says: 'they have reproached the steps of Thine Anointed One.' Anointed One in Hebrew, of course, is the Messiah. The Talmud now responds to this verse.

It has been taught, Rabbi Judah said, In the generation, when the son of David comes, the house of assembly, (in other words the Sanhedrin) will be for harlots, Galilee in ruins, the Gablan, (which today we pronounce the Golan), will lie desolate. [In the time of the first century, it was part of the decapolis, a very wealthy, very prosperous section of the country]. The border inhabitants will wander about from city to city, receiving no hospitality, the wisdom of the scribes in this favor, god-fearing men despised, people will be dog-faced and the truth entirely lacking, as it is written: Yey, truth fails, and he who departs from evil makes himself a prey. [a quotation from Isaiah chapter 59, verse 15.] - The school of Rabbi Shila said: He who departs from evil, will be dubbed a fool by his fellow-men.

That's a long section, let's go back and try to understand it. The quotation brought from Psalms 89:52, that basically says that not only the man of that generation will be suffering, but even the footsteps of thy Anointed One will be reproached. It

says that the Messiah himself will be persecuted and now this is expanded on by Rabbi Judah who says that in the generation when the son of David comes, either the assembly of scholars or the Sanhedrin itself will be for harlots. That there will be no scholarship, no justice, no judgment in the courts of Israel. The Galilee will be in ruins, the Golan will be desolate, the border inhabitants - the people that live on the borders or in the unwalled cities will be wandering from place to place in the Land. They will receive no hospitality, the wisdom of the scribes will be in disfavor. In other words, god-fearing men will be hated, people will be dog-faced, meaning brazen, without shame for each other, and the truth entirely lacking. Even the righteous of G-d will be persecuted and fall as prey. A pretty bad situation is described here, of course it fits the concept that was already given by the Rabbis in the earlier passage that deals with the issue of the time of the coming of the Messiah. It proves there will be tribulation and persecution and this only enhances the picture. Now somebody enters from the school of Rabbi Shila and says: In the generation when the Messiah comes, if somebody will depart from evil, will try to be righteous, will try to do things morally and godly in an upright way, he will be considered a fool by his fellow men. In other words, the world will be kind of upside down in its moral view, the righteous will be called fools, and those who steal and rob and cheat and kill will be considered honorable members of society. Of course, if one looks today at what is happening, this is almost a fulfilled prophecy. One could certainly say two things. He could say that we are living in the days of the coming of the Messiah, but you could also agree with Rabbi Joseph, that we have seen this cycle of unrighteousness so many times and evil generations have fallen upon us, that it's now difficult to discern if this is the one. It's difficult to know if the Messiah is coming or not, because we've already seen this phenomena take place in the history both of Israel and of the whole

world.

Now, the importance of these passages is that we see that throughout the generations, first, second, third, and fourth centuries Rabbis have continued to discuss the question, when is the son of man coming? What signs, and how can we know that the Messiah is coming soon. For us today, it is essential to continue this discussion, but not to fight over them. Maimonides says that those that argue over the end-time win only discord in the world. According to Maimonides in his tractate ***Hilchot Melachim***, Rules of the Kingship, chapters 11 and 12 where he deals with the Messiah, he states very clearly that what the prophets promised will come to pass, but it is not clearly delineated and clearly stated sufficiently to be able to argue over it and to fight over it. To some degree, the prophets purposely didn't give us a clear picture of the coming of the Messiah, lest we say 'Oh, we've got time and don't have to worry about it right now.' He is coming and the time to prepare for his coming is now. So part of the tension is because G-d has wanted us to always be ready, every hour and every day to receive the Messiah. However, it is important not to calculate and not to be dogmatic about the coming of the Messiah, but to keep that fire of expectancy and waiting for him burning and trying to be always ready for his appearance. These Rabbinic discussions reflect two things. They reflect that discussion, that fervor, that expectation over the advent coming of the Messiah, but they also reflect a certain degree of realism. Somebody might call it pessimism, that the world and the scholarly world and the righteous are destined to continue to suffer until the coming of the Messiah is actually accomplished.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 5

by Joseph Shulam

We have been dealing with the passage of the Talmud from Babylonian Talmud, tractate Sanhedrin page 96b which is the beginning of the major section in the Talmud that deals with the teachings of the Rabbis about the Messiah. The first section deals with **Bar Nafle**, the Son of the Clouds, which is a name that is given to the Messiah. This idea is also reflected in the New Testament, especially in the epistle to the Thessalonians, where it says that the Messiah will come in the clouds of heaven. This is taken of course by the New Testament writers and by the Rabbis from the description of the Son of Man coming in the clouds in the book of Daniel.

Well, now we are continuing our study on page 97 a of the tractate Sanhedrin with a number of sections that gives different traditions that deal with the generation in which the Son of David is coming, the generation in which the Messiah is coming. There are different descriptions of that generation, given by Rabbis in different periods of the Talmudic Era. I will read the few of them and then try to do some analyses of the meaning this has for New Testament students.

It has been taught, R. Judah said: In the generation

when the Son of David comes, the house of assembly will be for harlots, Galilee in ruins, Gablan lie desolate, the border inhabitants wonder around from city to city, receiving no hospitality, the wisdom of scribes in disfavor, God-fearing men despised, people be dog-faced, and truth entirely lacking, as it written, Yea, truth faileth, and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey. What it meant by yea, truth faileth [**ne`eneret**]? - The Scholars of the School of Rab said: This teaches that it will split up into separate groups and depart. What is the meaning of 'and he that departeth from evil maketh himself a prey [**mishtollel**]'? - The School of Rabbi Shila said: He who departs from evil will be dubbed a fool by his fellow-men.

Another tradition, which is given in the name of Rabbi Nehemiah in English says.

It has been taught, R. Nehemiah said: In the generation of Messiah's coming impudence will increase, esteem be perverted, the vine yield it's fruit, yet shall wine be dear (meaning expensive), and the Kingdom will be converted to heresy with none to rebuke them. This supports R. Isaac, who said: The son of David will not come until the whole world is converted to the belief of the heretics. Raba said: What verse [proves this]? The verse is: 'It is all turned white: he is clean.'

This is taken from Leviticus chapter 18, verse 13, in the context of leprosy. One of the signs of leprosy is when you get these white spots on your skin. And you have to go to the priest to get diagnosed, either you are having leprosy or not having leprosy. And this is taken here by R. Isaac, and Raba supports it, that indicated the whole Kingdom will be converted to heresy is the verse from Leviticus chapter 18, verse 13, *It is all turned white: he is clean*. And that is about the analysis of the priest on somebody, who comes to him to discern whether he has got leprosy or not. If the whole thing is white, he is clean. But

if he has got spots of white here and there, then he has got leprosy. One more Rabbinical tradition about what will happen in the generation of the coming of the Son of David, the coming of the Messiah, from the same page, continued reading. Our Rabbis taught. As you know, the tradition was in the name of individual Rabbis, in the name of R. Nehemiah, in the name of R. Shila, in the name of Rav. Now we have more or less the official, traditional view of the Rabbis in the Talmudic Era and this formula always comes like that - our Rabbis taught, bringing a verse from Deuteronomy chapter 32 verse 36.

Our Rabbis taught: For the Lord shall judge his people, and repent himself of his servants, when he seeth that their power is gone, and there is none shut up, or left:

The Talmud continues after this quotation:

The Son of David will not come until denunciators are in abundance. Another interpretation of the verse [their power is gone]: until scholars are few. Another interpretation of [their power is gone] is until the [last] penny has gone from the purse. Yet another interpretation: until the redemption is despaired of, for it is written, there is none shut up or left, as - were it possible [to say so] - Israel had neither Supporter nor Helper.

In other words, after the Rabbis made their interpretation of this verse in Deuteronomy 32:36, the question comes into the picture, how could anybody say, that Israel has no one to lean upon, because the description of this verse seems to indicate that there will be no one left, everybody will be shut up in heresy and in impudence and no money, and no power, and no scholars and the indication would be, that God had abandoned Israel. And the question is: has God really abandoned Israel, that Israel has no Supporter or Helper? And then the support for this statement of

the Rabbis is given.

Even as R. Zera, who, whenever he chanced upon scholars engaged thereon [i.e., in calculating the time of the coming of the Messiah] would say to them: I beg of you, do not postpone it, for it has been taught: Three come unawares: Messiah, a found article [something you find] and a scorpion.

Now let us go back and analyze these three sections on the same page in the Talmud that deal with the coming of the Messiah. First, there is something in common in these three sections that we need to take into account. What is in common is that all the individual Rabbis and the view of the Rabbis collectively seems to indicate that the time of the coming of the Messiah will be a time of anguish, of suffering, of national and legal and financial disorder. They all indicate that the Messiah will come, when there will be disorder, scholars and righteous people will be put aside or not respected or lose their position in the community.

These things are not unique to the Talmudic scholars. As you may already know, in the New Testament, when Jesus describes the fall of Jerusalem, in the context of the fall of Jerusalem he also predicts the Second Coming and the Judgment Day. And the time when the Messiah will come in Matthew chapter 24, one reads of very similar circumstances, reads that there will be wars, hunger, and persecution of the righteous. At the same time one reads that people will be still working in the field and living more or less normal lives, like the section here that there will be a lot of grapes, a lot of fruits yet the wine will still be expensive, and that picture seems to parallel the insight given in some of the Biblical perspective of the New Testament of the generation in which the Messiah will come. That's one aspect of this teaching, that we see in the Talmud till now, but there are some interesting other insights, that seem

to be connected to this teaching.

One is R. Nehemiah's statement, that in the Messiah's coming, the Kingdom will be converted to heresy, the Hebrew word for heresy here is **minut** and the traditional Jewish commentators of the Talmud say that 'Kingdom will be converted to heresy' means the Roman Empire. It's a remarkable forecast, R. Nehemiah, who lived at about a 150 BC, speaks of the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity which occurred during the days of the Constantine the Great in the year 313. One already could see in 150 BC that there is a direction in which the Roman Empire is going and that it will be converted to heresy, where heresy here means Christianity.

This is also very interesting, that they brought the idea of converting to Christianity as connected with the second coming, or connected in their eyes with the coming of the Messiah. A similar concept to this is found in Matthew, in the context of the miner commission, on which Yeshua sends his disciples to preach the Kingdom to the cities of Israel. In verse 34 of Matthew chapter 10 he says an interesting thing, that may be related to this concept. *'Do not think that I have come to bring peace on earth; I have not come to bring peace, but a sword. For I have come to set a man against his father, and daughter against her mother, and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law, and a man's foes will be those of his own household.'* The context here is, that the age of the Messiah and his presence will bring into the world the confrontation between good and evil, between those who are committed to God and those who are not committed to God. In the same chapter Jesus says, that he will not come until the Gospel, the Good News has been preached throughout all the cities of Israel. In Matthew chapter 10, verse 23: *'When they persecute you in one town flee to the next, for truly, I say to you, you will not have gone through all the towns of Israel, before the Son of man comes'*. In other words, the concept is that there has to be a covering of the

land with the Gospel, before he will come, and we see the concept here on a much larger scale talking about the Roman Empire as the turning to heresy. From the point of view of the Rabbis, of course faith in the Messiah was the heresy. Therefore this is the view, that R. Nehemiah brings, and Raba supports it, they are connecting that turning to heresy of the whole Kingdom with leprosy. In other words he connects Christianity to leprosy. It's an infection thing, it spreads, and eventually it takes the whole body; that's how Raba looks at it.

Now, that's very interesting, because when we'll get on to the next page, we will see, that the Rabbis think, that the name of the Messiah is 'the leper'. Let me tip you to what we are going to be studying later on this issue, when the Rabbis discuss, what is the name of the Messiah going to be. This section that says that the Messiah is a Leper, is found in the discussion of what the name of the Messiah is. It will come later on page 98 b, and this is how the text reads:

The Rabbis said: His name is 'the leper scholar', as it is written: Surely he had borne our grief and carried our sorrows, yet we did esteem him a leper, a smitten of God and afflicted.

The word for Leper here is **nagua** [stricken], in English translation it is translated as stricken, but the implication is that he was stricken with leprosy, at least in the Biblical Hebrew context. So this quotation, that justified that the name of the Messiah, or one of the names of the Messiah is Leper, is a quotation taken from Isaiah 53, which is, of course, the context of a Messianic prophecy, foretelling the suffering, the death and the atonement, that the Messiah would produce for humanity. So, this section is very important from this point of view, in that it connects Isaiah 53 with the Messiah, and with his name being the leper.

Now we go back to our section, and seeing the significance of this connection of Raba. Raba connects the time of the coming of the Messiah with the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity, and that conversion is describing with terms of contracting leprosy, and yet the Messiah is connected as the leper from Isaiah 53.

So there is a kind of a prophetic cycle, that goes on among the Rabbis, that in a way, plays right into Biblical concept of the Messiah, which is in the New Testament as well, that the Messiah is the Suffering Servant of God, and that He fulfills the prediction of Isaiah 53.

As you might remember, the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts chapter 8 was traveling from Jerusalem after having worshipped in the Temple during the holidays. He was traveling back to Ethiopia on a carriage on the road to Gaza, where probably he would have taken a boat and gone up the Nile-river to Ethiopia. That Ethiopian eunuch had apparently purchased a brand new copy of the scroll of Isaiah. So, he was reading this scroll of Isaiah, when God told Philip the evangelist to go and hitchhike, and join himself to that chariot on the road to Gaza. And Philip of course was hitchhiking, and he caught that chariot, and found the Ethiopian reading in the prophet Isaiah precisely on the page, in the scroll, where the Isaiah 53 today is connected. I say today, because in that time of course they didn't have chapters and verses, and he just happen to be in that section, that we today call Isaiah 53. And the question that the Ethiopian eunuch asked was: who is the prophet speaking about, himself or somebody else?

And that has been the traditional position of the Jewish world, for the last thousand years, they do not want to admit that Isaiah 53 is talking about the Messiah. Of course nobody else in the human history has fulfilled that prediction, as it has been in Yeshua. As you noticed, sometimes I say Jesus, and

sometimes I say Yeshua. His name is Yeshua in Hebrew, and it has the meaning. Jesus is the traditional name that Christians have transliterated from the Greek to European languages, French and English, Spanish... Jesús, Jesus. It's only a transliteration. His real name in Hebrew that has a meaning is Yeshua. And I on purpose sometimes use this name or that name in order to get the listener and the reader used to hearing the name, the way it ought to be pronounced, and that is the name Yeshua. But in order not to make it sound that I am talking about somebody completely different, then I sometimes interlace the name Jesus in the text, so that the connection will be made between Jesus and Yeshua in the mind of the listener or the reader.

But it is very important in my opinion to discern the significance of this prediction of R. Nehemiah. First is the fact that historically it did happen 163 years later after R. Nehemiah's predicted the conversion of the Roman Empire to Christianity. Second Raba's statement to justify that prediction of R. Nehemiah is taken from the section about leprosy in the book of Leviticus. This is very important, and I will continue in the next reading, which an official Rabbinical position, not an individual position, that is taken from this verse, in Deuteronomy 32:36.

Now before I get into this verse a little bit deeper, I would like to say something about Deuteronomy chapter 32, it's also called the song of Moses, not only Exodus chapter 15, which is the song of Moses on the children of Israel saying after they crossed the sea. In this case it is the song of Moses, that Moses tells the people of Israel, before he goes up to the mountain to die there. It is the last song of Moses, he sings basically, his swan song, and it is built on a **riv** pattern [**riv** in Hebrew means judgment or court, court-case]. Moses is adjuring the people of Israel and inviting them to go to court with him, he invites the heavens and the earth to be judges between Israel

and God, and Moses is the chief witness for the prosecution.

'Give ear, O heavens, and I will speak; and let the earth hear the words of my mouth. May my teaching drop as the rain, my speech distill as the dew, as the gentle rain upon the tender grass, and as the showers upon the herb. I will proclaim the name of the Lord. Ascribe greatness to our God!'

God is being brought to trial, he is the complainer, and Israel is being prosecuted. Moses is the witness on the side of God, the heavens and the earth are the judges. And that's how the whole song is enacted, as a court case. So, when you get to the verse that we are talking about, verse 36 in Deutoronomy chapter 32, the context of which is after Israel has made God angry by worshipping other gods, new gods that they knew not, gods that really behind them were demons, as verses 17 and 18 proclaim. And God says in verse 20 that he will hide his face from them, in verse 36 God is declaring, beginning the declaration of the sentence. He has both mercy on them and a verdict of their guilt. And so that's how I am going to start reading from verse 34 to take the context of what the Rabbis are analyzing as the coming of the Messiah, the time of the coming of the Messiah.

'Is it this laid up on store with me, sealed up in my treasuries? Vengeance is mine, and recompense, for the time when their foot shall slip; for the day of their calamity is at hand, and their doom comes swiftly. For the Lord will vindicate his people and have compassion on his servants, when he sees that their power is gone, and there is none remaining, bond or free. Then he will say, Where are their gods, the rock in which they took refuge, who ate the fat of their sacrifices, and drank the wine of their drink offering? Let them rise up and help you let them be your protection!'

The context of course is in verse 36: *'The Lord will*

vindicate his people' and the translation from the Talmudic reading of the Jewish translation of the same passage says: *'For the Lord shall judge his people and repentance of his servants'*. In English translation *'The Lord will vindicate his people and have ocompassion on his servants'*, the original Hebrew is harsher than the English translation of the RSV, but it doesn't make difference for our understanding here. In both cases the people's sin has reached a certain crescendo, a certain level, a high level, and God has two emotions that He has to cope with. One is his justice, his vengeance, his recompense, and the other one is his mercy. And both of these emotions play in the song of Moses and of course in all the prophets. And so the Rabbis read this passage in verse 26: *'The Lord shall judge his people [or vindicate his people] and have compassion'* [or in Hebrew *'...will repent himself of his servants'*]. Two very different translations but either way God at some point say to the people, all right, you have chosen to worship other gods, you've fallen into calamity, into suffering. Now I am going to have compassion on you, and that compassion will have some steps, some stages.

The first stage is that you will be able to see that your power is gone. There will be none-remaining powerful, you will have no one to lean upon, and at that time I will tell you: OK, call upon your gods, the ones that you've been worshipping, let's see who really ate the fat of your sacrifices. The people that you've been offering sacrifices to, the gods that you've been offering sacrifices to, and that you've been giving your devotion to, let's see if they will come and help you. And of course the indication is that when this happens, when all the ropes and all the outlets have gone for Israel, that is the hour, when God is going to intervene, and have compassion upon his children. Just like that.

In this context of the Rabbi's discussion R. Zerra's statement is brought to terminate this discussion. R.

Zerra says: 'When you scholars, Rabbis are engaged in calculating the end times and when you are engaged in discussing of when the Messiah will come, and how he will come, and what will happen in that generation, remember, there are three things, that come unawares, that come by surprise: the Messiah is one of them, a found article, you are walking down the street, you don't expect to find something, op! You find something, and a scorpion, which comes like a thief and by surprise. Therefore, R. Zerra statement seals this discussion by saying, don't worry about what is going to be around and calculate, when the Messiah is coming.

You have to be ready to receive the surprise whenever he comes, and not engage in the speculative discussions about the specifics of the age and the generation in which the Messiah will come, because he will come by surprise. The same thing is what Matthew 24 and many other passages of the New Testament teach. He will come like a thief in at the night, he will come when people least expecting, he will come when people say: peace, peace, he will come when people will be plowing in the field. They won't be ready for the end of the world, as we know it today, they will be preparing for tomorrow, that's why the person goes out in a field and he plows. He hopes that eventually the rain will come and the seed that he will sow will spread and he will be able to harvest. If he knew that it is going to be the end, he wouldn't be plowing, he is plowing because he is expecting the world to continue as it is. And therefore when people are least expecting the Messiah He will come like a scorpion, and like an article that is found in the street. When people are least expecting, that's when the Messiah will come, like a lightening in the sky.

And this seals this portion of the Talmud here and I suggest that we leave it at this time and continue our study next time with a very interesting section. It is the Jewish calendar has a concept of the

Millennium, and actually explains the concept of the Millennium in terms of Biblical interpretation and of the Jewish background to it during the Talmudic Era. I'll end here for this lesson.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 6

by Joseph Shulam

We have been dealing with passages in the Talmud mainly from the tractate Sanhedrin that deals with the messianic concept that the Rabbis had anywhere between the first century BC and fifth century AD. This is the period in which the Talmudic thought and the Talmudic scriptures were collected and edited and compiled together. We are now in Sanhedrin p. 97 a,

dealing with a very interesting passage that basically lays out the background for what Christians call **millennial doctrines**. In the New Testament there is only one chapter in the book of Revelations chapter 20, that deals with this concept of the millennium. And this is how it reads in Revelation 20, John is speaking and he says:

"And I saw an angel come down from heaven, having the key of the bottomless pit and a great chain in his hand. And he laid hold of the dragon, that old serpent which is the Devil and Satan, and bound him a thousand years, And cast him into the bottomless pit, and shut him up, and set a seal upon him, that he should deceive the nations no more, till the thousand years should be fulfilled: and after that he must be loosed a little season. And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them. And I saw the souls of them that were beheaded for the witness of Jesus, and for the word of God, and which had not worshipped the beast, neither his image, neither had received his mark upon their foreheads, or on their hand; and they lived and reigned with Christ a thousand years. But the rest of the dead lived not again until the thousand years were finished. This is the first resurrection, Blessed and holy is he that hath part in the first resurrection: on such the second death hath no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years. And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, Gog and Magog to gather them together to battle; the number of whom is as the sand of the sea."

This is all that we know of the doctrine of the millennium in the New Testament, where it is explicitly written in the Bible concerning a thousand years. Now the question that comes to mind is where does this teaching come from and how does it fit into the general scheme of Biblical thinking. There is not

much in the New Testament itself or in other Christian literature that is early enough for it to have a bearing on New Testament interpretation. But we do have this teaching in the Jewish literature, that we are going to actually read today and try to understand in light of it's background, and that will put some light on how we should treat the passage that we just read from chapter 20 of the book of Revelation. We are reading from Sanhedrin, Babylonian Talmud p. 97 a.

R. Kattinna said: Six thousand years shall the world exist, and one [thousand, the seventh], it shall be desolate, as it is written, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day. [quotation from Isaiah chapter 2 verse 11]. Abaye said: It will be desolate two thousand as it is said, After two days will he revive us: in the third day, he will raise us up, and we shall live in his sight [quoting from the prophet Hosea chapter 6 verse 2]. Two days meaning two thousand years according to Psalms 90 verse 4 which is quoted below.

It has being taught in accordance with R. Kattina: Just as the seventh year is one year of release in seven, so is the world: one thousand years out of seven shall be fallow, as it is written, And the Lord alone shall be exalted in that day; and it is further said, A Psalm, a song for the Sabbath day, [quoting from Psalm 90, which is dedicated to be a song for the Sabbath day], meaning the day that is altogether Sabbath- and it is also said, For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.

A day is again explained in the same Psalm in verse 4, as a thousand years. So Psalms 90, that is read every Sabbath in every Synagogue is interpreted by Abaye and by the Talmud itself as a period of thousand year reign. The thing that we need to notice here is that the whole scheme of this thousand-year reign is taken from the Creation story. The world was created in six days, and the seventh day God rested, so the whole of

history is seen on the scheme of a week: six days, and a seventh day of rest. If you take the Creation story that took the six days and you interpret it according to Psalms 90, that a day is a thousand years, you've got history in the perspective of six thousand years, and some kind of para history in the seventh thousand year, which is a day that the Lord alone will be exalted. In Jewish literature and the Jewish prayer book there is mention of a day that will be wholly Sabbath, that is it will be like the Sabbath. There will not be any toil, will not be work, nor will there be anger, or disease. It will be a day of divine, heavenly rest for humanity, because the Lord rested on the seventh day. So the seventh thousand years after a period of six thousand years according to this scheme, will be a thousand years of rest. I am going to come back to this passage in a minute, but first I am going to continue the Talmudic passage, and then go back to Revelation to try to understand how the two relate to each other.

To quote again from the psalm *a song for the Sabbath day*, meaning the day, that is altogether a Sabbath, a day that is a period of complete desolation. It means that there is no new creation but rest. As it is also said, *For a thousand years in my sight are but as yesterday when it is past*. This is the quotation from psalm 90 again, justifying the view, that a day is a thousand years. The Talmud brings in another passage, an earlier passage, attributed to the Tanna debe Eliyahu, which is a Talmudic source that has a lot of Midrashic material, and has some attribution to the prophet Elisha, that is Talmudic in nature. And this is what Tanna debe Eliyahu says.

The Tanna debe Eliyahu teaches: The world is to exist six thousand years. In the first two thousand there was desolation; desolation here - *Tohu vaVohu*, meaning like what was in the world before the six days of creation - topsy turvy, and so the world be desolate for two thousand years. Rabbis interpret this in this way: no Torah. It is a tradition that Abraham was 52

years old when he began to convert men to worship the one true God. From Adam until then two thousand years elapsed, according to Jewish tradition. So the first two thousand years there was before the government of the Law, before the giving of the Law on mount Sinai, before man knew that there is one true God, Creator of heaven and earth. Two thousand years the Torah will flourish, the second two thousand years meaning - it will be a period of the Mosaic Law. From Abraham's 52nd year until 172 years after the destruction of the second Temple. This does not mean that the Torah would cease there after, according to the Talmud, but it means merely to distinguish from the next era. That's the Rabbinical comment that is made to interpret these passages: two thousand years the Torah will flourish, and the next two thousand years, according to the Talmud is the Messianic era. The Messiah will come within that period, and will set up his Kingdom and reign during these next two thousand years that is called the Messianic era. But through our many iniquities all these years have been lost, the Talmud adds. In other words the Messiah should have come at end of the four thousand years from the time of creation, but because we were so sinful the Talmud adds, he didn't show up, he didn't come, and all these years according to the Tanna debe Eliyahu were lost for us and wasn't really fulfilled. And that is a very interesting attitude that we need to examine more closely.

Let's go back and talk a little bit more about this concept of world history in the scheme of a week, the scheme of the Sabbath. Creation is not seen by the Jewish Rabbis as only an act of nature. It is seen as a cosmic event, that the Creator of all universe, not only of the earth, the creator of the sun, of the moon and all the stars has a plan, has a scheme, in which, for whatever reason, he needed to create our world. And the world was created in six days and on the seventh day he stops creating and rests. The same thing is true with all of history, there is the micro and the macro. In the micro it was the garden of

Eden, in the macro we are talking about all the world. In the way God commanded the children of Israel to rest on the seventh day there is the scheme of seven, a scheme of the number seven. Every seven years the land should lay fallow, it is a Sabbatical year. Seven times seven, the fiftieth year is the year of jubilee, there is freeing of the prisoners and freeing of the debts, and freeing of the land that was sold. It is a year of favor to the Lord, that is to free all of God's people and to return everything to it's former state, this is a year of jubilee. That is the way the Rabbis looked at all of creation, at all of history, that it goes by scheme of seven. And if it goes by scheme of seven, and if one looks at this passage from psalm 90 to mean that a thousand years is one day in the eyes of the Lord, therefore if it says seven days it means seven thousand years the world will exist. But then what happens with this day, that is a Sabbath day, the last day in these seven thousand years? Is there a change in the system that the world functions on, like the way there is a change on the Sabbath day that you stop working, or like in the Sabbatical year that you stop working, that you leave the land desolate, you don't labor in it. In that year God provides for you like he did when he fed the children of Israel with manna in the wilderness. Six days they collected manna, and if they collected, let's say on Wednesday, double manna, the manna rotted and got worms in it, and then it was uneatable, but if they collected on the Friday the same manna, on Saturday they didn't collect, the manna remains good and no worms attacked the manna on the seventh day. So there is something supernatural in the scheme that the Rabbis are looking into, to understand and to find the relationship between the creation and history. And out of that scheme they devised different methods and arguments, like the arguing between Rabbi Kattina and Abaye, whether it is one thousand years, or two thousand years, each one bringing a different passage from the prophets to justify his argument.

So, after the argument of R. Kattina and R. Abaye they bring in another opinion of R. Kattina that the seventh thousand year is a Sabbath day, and they bring it from the psalm 90 meaning *A Psalm a song for the Sabbath day* here, and in the same psalm they find the reason, why Sabbath day is not just a regular one day Sabbath at the end of every week, but a thousand years, because in the very same psalm it says, *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.* For a thousand years is like one day, like yesterday. And therefore, connecting the two things that come from psalm 90, the Rabbis could reason out that the seventh thousand year period will be a period of release, a period of desolation in the meaning that there will be no new things created and there will be no new laws but God will rest and the saints will have that rest. We find this rest in the book of Hebrews chapter 3 and chapter 4. Here we have a midrash on psalm 95 and in the context of this midrash the writer is also using the word day as the eternal Sabbath day. Hebrews chapter 4: *"Let us therefore fear, lest, while a promise being left us of entering into His rest, any of you should seem to come short of it."* Notice that the promise is that we would enter into his rest. Verse 2: *"For unto us was the gospel preached, as well as unto them: but the word preached did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in them that heard it. For we which have believed do enter into rest, as he said, As I have sworn in my wrath, if they shall enter into my rest: although the works were finished from the foundation of the world."* In other words, these works, that God had prepared in the creation of the world were already finished before the creation, in the foundation of the world. In other words this plan that the world will exist, that at the end of the world there will be a period of rest that the saints will enter is something that always was God's plan, according to verse 3 of Hebrews 4.

Hebrews chapter 4 verse 4 now:

"For he spake in a certain place of the seventh day on this wise, And God did rest on the seventh day from all his works." Again referring to the act of creation and the resting of God on the seventh day in verse 5: " And in this place again, 'If they shall enter into my rest' [meaning psalm 95] Seeing therefore it remaineth that some should enter thereinto, and they to whom the good tidings were before preached failed to enter in because of disobedience, he again defineth a certain day, To-day, saying in David so long a time afterward (even as hath been said before), To-day if ye shall hear his voice, Harden not your hearts. For if Joshua had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. There remaineth therefore a sabbath rest for the people of God."

It is a scheme, that the writer of the book of Hebrews has from Psalm 95 and the story of creation, and basically it says, if psalm 95 that was written by David a long time after creation still promises another rest, therefore this is not the rest, that is promised by the Law of Moses in the Torah. It is another rest, that is spoken of in the act of creation. It is an eschatological, an end's time rest, that we are still waiting for. That they didn't enter during the time of Joshua, when they entered the Land. They didn't enter into that ultimate rest, that God had promised. Because if they had entered, then there would be no promise by David, no need for David to promise, they would already have possessed this rest. But since David many years later after Joshua still promises a rest, they must be waiting for this rest, that is the future rest that is to come. It is the same scheme, that we see with the Talmudic Rabbis. In other words there is an act of creation and there is the seventh day of creation, in which God rested, which is the commandment by the law of Moses, but there is another rest, an end time rest. The rest that we dealing with is a day that is completely rest, the way the Talmud says a thousand years of that

rest.

Now, it is important to see the scheme, because I think that the scheme is a quasi historical scheme, taken from the act of creation. And now we'll return to the passage of Tanna debe Eliyyahu.

Tanna debe Eliyyahu says that the world will exist six thousand years. Two thousand years there will be desolation, *Tohu vaBohu* or topsy turvy or whatever language the book of Genesis is interpreted in. In verse two it says: "*Ve eretz haita Tohu vaVohu.*" [The world was topsy turvy or in chaos.] And so the first two thousand years there will be chaos. Why chaos? No Torah, before the giving of the Law. And of course it is the generation of the flood that destroyed all life - *Tohu vaVohu*. It was the generation of the tower of Babel before Abraham - *Tohu vaVohu*. Man was confused by God, by given them different languages, different tongues, and therefore it's *Tohu vaVohu* - chaos. In the next two thousand years the Torah will reign, Mosaic Law will flourish, and men would live under the Torah, no *Tohu vaVohu*, the Torah brings order into creation. The third era, Tanna debe Eliyyahu says is the Messianic Era.

Now it is interesting to notice, what is today's date, the Jewish date today is 5757 years. That means, that according to the Jewish calendar, which by the way the scientists under Rabbis and everybody admits, there two hundred years in the Jewish calendar that are lost between the period of Esra and Nehemiah and the first Jewish tradition and literature that resurrects during the Hellenistic period. These two hundred years are lost in the Jewish calendar, nobody knows much about then, what happens with the Jews in the Land, there is no record of it and no Rabbinical tradition about it. And therefore it is generally added this 200 years of Jewish history, a kind of dark ages in Jewish history that are added to the calendar, which would mean that today we are in 5957 years, close to the end

of 6000 years. Which, if you take away 1957 years, it brings you back to the first century, to about precisely the time that Yeshua lived and walked in this Land, was crucified in Jerusalem by Romans and on the third day rose from the dead and forty days later ascended to be with his father in heaven.

So this scheme of Tanna debe Eliyyahu is very interesting, extremely interesting. It says that the last two thousand years are the Messianic era. Now we are in 1997 years in the Gentile Christian Western calendar, which means, that according to Tanna debe Eliyyahu we are living in the Messianic era right now. But the Talmud, written by rabbis that lived in Babylon during the Byzantien reign, say, that's true, Tanna debe Eliyahu does say that the last two thousand years are the Messianic era, but through our many iniquities all these years have been lost. In other words it didn't get fulfilled because we were so sinful, the years were lost as far as we are concerned because of our sin and because of our iniquity. But for us, who know the Messiah, that He is Yeshua, the Son of David, that we call in English Jesus of Nazareth, we know that the years were not lost. God kept his promise, and the last two thousand years have been the Messianic era. Israel was in the Diaspora and didn't enjoy the presence and the guidance of the Messiah, but for those of us, who know him, we know that they are the Messianic era.

Now let's go back to the book of Revelation and see if we can decide a little bit more of what the writer of the Book of Revelation is trying to tell us. If we take this seven thousand years idea with the last thousand years being the Sabbath, then we see that the writer of the book of Revelation is using this thousand year idea, that Satan will be bound, of course he will be bound because it is a day of rest, it is a year of rest, thousand years of rest, of Sabbath. So Satan will be bound and during the time that Satan, the serpent, the dragon, the Devil, (all the names are found in the chapter 20 verse 2) will be

bound during this thousand years, cast into a pit, and chained in that pit, so he could no longer deceived the nations, until the thousand years are fulfilled, and then he will be loosed for a season. But there will be a final end to him, after that brief season. This thousand year era is equivalent to the Sabbath day. Creation six thousand years, there will be six periods of a thousand years, as you can see in the story of creation, and in the seventh thousand year era Satan is bound. He will not deceive the nations.

When the thousand, the Sabbath is over, *motzey Shabbat*, at the end of the Sabbath, he will deceive the nations again for a season, he will be loose for a little season, but immediately after that will come the judgment. Verse 4 in Revelation 20: "*And I saw thrones, and they sat upon them, and judgment was given unto them ...*" Who is he talking about? He is talking about the apostles, referring again by allusion to psalm 122, that he says *I saw in Jerusalem the tribes sitting on the throne of David, on the thrones of David to judge the nations.* And here of course are the apostles, the twelve apostles like the twelve tribes, they are sitting on the thrones of David and they are proclaiming judgment. The first judgment that they are proclaiming are for those who are martyrs, those who were beheaded, and suffered as witnesses of Jesus and for the word of God and have not worshipped the beast.

Now after the Sabbath comes the judgment. There is a Sabbath day and then the judgment, and of course in order for the judgment take place, the Sabbath is also a day of resurrection, it's a day in which the soul is revived, and life is revived. And therefore the writer takes it the context of the Sabbath and says, Sabbath in a day of revival, a day of coming back to life, but only for the saints. The saints will come back to life, the others are waiting for the judgment day, the second resurrection, which is resurrection of

everybody else, in order to be able to stand in the judgment. And verse 7: " *And when the thousand years are expired, Satan shall be loosed out of his prison, and shall go out to deceive the nations which are in the four quarters of the earth, and Gog and Magog*" the writer of the book of Revelation puts it again in the context of eschatological war called Gog and Magog, taken from the prophet Ezekiel. The apostle John is referring to Gog and Magog taken from Ezekiel as an eschatological war that will take place after Satan will be loosed, after the Sabbath day, and he will try to devour the saints, devour the earth but will fail in that war, he will loose that war, and it will be an end for the beast and the false prophet.

Verse 10 of chapter 20 says: And the devil that deceived them was cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, where the beast and the false prophet are, and shall be tormented day and night forever and ever." In other words, it is like Pharaoh and his armies when they came out of Egypt and drowned in the Red sea. So the writer of the book of Revelation takes that scheme and joins it with what will happened at the end of slavery. Satan and all the evil of the world will be cast into the sea of fire like Pharaoh and his army, and they will suffer in that sea of fire for ever and ever, which is taken of course from Daniel chapter 12. There it tells of what's going to happen after the resurrection from the dead of everybody that died. "All those that sleep in the earth owill wake up, and the righteous will go to eternal bliss and the evil will go to eternal damnation." Put together these schemes from the Bible, the creation of the world, the Sabbath day, which includes the Sabbatical year and the year of Jubilee, and the whole cycle of sevens, together with the story of Exodus from Egypt, put together all these things, draw this picture in light of the concept that the world would exist for seven thousand years, and in the seventh thousand years there would be an era wholly Sabbatic.

All these things taken, as we've seen from the Jewish context of our faith, and from the book of Revelation reaffirms and reassures that context. The question is do we take it as a literal a historical scheme, or as a way of interpreting the program that God has for history. Either way we can not deny what the text says, neither can we deny the Jewish background from which it comes. The book of Revelation doesn't give us the idea that the thousand year is that Sabbatical year that is taken from the pattern of creation. Putting them together I think the picture becomes so much more clearer, where the ideas of the book of Revelation relate to their Jewish background and how we should interpret them in light of the Sabbath and the creation story.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 7

by Joseph Shulam

We are in lesson number seven of a series called the Messiah in the Talmud. We are dealing with passages in the Talmud that deal with the Messiah. We are in a very big block of texts, that deals with the Messiah, that stretches between Sanhedrin p.96 to p.105. And presently, we are dealing with p.97 b of the tractate Sanhedrin in the Babylonian Talmud. In the last lesson we dealt with a number of passages that deal with the time of the coming of the Messiah and deal with the concept of history being patterned after the week of creation. In other words all of history is compared to seven days, where each day is considered a thousand years, and the seventh day is suppose to be the millennial rest, a millennial Sabbath. And we are continuing dealing with the same concept on this page, reading from p.97 b tractate Sanhedrin.

Elijah said to Rab Judah, the brother of R. Salla the Pious: 'The world shall exist not less than eighty five jubilees, and in the last jubilee the son of David will come.' He asked him, 'At the beginning or at the end?'- He replied, ' I don't know.' 'Shall [this period] be completed or not?' - ' I do not know,' he answered. R. Ashi said: He spoke thus to him, 'Before that, do not expect him; afterwards thou mayest await him.'

In other words this section that we are dealing with is still dealing with the same topic, and that is, when the Messiah is going to come. Here it presents a concept that the world will exist no less then 85

jubilees, that is 4250 years, because each jubilee is 50 years. So he says that the world will exist no less than 85 jubilees. And in the last jubilee the Messiah will come, and the question that is asked here by R. Judah is, will the Messiah come at the beginning of the last jubilee or at the end of that jubilee, but Elijah doesn't know. This citation is a *Baraita*, that is it comes from outside the Mishnah and is an ancient tannaitic source. The section leaves the rabbis hanging. It gives similar date as the previous discussions. But now the time period is not based on the week, but rather it is based on the jubilees. Each jubilee is 50 years, and therefore 85 jubilees is 4250 years, and at the end of that time the Messiah will come.

Now, it is still within the same time frame. In the discussion of last week we had 2000 *Tohu VaVohu* or *Topsy Turvy*, disorder before the Torah was given, 2000 years the Torah will flourish and then the last 2000 years of the six there are going to be the Messianic era. And that means that Messiah was suppose to come at approximately 4000 years, according to the Jewish calendar. 85 jubilees is still within the same ball park, because it is 4250 years. The Jewish calendar today stands at 5757 years. So however you look at it from the Talmudic point of view, the Talmudic Rabbis still considered that the Messiah should have come about 1750 years ago, or about 2000 years ago around the year 4000, according to the Jewish calendar, but the Messiah didn't come.

R. Ashi retorts to this discussion. R. Ashi is an Amora, a Talmudic rabbi from the fourth century. This discussion basically says: 'Before that day do not expect him to come, but after that day, in the last jubilee, or in the 85th jubilee then you have to wait for him every day and be ready for his coming.'

We are continuing the reading of the Talmud. R. Hanan b. Tahlifa sent [word] to R. Joseph: I once met a man who possessed a scroll written in Hebrew in

Assyrian characters. I have to stop here to explain a little bit what is going on. The Hebrew text that we have today in the Bible and the way we write Hebrew today is the Assyrian character. The Assyrian characters are the square letters of the Hebrew alphabet. The characters that our forefathers used in the first Temple period is called the Canaanite character. The Canaanite characters are very different from what we read today. The average Israeli, I would say the 99.9% of all Jews can not read the ancient script, that was written in the first Temple period. Only paleontologists and archeologists, who have studied this can read it. Biblical scholars can't read it, they don't learn how to read the ancient Hebrew text, which is basically found in archeological evidence and in ancient scriptures and very little in the Dead Sea scrolls. Mainly the tetragramaton, the Holy name of God in some of the Dead Sea scrolls is still preserved in the ancient Hebrew Canaanite character. So R. Hanan b. Tahlifa is telling the story to R. Joseph, saying: I once met a man who possessed a scroll written in Hebrew in Assyrian characters [that means in the square character of the letters similar to the way they are today]. I said to him: 'Whence has this come to thee?' [how did you find this scroll another words]. He replied, 'I hired myself as a mercenary in the Roman army, and found it amongst the Roman archives. In it is stated that four thousand, two hundred and thirty-one years after the creation the world will be orphaned. [As to the years following,] some of them will be spent in the war of the great sea monsters, and some in the war of Gog and Magog, and the remaining [period] will be the Messianic era, whilst the Holy One, blessed be He, will renew his world only after seven thousand years.' R. Aha the son of Raba said: The statement was after five thousand years.

This is an interesting discussion. It has many many historical interests in this discussion. You have two rabbis discussing the coming of the Messiah, and they

bring a story that some guy found in the Roman archives a Hebrew manuscript, most likely from the second Temple period, written in Assyrian script. And in that Hebrew manuscript there was a mention that the Messiah will come again after 4230 years, fitting very much the picture of the previous Baraita, that talked about 4250 years, and in the last jubilee. So we are still dealing with the last jubilee according to this opinion of when the Messiah will come, and they are bringing the support to that position from a manuscript found in the Roman archives in the Hebrew language.

And of itself that's interesting, because we know that the Roman army after sacking Jerusalem at 70 AD took from the Temple its implements and many of its documents and in fact scholars have been discovering ancient documents in the Roman archives that are saved by the Catholic Church until this day. And there are still thousands and thousands of Hebrew manuscripts that have not been either shown or revealed by the Catholic Church to anyone. But now they are doing it *tipin-tipin* slowly slowly, drop by drop that they are revealing what kind of documents they have. In that connection in 1988 I myself found a manuscript in the palace of the Escorial in Spain, that used to be the palace of king Philip the second of Spain. They had a fabulous library of manuscripts. And I asked the curator priest, a Catholic priest if they have any Hebrew manuscripts, and immediately he took me to a glass case in which there was a wonderful manuscript of the Bible, an illuminated manuscript with wonderful paintings, and I asked if he has any other interesting manuscripts in Hebrew? And he says: Yes, they have many, and he locked me in a room, and after few minutes he brought three big handwritten manuscripts. And I opened them, they were written on vellum, by hand, in beautiful Hebrew text, very legible. And when I opened the first one, I almost fainted. It was called: 'The Book of the Wisdom of God', and was dedicated to the bishop of Toledo, Spain, written in 1472, twenty years before

the expulsion of the Jews from Spain. It was written by a Jew, obviously a very very learned rabbinical student, in Hebrew, and title was 'The Book of the Wisdom of God', but the dedication was: to our Lord Yeshua HaMashiah. And it was an explanation from strictly Jewish sources, without one quotation from the New Testament, why Yeshua is the Mashiah. And I asked permission from the priest to publish this manuscript, and he says to come the next day, and when I came the next day, I received a microfiche of the whole manuscript, which I have until today, and a written permission to publish this manuscript. It was totally unknown and unpublished before. I still have it, the only thing is I don't have is the time and money to sit and go over it and translate it and publish it. And so there are literally hundreds of thousands of manuscripts within the possession of Catholic Church in Hebrew.

And this Talmudic passage, written sometime in the fourth or fifth century reflects this reality, that in the archives in Rome there were Hebrew manuscripts, dealing with the coming of the Messiah. The Talmud preserves this truth, and records that there was this manuscript found, in which it said that the Messiah will come at 4231 years after the creation of the world, and that at the coming of the Messiah the concept is that there will be a great mythological war against the sea monsters, and the war of Gog and Magog, and then, after these wars there will be the Messianic era. In other words this manuscript holds, if we put it in the framework of Christian theology, the coming of the Messiah, a great war, mythological war of sea monsters and Gog and Magog, and then the blessing of the Messianic era. One would say it is a post tribulation theology. The Messianic era will take place and then the world will be renewed after 7000 years. The Messianic era will start at 4231 years, but the world renewed, new heavens and new earth the way the prophet Isaiah describes it and the book of Revelation describes it, only after the seventh thousand year period. These rabbis don't see

a millennium here, they see a millennium of almost two thousand years, not of one thousand years, that's then an opinion we have already seen in previous sections that we have studied.

R. Aha, a later Babylonian scholar comes, and says: 'The statement was after five thousand years, not after seven thousand years.' A correction of the opinion by later Babylonian rabbi, that it is not after seven thousand years that the world will be renewed, but only after five thousand years. Well, we know that R. Aha was wrong because our calendar already reads 5757.

We continuing the reading from the same page. It has been taught; R. Nathan said: This verse pierces and descends to the very abyss, speaking of a verse taken from Habakkuk, chapter 2 verse 3. It is a very important passage of we deal with, and just as informative in Jewish thinking about the Messiah, and especially in Maimonides' concept of the Messiah. We are going to analyze it in a minute, but let's read how the Talmud quotes this verse from Habakkuk chapter 2. This is how the Jewish translation translates this passage "*For the vision is yet for an appointed time, but at the end it shall speak, and not lie: though he tarry, wait for him; because it will surely come, it will not tarry*". I am going to read this passage one more time, so that you will see the confusion in the grammar, that this translation reflects from the Hebrew text. *For the vision is yet for an appointed time.* The subject is the vision, *but at the end it shall speak, and not lie:* Who shall speak and not lie? the vision; *though he tarry, wait for him;* So the subject has changed in the middle of the thought. You would think, that the subject is still the vision, but at this point the subject is in the singular masculine pronoun - he, not it. *though he tarry, wait for him. Because it will surely come.* Again there is exchange between he and it, *because it will surely come, it will not tarry.* So there is change of pronounce between a neuter it to a

masculine he in the middle of the verse [\[YK1\]](#). Continuing reading the Talmudic passage: 'Not as our Masters, who interpreted the verse, *until a time and times and the dividing of the time.*'

In other words time and another time and a divided time, that's how they are translated here from Daniel chapter 7, verse 25, the last three and a half years of the Daniel's vision. The Talmud brings this verse from R. Nathan, from Habakkuk, and then it rejects the opinion of the Masters, meaning the great rabbis, who interpreted the verse, the verse of Habakkuk in light of Daniel chapter 7 verse 25. nor as R. Simlai who expounded, *Thou feedest them with the bread of tears; and givest them tears to drink a third time;* not as R. Akiba who expounded, *Yet once, it is a little while, and I will shake the heavens, and the earth:* taken from the Haggai chapter 2 verse 6. You have three verses, brought by different rabbis, or different groups of rabbis, in fact in different periods of time. Where each one of these verses says or seems to indicate a time in which the Messiah would come. So you've got the first verse, taken from Habakkuk chapter 2, the second verse taken from Daniel chapter 7 verse 25, and the third verse taken from Haggai chapter 2 verse 6.

We come back to these verses. R. Akiba's opinion based on the passage in Haggai is: the first dynasty [sc. The Hasmonean] shall last seventy years, the second dynasty [the Herodian], fifty-two, and the reign of Bar-Koziba two and a half years. This is what the Talmud presents as R. Akiba's vision of when the Messiah will come. Why is that vision relevant. Because R. Akiba is the one who appointed and anointed Bar Koziba, but today we call him Bar Kohba, as the Messiah. The great revolt that failed during the days of the Roman Caesar Hadrian A.D. 135, and lasted for three years approximately. In A.D. 135, R. Akiba and nine other great rabbis, that supported that revolt, were executed, crucified in fact, by the Romans. And Bar Koziba's revolt brought

a great calamity, Jerusalem was totally destroyed by Hadrian. By totally I mean that every single building was flattened, was plowed under, scattered with soil over it, and then a new city built on top of the mound that used to be Jerusalem. And the name of that city was Aolia Kapitolina. Hedrian tried to change, to erase the name Jerusalem from a map. Today of course nobody knows what Aolia Kapitolina means, hardly anybody has ever heard of Aolia Kapitolina, except archeologists and historians. But Jerusalem is still here! We are living in Jerusalem right now, looking right out of the window at the Parliament, at the High Court being rebuilt. Nobody heard of Hadrian, very few of Bar Kochba, but everybody knows Jerusalem, and Jesus Christ, the Messiah.

Well these historical notes are not so important, but it's important to see these three verses, dealing with the coming of the Messiah, the disagreement between the rabbis about the interpretation of these verses, and R. Akiba's opinion, that he is interpreting this verse from Haggai as three periods, and that's how he is interpreting: *Yet once*, for R. Akiba means the Hasmonean dynasty, *it is a little while*, the Herodian dynasty, that lasted for 52 years, according to this Talmudic passage, and then the short reign of Bar Kochba, Bar Koziba in the Talmudic spelling, which is the right spelling. Today we know that he signed his name Bar Koziba, because we have found his letters in the Dead Sea area, and we have his handwriting and his signature. So we know that his real name was not Bar Kochba, which means the son of a star, but Bar Koziba, which means a son of a lie, and of course history has proved, that both R. Akiba and Bar Koziba were false, when they appointed him as Messiah, and brought a terrible, horrible calamity on the nation of Israel, that caused most of the Jewish people to be cast out to be thrown out of the Land of Israel, of Judea, and from Jerusalem. At that time the center of Jewish learning moved to the Galilee, and than from the Galilee it moved to Babylon, and it hasn't come back yet to Jerusalem. Most of Jewish learning today is in

United States of America, and not in Jerusalem. Slowly slowly it might return to Jerusalem, but it's not at this time in Jerusalem.

But let me return back to the first opinion of R. Nathan, and analyze this opinion in greater depth. R. Nathan's opinion taken from Habakkuk, chapter 2 vs. 3. Basically what does it say? It says, that in our promises there is a vision *od hason lamoed* in Hebrew. There is a time for the vision, there is an appointed time. It shall not lie, it shall speak at the end. Our task is to wait for him, to wait and not to give up, wait and continue waiting. Because he will come and he will not tarry. Why? There is an appointed time, we don't know the time, but our task is to wait. A very Maimonides like, amillennial position of R. Nathan. Amillennial position that the task of the believer is not to give up, and not to lose hope, but to wait, to be ready.

The second position that our Masters, our Rabbis held to, was interpreted from the verse in Daniel chapter 7, verse 25, a time times and a divided times. In other words a period of three and a half years, and in other words there is set time, and we need to wait for that time, but not to be anxious, or be anxious before that three and a half years comes. Many of the premillennial Christians today in the world are living under that illusion, that there certain events that have to take place in history before the coming of the Messiah, therefore we have time, and these events haven't taken place, and there is time to watch and see for the signs, that are suppose to be fulfilled before he is coming.

R. Akiba's position is that the Messiah is coming in his own day, and in fact he is here according to his position meaning Bar Kochba, but we know that that position didn't pan out in history. The discussion itself is interesting in the use of these verses and their interpretation in light of the coming of the Messiah. I am going to continue reading one more

passage from the Talmud on the same page. The Talmud asks. What is meant by '*but at the end it shall speak and not lie?*' dealing with the passage from Habakkuk, '*at the end it shall speak*', means the vision, '*and not lie?*'-

R. Samuel b. Nahmani said in the name of R. Jonathan: Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end. Quite a harsh statement: Blasted be the bones of those who calculate the end. It is a curse on all those who engaged themselves to end time speculations. The Talmud continues after this curse, saying, for they would say, since the predetermined time has arrived, and yet he has not come, he will never come. The Talmud here predicts what would happen to these calculators of the end, to these people who engaged themselves with these speculative doctrines of the end time. The same speculation that bring division and hatred among Christians and among believers. It says, what is going to happen when you set a time and you say, the Messiah is going to come at this time, because I have calculated it from Daniel or from Revelation or from Habakkuk or from Haggai or from Isaiah, and you are only dealing with your own interpretation, when you set such times and they don't pan out, it destroys people's faith. This has happened more than once in Christian history, it destroys people's faith and they give up totally on the coming of the Messiah. And the Talmud predicts that this is what would to happen when they teach these doctrines and it doesn't turn out the way they taught it. Then they cause the people to despair, and they say, OK well since it didn't come as we thought it would or as we have been taught then he will never come.

But it is not so, the Talmud repeats, wait for him, as it is written, *Though he tarry, wait for him*. Don't give up on his coming. Should you say, the Talmud continues, *We look forward [to his coming] but He does not: therefore Scripture says, And therefore will the Lord wait, that he may be gracious unto you, and*

therefore will he be exalted, that he may have mercy upon you. This quotation is taken from Isaiah chapter 30 verse 18 and reflects the Talmudic opinion, that you should wait, and that God himself is waiting for the advent of the Messiah. Why is God waiting, he is waiting because of his mercy, so he may be gracious unto you, so that he may have a chance to show his mercy to you. The passage taken here is very very encouraging. In the New Testament Jesus taught the same thing. He said the Messiah may tarry, so more people can hear the Gospel, change their lives, walk in the light and be saved, because if he comes right now, most of the world is still in unbelief, still in disobedience and in rebellion to God. So he is giving humanity a chance, he himself is waiting to come, and he is giving humanity a chance to change, to do the work of evangelism, to do the work of what the rabbis called *ha-tikun ha-gadol* the great repair job, that humanity is waiting for and needs so badly, for it's spiritual disorder, moral disorder, social disorder, and that's why God is tarrying from bringing the advent of the Messiah.

We continuing reading. But since we look forward to it, and *He* does likewise, what delays [his coming]? In other words we are waiting for him, he is waiting to come, but still he has not come and his coming is delayed. It says - The Attribute of Justice delays it. The attribute of Justice is one of the main attributes of God. God has two main attributes - Justice and Mercy. And God balances these attributes in history. Jesus is the Attribute of Mercy, and he had to die because of God's Justice. That's what the book of Romans explains to us in chapter five. Because God's attribute of Justice could not go unsatisfied, it is a part of his character. Therefore God's attitude towards humanity is a balance of his love, his mercy and his desire for truth and justice. And in Jesus Christ these two aspects join together as John chapter 1 verse 17 describes it, saying "the law was given through Moses, but truth and grace was given through Jesus Christ." Truth and

grace, truth is the attribute of justice, which is absolute, and grace is the attribute of the love and charity of God that says, that the absolute can survive without compromise of its truth righteousness and justice. Jesus paid for us, so that we can receive grace. So the Talmud says, what delays the coming of the Messiah? - God's Attribute of Justice, simply because we are not worthy at this time to be saved, and God doesn't want to dam us, so he tempers that attribute of justice by waiting until we respond to his grace. Continuing reading. But since the Attribute of Justice delays it, why do we wait for it? The answer - To be rewarded for hoping, for believing, as it is written, *blessed are all they that wait for him*. A quotation from the same passage in Isaiah chapter 30 verse 18. And now we wait for him so that we will be blessed.

[YK1] How can this be Hebrew does not have a neuter gender?

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 8

by Joseph Shulam

We are in lesson number 8 of studies on the Messiah in the Talmud. We are kind of ploughing through the tractate Sanhedrin in the Babylonian Talmud between pages 96 to 105, and right now we are in page 98a at the bottom of the page dealing with the statement of R. Johanan, who said: "The son of David will come only in a generation that is either altogether righteous or altogether wicked. 'In a generation that is

altogether righteous,' - as it is written, *Thy people also shall be all righteous: they shall inherit the land for ever.*" This is a quotation from Isaiah chapter 60 verse 21 and the implication is that the people will inherit the Land forever when they will be righteous.

Continuing the reading from the Talmud: 'Or altogether wicked,' - as it is written, *And he saw that there was no man and wondered that there was no intercessor;* (This quotation is taken from Isaiah 59:16, all from the same section in the prophet Isaiah) and it is [elsewhere] written, *For my own sake, even for mine own sake will I do it* (taken from Isaiah chapter 48 verse 11).

When the Talmudic scholars were discussing the coming of the Messiah they found promises of his coming in both set of circumstances. In the circumstance where the people were deserving his coming, because of their righteousness, or in the circumstance where they were so wicked and so evil that God finally will intervene to stop the wickedness by the coming of the Messiah. Bringing these two possibilities into focus they decided that the coming of the Messiah could be in either case. In the case of the generation that is altogether righteousness, when the people are doing the will of God and there for they deserve the redemption of the Messiah and his coming, or that the people will be wicked and they deserved the Messiah's coming in order to pronounce judgment on the wicked. As we know also from the New Testament the coming of the Messiah brings salvation to the faithful, but it is also, at the same time bring condemnation to the wicked that don't believe God. Actually in John chapter 3 verses 18 and 36 we are told that the world is already condemned, and therefore the Messiah is coming to bring salvation to the faithful, but at the same time, those that refused that salvation are condemned already.

It is very interesting that in our own time the first

chief rabbi of Israel R. Kook, who was a great man with deep love for the people of Israel, and for the Land of Israel, said that our generation, the generation of the people that established the state of Israel, was the generation of the coming of the Messiah, because we are such a generation that is both altogether wicked and altogether righteous at the same time. We are wicked because we have left the ways of our forefathers, we became a secular state, a secular people by in large, not religious. Still the majority of Israel is not religious, in spite of the fact that the number of the religious people has increased dramatically in these last few years, but by in large the majority of the people of Israel are still secular, and therefore they don't keep the Law, they don't keep the commandments, they don't keep the Sabbath, and they basically do what they want to do. Their morality is rampant, in cities like Tel-Aviv sometimes it is hard to find a kosher restaurant, it's so secular. So it is basically a wicked generation, from that point of view. But it is also altogether righteous, because this generation has come to the Land of Israel and has the privilege of rebuilding the Land. So R. Kook's view was that when the Talmud says that the son of David will come in a generation that is either altogether righteous or altogether wicked, R. Kook's thinking was that our generation is both altogether righteous and altogether wicked, and therefore it is very likely that we are the generation that in his language, "We are hearing the footsteps of the Messiah" in our generation.

We will now continue reading on page 98a. R. Alexanderi said: R. Joshua b. Levi pointed out a contradiction. It is written, *in its time* [will the Messiah come], whilst it is also written, *I* [the Lord] *will hasten it!* The context of this passage is the Isaiah 60:22, it is the context of the coming of the Messiah, the coming of the Redemption upon Israel. So in the one verse it says 'in its time', there is an appointed time in which the Messiah will come, and the same verse says, 'I will hasten it.' After

the quotation he says: If they are worthy I will hasten it: if not [he will come] at the due time.

R Alexandri said: R. Joshua opposed two verses: it is written, *And behold, one like the son of man came with the clouds of heaven;* [taken from □Daniel chapter 7 verse 13] whilst [elsewhere] it is written, [*behold, thy king cometh unto thee...*] *lowly, and riding upon an ass.* [from Zechariah chapter 9 verse 7]. Now it seems to be a contradiction, at least in the mind of R. Joshua that these two verses don't fit the same person or the same occasion. One is coming on the clouds in a supernatural way in glory, and the other one is coming lowly and humble and riding on a donkey. So how could the coming be both ways? That bothered R. Joshua, that the description of the coming of the Messiah, was a double description, that seem to contradict one another, and this is the way the Talmud resolved that seeming contradiction. I am continuing to read from the Talmud. If they are meritorious, [he will come] *with the clouds of heaven;* if not, *lowly and riding upon an ass.* In other words R. Joshua resolves the problem by saying that the nature of the coming of the Messiah is dependent on the merit, the righteousness of the people of Israel, if they are meritorious, that means righteous, he will come with glory from heaven in clouds. But if they are not meritorious, that means that they are wicked generation, he will come humble and riding upon an ass.

Of course the New Testament writers and in fact Yeshua himself resolve this in a totally different way. Instead of making the two types of comings dependent on the merit of the people, they say, there are actually two different comings. Not coming this way if the people are righteous, and the coming that way if the people are not righteous, but one situation is the first coming, in which he will come humble and lowly and riding upon an ass, and the second coming, in which he will come in glory with the clouds of

heaven.

There are two different distinct ways of resolving the same textual problem, because we do have in the Tanach, in the Bible seemingly the two kinds of Messiahs, and we divide them into two kinds of comings, first coming and second coming. But the Jewish rabbis that didn't know about two kinds of comings divided the same structure, the same seeming contradiction of the verses in a different way, in which they said, they are dealing with conditional type of coming of the Messiah. In other words, if he would come in a time when Israel is righteous, he will come in glory, if he will come in the time when Israel is not so righteous, he will come lowly and riding upon an ass. But the important thing for us to notice is that they are dealing with the same verses. In other words, they are aware that these verses in the Torah and in the Prophets and in the Psalms are dealing with the coming of the Messiah, and instead of saying that there is the first coming and the second coming and dividing them according to that category, they are saying, he will come this way if the people are righteous, and in that way if they are not righteous.

Let us continue reading after this passage and see the continuation of this text. King Shapur said to Samuel, 'Ye maintain that the Messiah will come upon an ass: I would rather send him a white horse of mine.' He replied, 'Have you a hundred-hewed steed?' In other words, is there a horse that has a hundred colors on him? A little historical note. King Shapur struggled against Rome, he was a king of the area of Iraq and Perigee of today, Persia. He fought against Rome for many years and Rome actually never was able to conquer Persia. So king Shapur, when he heard the Jews discussing that the Messiah might come on a donkey, said, 'Listen, he shouldn't ride on a donkey. I'll give him my own horse.' In other words he said I have such respect for the Messiah, that I would give him my own horse. Why should he ride on a

donkey? And so R. Samuel didn't want to tell him, 'Listen, we don't want your horse, we would rather have him ride on a donkey, cause that's what the prophets really predicted', instead he said, 'Listen, you don't have the kind of horse that he really needs, he needs a horse that has a hundred different colors. And if you don't have a horse like that, well the donkey will do'. That was a diplomatic way of telling King Shapur - thank you, but no thank you. And it's an interesting little historical note within this context of the Messiah coming on a donkey.

Today of course, in the Jewish religious world one would find it difficult to believe that on the streets of Jerusalem the Messiah would come on a donkey. One can find it difficult for many reasons. First is that donkeys are no longer used as the main means of transportation in this part of the world. The second reason is that there have been so many false Messiahs, who have ridden into Jerusalem on donkeys, and in fact every so many months there is another one that comes into Jerusalem riding on a donkey with long side curls, *peot*, and with a turban on his head usually followed by a woman with a baby in her hands, dressed in some kind of a Biblical clothes. And they parade up and down the city hoping that someone will recognize them as the Messiah and become their disciple and that they may be given a free meal or something. But the plausibility of somebody today coming into Jerusalem on a donkey and being accepted as the Messiah is less likely by far, then when Yeshua came into Jerusalem a week before the Passover riding on a donkey, and the people recognized him immediately as a king. Today it is less likely that this would happen.

Now continuing the reading from the Talmud. R. Joshua b. Levi met Elijah standing by the entrance of R. Simeon b. Yohai's tomb. He asked him: 'Have I a portion in the world to come?' He replied, 'If this Master desires it.' Meaning if Simon b. Yohai would allow him to have a portion in the world to come. R.

Joshua b. Levi said, 'I saw two people but I heard the voice of a third.' In other words he was at the tomb of Simon b. Yohai, but he was only talking to Elijah. So he and Elijah were two, but he also heard the voice of Simon b. Yohai, speaking from the tomb. He then asked him [R. Joshua b. Levi asked Elijah], 'When will the Messiah come?' Elijah answered him, 'Go and asked him yourself'. R. Joshua b. Levi asked, 'Where is he sitting?' Elijah answered, 'At the entrance.' 'And by what sign may I recognize him?' - 'He is sitting among the poor lepers: all of them untie [them] all at once, and rebandage them together, whereas he unties and rebandages each separately, [before treating the next], thinking, should I be wanted, [it being time for my appearance as the Messiah] I must not be delayed [through having to bandage a number of sores].' So he went to him and greeted him, saying, 'Peace upon thee, Master and Teacher.' 'Peace upon thee, O son of Levi,' he replied. 'When wilt thou come Master?' asked he, 'Today', was his answer. On his returning to Elijah, the latter enquired, 'What did he say to thee?' - 'Peace upon thee, O son of Levi,' he answered. Thereupon he [Elijah] observed, 'He thereby assured thee and thy father of [a portion in] the world to come.' 'He spoke falsely to me,' he rejoined, 'stating that he would come today, but has not.' He [Elijah] answered him, 'This is what he said to thee, *Today, if ye will hear his voice*'. a quotation from Psalms 95 verse 7.

Let me analyze this story a little bit, so that it will be a little bit more understood. R. Joshua b. Levi goes to the tomb of Simon b. Yohai, which is near Meiron in the middle of the Galilee. Simon b. Yohai was a rabbi, one of the disciples and co-students and co-rivals with R. Akiba, who led a rebellion, that today we call the Bar Kohba rebellion, that started at the year 132, and R. Akiba and R. Simon b. Yohai together with 8 other rabbis were executed, put to death by the Romans. Ten such rabbis, leaders of the Bar Kohba rebellion were put to death in the year 135,

and they are considered martyrs, who died for the cause of the Torah and Israel. R. Simon b. Yohai was attributed with all kinds of miracle working powers in Jewish tradition. Until his time the city of Tiberias was considered unclean, and Jews that were religious didn't live in Tiberias, because it was actually build by Herod the Great on a cemetery, but it was Simon b. Yohai, according to that tradition, who came and purified the city by floating a skull on the water of Tiberias and then all the dead skeletons flowed out of their graves, and the city was then purified by the Pharisees and then became a great center for learning Torah and for establishing the traditional reading of the Hebrew text of the Bible. But later Simon b. Yohai's tomb became a place of a pilgrimage, as it is until today. On *Lag baOmer* thousands and thousands of orthodox Jews go to the tomb of Simon b. Yohai to celebrate, and he is considered like a mystical master in Judaism.

R. Joshua b. Levi goes to the tomb of R. Simon b. Yohai and there he meets Elijah. Elijah is also kind of mystical figure in Judaism, a figure that didn't die, that went up to heaven on a worldwind, and therefore Elijah is there, apparently, according to the story, communicating with Simon b. Yohai within his grave. And R. Joshua b. Levi comes and meets Elijah at the tomb, and he asks him the most pertinent question that any Jew could ask. 'Am I listed as one of the people who will inherit eternal life or not?' If we were using Christian terminology, we would say, 'I am saved?' And Elijah replied to him, 'If this Master desires it.' Of course Elijah is referring here to Simon b. Yohai, who is in his tomb, because there was nobody there except Elijah and R. Joshua b. Levi. And so, if this master desires it, is probably referring to Simon b. Yohai. But it is interesting to note, that Rashi, one of the great Talmudic commentators said that - this Master was referring to the *Shechinah*, to the Presence of God that was also with them in the tomb. Why does Rashi say that, because living in eleventh century Europe, he can't

imagine that they would talking to a dead one, which is against the Torah. Necromancy is forbidden in Deutoronomy chapter 18 verses 9 and 10, so how could they be talking to a dead person. So according to Rashi they were talking to the *Shechinah* that was present with Elijah in the tomb of R. Simeon b. Yohai, that is Rashi's interpretation. But it could be more likely, according to the story he was talking to Simon b. Yohai, who was in his tomb. R. Joshua b. Levy says that he saw two people, but he heard the voice of the third, meaning that he saw himself and Elijah, but he heard a third voice, which, according to Rashi would be the *Shechinah*, but according to the simple understanding of the text, would be the dead Simeon b. Yohai, who communicated with them, and said something, to make him here the voice of the third.

Then Rabbi Joshua b. Levi asks Elijah another question, he didn't get an answer to his first question, which was, 'Do I have a portion in the world to come?' Therefore he asked the second question, 'When will the Messiah come?' Elijah replied to him and said, 'Go and ask him himself.' So he said, 'Where is he?' Elijah said, 'He is sitting at the gate of the city together with all the poor and the lepers of the city, who have no place in the city, and they sit outside the gate begging and hoping for somebody's charity, to provide for them a way of living.

That's first of all an interesting point of view by itself. According to the Talmud and to this story the Messiah is here! He is not in heaven. He is here, outside the city, he is suffering, and he is a leper. The concept that he is a leper of course is taken from Isaiah 53, *Surely our griefs He Himself bore, And our sorrows He carried, Yet we ourselves esteemed him stricken.* 'Stricken' in the medical sense means being leper. And the Messiah in this tradition was that he was a leper (we will see it further down on page 98), that the Messiah was a suffering person, and leprosy is of course in Judaism the father of all impurities. And therefore the

Messiah is suffering of the impurity of being a leper. And he is here now, he is not in heaven, he is here, he has come.

The story implies that the Messiah has come, and he is waiting for us to invite him. Notice, that one of the ways, that Joshua b. Levi is told that he can identify the Messiah is that the Messiah untying his bandages one by one, whereas the rest of the lepers untie all the bandages of the whole body, and then they treat their sores, then they tie them all together at once. But the Messiah unties his sores one by one, each sore has its own time and bandages, saying to himself, 'Less they need me, they invite me to come, so I may not delay'. This is how the Messiah sees this possibility, this is how the text sees this possibility. So whatever we say the Messiah is here, he is suffering and he is waiting for us to call him, to invite him to come. So Joshua b. Levi goes, and he finds the Messiah outside the city, and the conversation between the two is: Joshua b. Levi says to him: '*Shalom aleichem, Mori veRabbi* - my Master and my Teacher', and the Messiah answers him, '*Shalom lecha, ben Levi* - Peace upon thee, the son of Levi'. And Joshua b. Levi asks him, 'When will you come?', like a typical Israeli *hutzpan*, he says, 'When will you come?'. He didn't say, 'How are you, can I help you,' no politeness, directly to the subject. And the Messiah tells him, 'Today.' Joshua b. Levi takes to running, to get himself and his house in order, he doesn't wait for a further conversation, but of course the day goes by, and the Messiah doesn't come.

So the next time Joshua b. Levi goes to the cave of the tomb of Simon b. Yohai he meets Elijah there again, and Elijah tells him, 'Tell me what happened?' So he replies and says, 'Peace upon thee, o son of Levi'. So Elijah says, 'OK, you wanted to know if you have a portion in the world to come. If he told you, peace upon thee, son of Levi, that means that he recognized you, and he also recognized your father by

saying son of Levi'. Joshua b. Levi is now happy with that he now has an admission from Elijah that he had a portion in the world to come. Then he tells Eliajah, 'He lied to me, the Messiah lied to me'. So Elijah said, 'Tell me what did he say?' - 'He said to me that he would come today, but he didn't come!' Elijah said, 'I'll tell you what he meant. He meant today, *if you will hear his voice*' [quoting from Psalm 95 verse 7].

That in itself is very interesting, because all Psalm 95 is used in a *Midrashic* way in Hebrews chapter 3. Hebrews chapter 3 and 4, in fact are completely built as a *midrash* on psalm 95. But what was Elijah telling Joshua b. Levi? He was telling him, that when the Messiah said today, he didn't mean just today, historically, that he would come to the world today. But he meant, for you he would come today, if you would personally hear his voice. In other words if you would believe the Messiah, and obey him, then for you he would come today. That's what the implication of this story is, and that's how Elijah is portrayed resolving the seeming incongruity, untruth in the mind of Joshua b. Levi. And of course that psalm is used in that way in the New Testament, and the writer of the book of Hebrew says: Reprove one another while it is still called today, while you still have time, while sun still rises every morning and sets every night, and time exists. Then you still have to reprove one another and correct one another and help one another, so that when he comes, he will not say to our generation what he said to the generation of the wilderness: *I swear if you enter into my rest*. In other words God swore not to allow the generation, that came out of the land of Egypt enter into his rest, because they didn't recognize his authority, or at least the Messiah's authority and his place in God's plan of Redemption.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 9

by Joseph Shulam

We have been discussing the Messiah in the Talmud.

We are reading from the Babylonian Talmud tractate Sanhedrin, p. 98 b. We will start with Rav's statement, and this is what Rab said: The son of David will not come until the power enfolds Israel for nine months, as it is written *Therefore will he give them up, until the time that she which travaileth hath brought forth: then the remnant of his bretheren shall return unto the children of Israel.* In other words Rab, great rabbi of the generation of *amoraite*, is stating his opinion of when will the son of David come.

The concept of son of David is equal to the Messiah, because the Messiah has to be the son of David, since the all Messianic expectation of Israel is based on the God's promise to king David. So anybody who is not the son of David can certainly not be the Messiah. Also in a Talmudic time often times they didn't speak about the Messiah, but they spoke about the son of David. They did that for both polemic reason, and technical reason, because they didn't want to keep using the word Messiah, which was confused in the Byzantine period with the Christian concept of Christ in the Byzantine Church. And so oftentimes they spoke about the son of David as the polemical counterpart to the Christian concept of the Messiah. Rab is saying, dealing with the same question, when will the son of David come? And the statement is that son of David will not come until

power enfolds Israel. This intimates and hints that power enfolds Israel until the Roman Empire takes over the whole world, in which Israel is scattered. That's Rashi's interpretation, because Israel at that time was already not an independent nation on its own land. Israel was already well scattered in the Byzantine Empire and already into Europe by the fourth century. And this is about the time when Rab was saying these things, in the fourth century, or late third century and the beginning of the fourth, so he said these things, when Israel was already in ruins and the Jewish people was scattered, and the Byzantine Empire was at its highest, beginning with the Christian period. So for this reason often times the name the son of David is used as synonym to the Messiah.

And so he says, the Messiah will not come until the Roman Empire will take the whole Diaspora and holds Israel for nine months. In other words they have to rule over the whole thing over the nine months, and he brings the verse from the book of Micah, chapter 5. It is verse 3 in the English and verse 2 in the Hebrew, because the Hebrew chapter starts with '*O, Bethlehem, Ephrathah who are the little among all the clans of Judah...*', a Messianic prophecy. Let me start reading from verse 2: '*But you, O Bethlehem Ephrathah, who are little to be among the clans of Judah, from you shall come forth for me one who is to be ruler in Israel, whose origin is from old, from ancient days. (Now verse 3.) Therefore he shall give them up until the time, when she who is in travail has brought forth; then the rest of his bretheren shall return to the people of Israel.*' Verse two is the Bethlehem, Ephrathah prophecy of the birth of the Messiah, which is used in the Gospel of Matthew and in fact in all the Gospels, that Jesus was born in Bethlehem. But the next verse is the one who speaks of time, the word until, until the time, when she who is in travail has brought forth. In other words, somehow the relationship of the ruler of Judah that comes from Bethlehem and had a birth or travails for

nine months are related to the redemption and to the salvation of Israel. And Rab says, OK, the Messiah will not come, the son of David will not come until after the nine months that the power, and the power here is equivalent to Rome has taken over all of Israel.

That is interesting, first of all it is interesting because it relates Rab's opinion of when the Messiah suppose to come is directly related to this Messianic prophesy of the Messiah being born in Bethlehem, which is related to the whole story of the Messiah being from the tribe of Judah, from the family of David, and of course in the Gospel, in the New Testament we see that this is really how the Gospel starts, at least two of the Gospels start with the birth story. And the birth story in the historical circumstances of the tax collection related to Bethlehem, where Joseph and Mary, who were really Bethlehemites from the family of king David, are coming to Bethlehem to register and to pay their taxes when they where living in Nathareth. They were Jews from Judeah, who moved to Nathareth and who are coming to Bethlehem to register in their birthplace. And so Yeshua is born in Bethlehem. And Rab relates this story of Bethlehem and the story of the birth that the lady that travails for nine months to birth with the redemption of Israel. And that in itself is an interesting aspect of how Rab looked at the coming of the son of David.

We are going to continue the discussion and go to another rabbi from the same period - Ulla, who said: Let him [the Messiah] come, but let me not see him. This is rather difficult statement. In other words Ulla believes that the Messiah should come, but he doesn't want to be around when that happens. This is a strange attitude. Why doesn't Ulla, who was the great rabbi, want to be here when the Messiah comes. He wants the Messiah to come, but he doesn't want to be here when he comes. Why? Because he expects the prophesies of the Old Testament about the coming of the Messiah to be fulfilled. What

prophecies of the Old Testament doesn't Ulla want to experience? He doesn't want to experience the prophecies of the travail, of the suffering that is suppose to be happening at the coming of the Messiah. There are many prophecies, that speak of the Messiah will come in the age that doesn't deserve his coming, in an age in which there will be hunger, and war and suffering and disrespect to God, and to the community, and to the rabbis, and poverty. And that's why Ulla says, OK, let the Messiah come, but not when I am around. I do not want to experience these difficulties and these trouble that are associated just before the coming of the new era, just before the dawn of the Messiah.

Rabbah said likewise (I am continuing the reading): Let him come, but let me not see him. R. Joseph said: Let him come and may I be worthy of sitting in the shadow of his ass's saddle. Here we have three great rabbis, two of them agree that they want the Messiah come as soon as he can, but they do not want to be around when it happens, and then there is R. Joseph says: 'Listen, I don't care when he comes as long as he comes. I am willing to sit under his donkeys saddle.' There are two ways to interpret that in the Aramaic, in which this is written. It could be that I am willing to be his donkey, in other words I am willing for him to put his saddle on top of me, and for me to be his donkey, or I am willing to sit in his donkey's shadow, literally. Either way R. Joseph's humility is impressive, because he seems to indicate that he is whiling to pay the price of being a servant of the Messiah in his coming.

The Talmud goes back to question R. Ulla's and Rabbah's view that say, let's Messiah come, but we don't want to see him. Comes a later Rabbi and says Abaye, one of the heads of the yeshivas in Babylon, and he asks Rabbah: 'What is your reason [for not wishing] to see him? Shall we say, because of the birth pangs [proceeding the advent] of the Messiah?' But it has been taught, R. Eleazar's

disciples asked him: 'What must a man do to be spared the pangs of the Messiah?' And his answer was: Let him engage in study (of the Torah) and benevolence (doing good deeds, giving charity); and so the disciples of R. Eleazar said: 'But Master, you have both'; he replied: '[I fear] lest sin cause it, in accordance with [the teaching of] R. Jacob b. Idi, who opposed [two verses].

We are going to get back to it in a minute, but let me explain what happened here. R. Eleazar's disciples come to Rabbah and say: 'Listen, what do you have to fear, why are you afraid of seeing with your own eyes the coming of the Messiah?' But they do it in a very round about way. They say, how can we escape the birth pangs of the Messiah, in other words the period of suffering that just precedes the coming of the Messiah. And he says: two ways, study the Torah and do charity. And then they say: why are you afraid then, you are a great scholar, and you do a lot of charity, a lot of good things, and so what do you have to fear? He says: I am afraid, because sin may cause me to suffer anyway. In other words, I may not have enough good works, and not enough study of the Torah to deserve to skip these tribulations. Even in itself this question is an important question, and the New Testament of course deals with this question. And there are all the sects in the Christian world, who argue and fight and complain and divide Church over this question of whether believers will have to go through the tribulation or they will skip the tribulation. There is post tribulation and pre tribulation rapture, and there is premillenium and post millenium, all these things that the Christians are argue about are basically questions that were relevant also to Jews, because they come from the same scriptures, and so the Jews have to ask the same questions if they want to deal with these issue of the coming of the Messiah.

For Rabbah said, in order to escape the tribulation man has to have the study of the Torah and also, at

the same time good works and charity. But he himself is living under the fear, maybe I don't have enough, maybe I have a sin, and maybe that sin is, that all the good works and all the charity and all the study of the Torah that I've done may not be enough to skip over the period of tribulation. And so that's why he doesn't want to live during the period of the coming of the Messiah. In other words he is sure that in the Judgment day he will be found sinless, but he is not sure that whatever he had done is sufficiently valuable for God to be able to skip that tribulation, and that's why he said: Let him come, but I don't want to see it myself.

The discussion goes on, and the Talmud says that this is exactly what R. Jacob b. Idi proved by bringing two verses that contradict each other, and here are the two verses that R. Jacob b. Idi brings. It is written, *And, Behold, I am with thee, and will guard thee in all places whither thou goest*; it is the verse, taken from Genesis 28 verse 15, after the Jacob sees in the dream the latter going up to heaven and the angels of God descending and ascending on this latter, and then God promises him, and says to Jacob: *And behold I am with thee, and will guard thee in all places whither thou goest*. And there is another verse, related to Jacob, that says: *And Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed!* This verse is taken from Genesis 32 verse 8, when Jacob has left Laban with Rachel and Lea, and their children, and the flocks, and he is crossing the river Yabok and he meets the angel. And there in this context it says: *And Jacob was greatly distressed*. So if God had promised him earlier, on the way up to Harran: Behold I am with thee and I will be with thee and will go with you wherever you go, in all the places, why is Jacob all over a sudden now is afraid, greatly distressed? So R. Jacob b. Idi brought these two verses in contradiction to each other, and the Talmud gives the answer as to why was Jacob afraid. He was afraid, that sin might cause [the nullification of

God's promise].

Even as it was taught: *Till thy people pass over, O Lord*: this refers to the first entry [into the Land]; *till thy people pass over, which thou hast purchased*: this refers to their second entry (into the Land). Hence you may reason: The Israelites were as worthy of a miracle being wrought for them at the second entry as at the first, but that sin caused it (not to happen). In other words we've got an answer to the different attitudes of the coming of the Messiah brought by a third source R. Jacob b. Idi, who learns this from two situations in which Jacob was found. The first situation is when God appears to him on Bethel, in chapter 28 of Genesis, in which he sees a dream, and in a dream there is a ladder goes up, and the second one is upon his return from Harran when Laban pursued him, at the point he is on his way to meet Esau and he is preparing himself to meet his brother, from who he bought the inheritance for lentil soup, and therefore in this preparation before he meets with the angel it says: *Then Jacob was greatly afraid and distressed; and he divided the people that were with him, and the flocks and herds and camels, into two companies, thinking, "If Esau comes to the one company and destroys it, then the company which is left will escape."* In other words Jacob is strategizing in chapter 32 verses 7 and 8, he is strategizing because of his fear and distress of what Esau will do to him, when he meets him after his return to the Land after being 21 years in Harran, in northern Syria working for Laban so he could get Rachel as his wife, and then so he could get some sheep and some herd to bring back with him. For 14 years he worked for Laban for free, just to be able to marry his daughters, and then 7 years he works so he can get something to live on. And now he is on his way back and he is afraid of his brother Esau. Why is he afraid? He is afraid according to R. Jacob b. Idi, because he sinned, and he was afraid that his sin will nullify the promise of God, that God promised him on his way up to Harran, that said, behold I will be with

you, don't be afraid, I will be with you all the time, wherever you go. And of course God was with him all the time wherever he went, but now, when he is returning he is afraid of Esau. Why? Because he sinned against Esau according to his own view. The sin was that he'd got the inheritance for lentil soup, it was not a fair trade according to all opinion, even if it was a legal trade. So that is why R. Jacob b. Idi says, that Rabbah said: Let him come, but let me not see him, as the result of the fact that he might have some sin, that will nullify the promise of God to him.

I am continuing the reading of the Talmud where we left off. He was afraid, that sin might cause [the nullification of God's promise]. Even as it was taught: *Till thy people pass over, O Lord*: this refers to the first entry [into the Land]; *till thy people pass over, which thou hast purchased*: this refers to their second entry [into the Land]. These two verses are taken from the Song of the Sea, from Exodus chapter 15 verse 16, where Moses was, after the crossing of the Red Sea with all of Israel, Moses with great joy and with great celebration brings this Song of the Sea, which becomes one of the greatest hymns in Biblical and Jewish history, where Moses sings praises to God, thanking him for allowing the children of Israel to cross the sea, for the enemy drowning in the sea, and expecting promises of the Eternal Temple, not made with man's hands to be build in which the people will worship at the end of the Song of the Sea. But in verse 16 it says: *Till thy people cross over, till thy people whom you have purchased, cross over*. And he learns from this verse that there are the two crossings. That there is a crossing over the first time, and there is a crossing over the second time, but according to the Talmud it says, we didn't cross over the second time, even if it was promised in the song of Moses. Why has it not been done? Why has redemption, purchase (these are synonyms for the same concept), why did not this redemption as it is promised come to be? Because of our sin. The Talmud

says the Israelites were as worthy of a miracle being wrought for them as at the first, but that sin caused it [not to happen]. The full redemption of Israel hasn't really happened because of our sin, according to this Talmudic view.

Of course, according to the New Testament view it has happened in spite of our sins, because of the mercy and the grace of God. In other words, according to the New Testament Jesus is the second Passover, he is Passover Lamb, from 1 Corinthians chapter 5. We are the unleavened bread, and he is the Passover Lamb, and becoming a believer is like coming out the Egypt in the second time, in a much stronger way, then in the physical time, when they came out of Egypt. In 1 Corinthians chapter 10 Paul says, were not all our forefathers baptized by crossing the sea, and did they not receive the spiritual food from the cloud that went with them by day and like fire by night. In other words, whoever crosses the sea the first time was in the physical, and the second time was in the spiritual sense, which was the more powerful sense in that the second time was by what Yeshua, Jesus did for us. This is the same concept, but in reverse, the Rabbis say that the second entry to the Promised Land did not happen, because of our sin. The New Testament says it did happen through Yeshua haMashiah, the second Exodus happened through Yeshua haMashiah, because he took us out of darkness into light, out of life that was bound by our earthly flesh into a life that are directed by the Spirit of God, and all these things happened in spite of our own sin. It was not stopped because of our sin, but came in spite of our sin, by the mercy of God these things took place and happened.

Continuing the reading. R. Johanan said likewise: Let him come, and let me not see him. Resh Lakish said to him: Why so? Shall we say, because it is written, *As if a man did flee from a lion, and a bear met him; or went into the house, and leaned his hand on the wall, and a serpent bit him?* This verse taken from Amos

chapter 5 verse 19. The Rabbis, as you see, return to the same motive in different generations. In other words, there are always people, who say: Yes, yes I want the Messiah come, I believe he should come soon, but I don't want to be here, when he comes. In fact I myself was saying it more than once. I don't really know the final interpretation of all the events, of all the things that will happen when the Messiah comes. Whether it will be a wonderful thing, or whether you know, a lot of my friends and the other people, who are not believers will have to die and to suffer, and whether I will have to go through the tribulation myself. I don't know for sure. Either way, because as you can see, the same verses from the Old Testament, that people question and have different opinions on, same thing is in the New Testament, and so this recurring question in different generations is: Do you want to be here when the Messiah comes, is the question, already addressed by the prophet Amos, when he says: You say to the Lord, the Day of the Lord, the Day of the Lord, the Day of the Lord! You should know, that the Day of the Lord may be darkness and not light. Don't be so sure of yourself, and so proud, spiritually proud, that you say: O well, let that Day come, I am ready for it, so what do I care about everybody else. If you have that kind of attitude, you are already in sin, and then you shouldn't be so quick to want the Day of the Lord to come for the Messiah to come.

And therefore, now a generation later the same question reappears, that R. Johanan and Resh Lakish, who said to him: Why is it that you don't want the Messiah to come in your time? Is it because it is said in Amos, that *as when a man flees from a lion and a bear meets him, or went into the house, and he leans upon the wall, and a serpent bites him.* Now R. Resh Lakish wants to interpret how he sees this verse related to the coming of the Messiah and to the situation. It is written: But come, and I will show you its like even in this world. [That the situation of the coming of the Messiah is a little bit like life

in the world]. When one goes out into the field, and meets a bailiff. [A bailiff is a tax-collector, who contests his title to the field. Rashi translates it: an official surveyor, who fixes the boundary lines of the different owners, and thus may increase or limit one's property.] So when he goes out in the field and meets a lion, he says it's like meeting a bailiff. And when he enters the town, and is accosted by a tax-collector, it is as though he had met a bear. On entering the house and finding his sons and daughters in the throes of hunger, it is as though he were bitten by a serpent.

R. Resh Lakish is trying to say here to R. Yohanan that coming of the Messiah, the tribulation, is something you can't run away from. It's an evil, that comes after you no matter where you are. It is like this verse in Amos that you go into the field you meet a lion, you come into a town you meet a bear, you go home and you meet a serpent. But the point of the verse is that you can not escape the fate of that God has prepared for you, and therefore you can not escape the tribulation before the coming of the Messiah and the trouble that it carries with it, if he comes, or when he comes. But, R. Resh Lakish continues, [his unwillingness to see the Messiah is because it is written: *Ask ye now, and see whether a man doth travail with child? Wherefore do I see every man [gever, in Hebrew. **Gever** means a man, and also it means a cock, a male chicken] with his hands on his loins, as a woman in travail, and all faces are turned into paleness?* This is taken from Jeremiah chapter 30 verse 6 in Hebrew, and verse 5 in English, in which says that man will travail like a woman with a child, and it is in a Messianic context.

Therefore this idea is that R. Johanan didn't want to see the coming of the Messiah, because of this travail, like that of a pregnant woman, of suffering, of the birth pangs of the Messiah, that will come upon men, not only on women, but the word man here is in generic means upon everyone. They don't have the

righteous people escaping the tribulation, but they have the righteous people going through the tribulation first, and then the coming of the Messiah, according to R. Johanan's view, that Resh Lakish is interpreting. And the Talmud asks this question. What is meant by '*wherefore do I see every **gever**?*' Rabbah, the son of R. Isaac said in Rab's name: It refers to Him to whom all *ge'vurah* [strength] belongs. They are now dealing with Jeremiah chapter 30, verse 6, and the question is asked: what is meant by every *gever*, every man? Every man will be like a woman that travails with child? The answer is: every man is not only man, but every power, every strength will be in travail. And then he asks the second half of the verse: and what is the meaning of '*and all faces are turned into paleness?*' Same R. Johanan says: [This refers to God's heavenly family [i.e. angels] and his earthly family [i.e. Israel,] when God says, These [The Gentiles] are my handiwork, and so are these [the Jews]; how shall I destroy the former on account of the latter? In other words, according to R. Johanan, the tribulation will come on every *gever* meaning both Jews and Gentiles, and *all faces* mean also Jews and Gentiles. Therefor God can not destroy his handiwork, which is not only Israel, but also the Gentiles.

R. Papa said: Thus men say, 'when the ox runs and falls, the horse is put into his stall.' This is an interesting statement. Rashi interprets it: The horse is made to replace it, but when the ox recovers, it is difficult to remove the horse. So the Israelites, having fallen, were replaced in power by the Gentiles: but on their recovery, it will be difficult to remove the Gentiles from their position without inflicting much suffering. Interesting how he interprets this passage of R. Papa. He says, when the ox runs and falls, the horse is put into his stall, meaning Israel. Remember the historical context we had discussed earlier, Israel is in exile, and it is broken by the exile, the Gentiles apparently are up high in power. They are high in power, but Israel is

in disrepute, Israel has fallen, and the time will come when God will want to replace Gentiles, to put Israel back in their original position, but it will be very difficult to remove the Gentiles. The role of the tribulation, according to this view of R. Papa is basically the removal of the power of the Gentiles over Israel, and the placing Israel back into its original position, which is a very difficult procedure. Considering that you have the Gentiles installed in power for such a long period, and nobody, not even the horse doesn't want to give up its position easily, and to allow the ox to come back into its place.

And so this is the discussion of these concepts and these verses and these views, that we had seen in experience in relationship to this Talmudic teachings of the Messiah. The importance for us is, of course, is to see how these things relate to the New Testament. And again we see that the main thing is that the Jewish Rabbis dealt with the concept of the Messiah, dealt with the same materials, with the same verses, with the same structures, problems, that the Christian world dealt with and deals with today, that the New Testament deals with. In other words, we are dealing in both cases with very Jewish material about the Messiah, dealt in different backgrounds and different schools of thought, and different periods of history, and different circumstances. But all we know is the messianic prophesy: O Bethlehem Ephrathah ... That the concept of the Messiah's coming is in birth pangs. And it raises the question: Do I want to be there in the time of his coming and see the tribulation, that will ensue one way or another when the worldly power is overthrown and the establishment of the Power of God to rule over the world, which doesn't happen without tribulation, in the opinion of most of these Rabbis.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 10

by Joseph Shulam

We are in lesson number 10 of the study dealing with Messiah in the Talmud. We have been reading from the tractate Sanhedrin, and we are now at p. 98 b, starting with the words of R. Giddal. But before we enter into the text I would like to do some review and some general thinking about the Messiah.

We have a tendency of doing two opposite things. One, we have a tendency to over simplify, and the other, we have a tendency to over complicate. And some time, these tendencies, as strange as it might seem, work together. When I speak to Christians about the Jewish view of the Messiah, they often tend to over simplify and say, but the Jews are still waiting to the Messiah. And at the same time, may be even with the same breath, they say: "Would they really believe that the Messiah will come?" Or some other statement that tends to indicate this. The view of what Jews believe or don't believe is not completely based on facts, but on impressions. The Jews do the same thing with Jesus, and with Christianity. The Jews look at Christians and say: "Why do they believe that Messiah has already come, when not much has changed? Therefore it can't be that Jesus is the Messiah." Most Jews don't even know that Christians are waiting for the return of the Messiah. And there are many things that Christians are waiting to happen that will repair, or fix, or redeem the creation, the world that we live in, and launch it into era of peace and blessing for the children of God, and judgment for the children of this world.

So the study of this Jewish literature concerning the Messiah, which is so ancient should put us in some kind of a historical prospective of what Jews believe about the Messiah, how deep were their concerns and

their interests with the Messiah, and how much time and energy they spent trying to figure out from the Biblical prospective and from the tradition who the Messiah is, what is his name, how will he come, when will he come, what will happen when he does come. And we have to look at this material as a backdrop of the New Testament, even though chronologically speaking, from the point of view of time, this material is younger than the New Testament, the New Testament is older than this material, but it is still indigene, it is still the backdrop, because this was the Jewish thinking, the Jewish ideas, that fed the Rabbis and which also fed the apostles and the disciples earlier.

So let's go back to page 98 b of tractate Sanhedrin and read a little bit from the text. R. Giddal said in Rab's name: The Jews are destined to eat [their fill] in the days of the Messiah. Meaning, that when the Messiah come there'll be plenty and Israel will enjoy that plenty in the days of the Messiah. Literally the Hebrew text says that in the future Israel will eat the years of the Messiah, messianic era, meaning that they will eat the plenty that will be present here when the Messiah comes.

R Joseph demurred. (Demurred means - he answered, he raises the question, raises the issue) And he asks this question: Is this not obvious; who else then should eat - Hilek and Bilek? R. Joseph's question is: why do we have to affirm this truth, the so evident truth that when the Messiah come there will be plenty and blessing and prosperity in the Land? This question is: why do we have to emphasize that Israel will eat in the days of the Messiah. Who else should eat, Hilek and Bilek? Hilek and Bilek in Aramaic is Tom and Jerry; Tom, Dick and Harry in American slang. In other words, if it is not Israel, who else will eat? The Talmud explains: this was said in opposition to R. Hillel. We had read earlier, that R. Hillel made a statement, in which he maintained that there is not going to be a Messiah for Israel,

since they have already enjoyed him during the reign of king Hezekiah. I am going to spend some time trying to explain Hillel's statement, but the Talmud says, that R. Joseph's statement and R. Joseph's demurring in opposition to this statement of R. Hillel, that says: there is not going to be the Messiah in Israel, because we have already enjoyed it in the days of Hezekiah.

Now what did Hillel really mean? Hillel looked at the prophet Isaiah, and he saw in the prophet Isaiah the Messianic prophecies, beginning with Isaiah 7:14, and then with Isaiah 9 - *'For to us a child is born...sun is given...and his name will be called a Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace... and the government will be upon his shoulder...'* He looked at these prophecies as referring to the birth of Hezekiah. Hezekiah was a righteous king in the beginning, he was lived by God, but later on there were problems that developed between God and Hezekiah. So Hillel's statement was that the Messiah was supposed to come in the days of Hezekiah, but he didn't come, and therefore he is not coming. According to Hillel's view the messianic prophecies were prophecies, that dealt with the time in which the prophet Isaiah lived. They are not prophecies in general for some time far in the future, but they were prophecies that dealt specifically with Isaiah's time and period and the situation in the Land during his time. So since it didn't materialized in Hezekiah's time, then it's not going to materialized in the future either. Now R. Giddal's statement was: In the future, the day will come in the future, when Israel will eat it's fill, will enjoy the presence and the plenty and the bounty of the days of the Messiah. R. Giddal's statement was a contradiction to R. Hillel's statement, who says that the Messiah was supposed to have come in the past but didn't come, therefore he is not coming. R. Giddal's statement is: No, this is something that going to happen in the future. So these are two very important views that constantly in tension one to the other. They are

constantly in contradiction to one another, when it comes to the Messiah. Some said that messianic prophecies were ad hoc, in other words there are the messianic prophecies, that dealt with the historical circumstances, and condition of the people during the days, in which it was given. Others say: No, these prophecies are not dealing with problems ad hoc, but they are dealing with the future, and there are things, that have not come to pass yet, and therefore they will come to pass in the future. When is this future? It is sometimes at the end of times, they are dealing with the last days. As we know, so many of these messianic prophecies starts with the phrase: *And in the last days... Ve acharit hayamim...* Therefore R. Giddal's statement in the name of Rab's is that there are still promises for Israel to enjoy the plenty and the blessing of God in the future. Hillel's view is: No, these were promises for the past that didn't materialize, and they are never going to materialize. We had a chance, we missed it, finished. That was Hillel's view.

Modern Judaism, of course is split by these two views. We've got the Reformed Jews, that have stopped believing that the Messiah is a literal person. They believe it's a messianic era, they spiritualize the messianic promises, but the messiah is not a person. Of course the Orthodox still very much believe that it is a person, and it will materialize in the future. But these views were batted back and forth in the Talmudic era.

We are going to continue reading now with Rab's statement, who said: The world was created only on David's account. Rashi said on this, that he might sing hymns and psalms to God. In other words, why did God create the world? So that there will be king David, and then king David will be able to make the time of God pleasant with praises and hymns and songs. That's Rab's view, and that is an interesting view, because in the New Testament we have some statements such as these. In Colossians chapter 1

verse 15 we read about the Messiah:

"Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature [all creation]: For by him were all things created, , that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or power: all things were created by him, and for him: And he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence. For it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell;"

And also we find the same idea in the Hebrews chapter 1 in the verse 2, in which we read the following, talking about the Messiah again:

"Hath in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he hath appointed heir all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high;"

Both of these statements and including in John chapter 1 verse 1 and forward, we see that the world was created by the Messiah and for the Messiah.

So of course Rab's statement: the world was created only on David's account, basically indicates, that all of creation was for the purpose of the /Messiah. Not king David here as an individual king, pointed in history, but the king David as a representative of the Messianic seed, of the Messianic person in the Bible. Rashi's interpretation takes it in the extremely literal sense, that God wanted to hear songs and hymns and praises from the mouth of king David. On this statement R. Samuel said: On Moses's account. On account of Moses so that he might receive the Torah and bring Torah to the world, and bring the

light of the Torah to the world. For the sake of the Torah, in other words, the world was created. It is not the end of the discussion. R. Johanan said: For the sake of the Messiah. Here we see the clear statement, not the literal interpretation of king David's account, but according to R. Johanan, it is for the sake of the Messiah.

This refers back again to the same reading from the New Testament that we read before, that God created the world for the sake of the Messiah, so the world might be saved. The issue is even deeper than that, because why would the world need to be saved? In other words, the Messiah is a Savior, a Redeemer, he came to the world to restore men from the separation that sin had caused between men and God. If there was no sin, there would be no need for the Messiah, if there was no need there would be no need for the world, and God would have rested forever and ever. So it is a cycle. They said God have created the world for the sake of the Messiah, and Messiah is a Savior. That means, that in order for the Messiah to have a job, the world had to be sinful. If the world was not sinful there would be no need for the Messiah, if there was no need for the Messiah, there would be no need for creating the world.

This cycle is complicated, and the Rabbis feel that complication. But they can't escape it, because they have to deal with the reality that the word of God presents to them. Since the reality is that Messiah is a Savior, and that the world is lost, and that mankind is sinning, and therefore they need atonement, and therefore they need a Savior. If they weren't sinning, there would be no need for the Torah, if there was no need for the Torah, there would be no need for the Messiah, and for the atonement. So this cycle is one that the Rabbis constantly strain at. And now R. Johanan says clearly: the world was created for the sake of the Messiah.

So the Rabbis begin to argue: If it is for the sake of the Messiah, then we have to know who he is, what's his name? They say, what is his name, the name of the Messiah? And each school brings the name of their Rabbi as the name of the Messiah. We are going to read it now through and then discuss it. R. Johanan said: for the sake of the Messiah. What is his [the Messiah's] name? - The school of R. Shilo said: His name is Shiloh, for it is written, *until Shiloh come*, (the quotation from Genesis chapter 49 verse 10, Jacob's blessing on the Judah). The school of R. Yannai said: His name is Yinnon, for it is written, *His name shall endure for ever: e'er the sun was, his name is **Yinnon*** (taken from Psalms 72 verse 17). The School of R. Haninah maintained: His name is Haninah, as it is written, *Where I will not give you **Haninah*** (means reprieve, taken from Jeremiah chapter 16 verse 13). Thus each School is envisioning the intense admiration of its teacher, the head of that **yeshivah**, as being the name of the Messiah. Each school thinks, that their teacher is the Messiah, the Savior of the world, and the Rabbis continue. Others say: His name is Menahem the son of Hezekiah, for it is written, *Because **Menahem** ['the comforter'], that would relieve my soul, is far* (this is the verse from Lamentation chapter 1 verse 16. The comforter, that will relieve my soul is far, so they say that his name is Comforter.) The Rabbis said: (that is the consensus now of the Rabbis that vote and gathered the Talmud together) His name is the 'leper scholar,' as it is written, *Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted* (this quotation is from Isaiah 53 verse 4). Now let's go back and try to understand this discussion of the Rabbis a little bit in greater depth.

We saw, that after the discussion of why was the world created, for what purpose, and after we see, that R. Johanan says, that the world was created for the sake of the Messiah, the editors of the Talmud bring this discussion, that took place in the

tannaitic period, it is a **Baraita**, in which the Rabbis discuss the name of the Messiah. Each one is obviously thinking that the head of his school, of his *yeshiva* is the Messiah, which is interesting within itself. In other words these teachers were so admired, so respected, so looked up to, that their students, their disciples each thought, that they were the Savior, that they were the Messiah. Similar process is happening a number of times in Judaism, recently we have seen the same being happened with R. Schneerson, the Rabbi of HaBaD, of the Lubavich movement, in which his disciples, when he got old and sick, and they saw they had no air, there is no continuation of that Hasidic cord with inside, they pointed him, I think in the beginning even without his knowledge, to be the Messiah. So now, that he is dead, they still claim that he is the Messiah, and a lot of them believe that he is going to rise from the dead. Something similar happened here in the process, in which these schools, that were headed by these men, in each school the disciples of that school looked up to their teacher s being a possible candidate for the Messiahship.

The school of R. Shilo looked for a verse that indicates that R. Shilo was the Messiah. It is a very messianic verse, and it has to do with Jacob's testament. Jacob's promise, for telling what would happen in the history of his children, that is taken from the chapter 49 of the book of Genesis. Let's read from verse 9: *Judah is a lion's whelp: from the prey, my son, thou art gone up: he stooped down, he couched as a lion, and as an old lion [as a lioness]; who shall rouse him up? The sceptre shall not depart from Judah, nor a lawgiver from between his feet, until **Shiloh** come; and unto him shall the gathering [obedience] of the people be.* In other words the nations would gather unto Judah, who is holding the scepter of kingship and who will be a lawgiver and inside this description there is a condition, '*until **Shiloh** come.*' Rabbis reaffirm that this is a Messianic promise, but very few know what the word

Shiloh means. There are many interpretations of the word **Shiloh**, one of the most common is that it means His own [**sheloh**], others interpreted in different ways. It is very interesting, in the Hebrew text that within this phrase *until **Shiloh** come* is an acronym of the name of Yeshua, but we are not going to enter into this numerological and cabalistic calculations right now. The Rabbis knew from very early on that this passage is a messianic promise and they dealt with this verse in a messianic way and here we see that they say: The school of R. Shiloh brings these Messianic promise, this verse and says: Oh, *until **Shiloh** come*, obviously the name of the Messiah is **Shiloh**, like their own Rabbi.

Then the school of R. Yannay brings a very interesting psalm, that has this name **Yinnon**. This is a very strange word in Hebrew, which is very difficult to translate, it occurs only one time in the Bible, and therefore the real meaning of it is not so clear. Anyway, whatever the meaning is, its context is fairly clear. It's talking about Somebody, who was before the creation of the world, and whose name is **Yinnon**. Let me read you a little bit of the context of this. I will start reading from verse 11 of Psalms 72:

Yea, all kings shall fall down before him: all nations shall serve him. For he shall deliver the needy when he crieth; the poor also, and him that hath no helper. He shall spare the poor and needy, and shall save the souls of the needy. He shall redeem their soul from deceit [oppression] and violence: and precious shall their blood be in his sight. And he shall live, and to him shall be given of the gold of Sheba: prayer also shall be made for him continually; and daily shall he be praised. There shall be an handful [abundance] of corn in the earth upon the top of the mountains; the fruit thereof shall shake like Lebanon: and they of the city shall flourish like grass of the earth. His name shall endure for ever: his name shall be continued as long as the sun: and

men shall be blessed in him: all nations shall call him blessed.

Verse 17 again, *His name shall endure for ever* they translated the Hebrew **yinnon** as **yicon** - shall endure for ever, but literally the Hebrew says, *His name shall be Yinnon: his name shall be continued as long as the sun.* And the school of R. Yannay imagine the closeness between Yannay and **yinnon**, even though they are not so close, but they sound close, and they say: Well his name shall be Yinnon, but this is a Messianic prophesy. In fact in the prayerbook of the High Holidays it is used as a Messianic prophesy and one of the names of Messiah is called Yinnon, means before the sun was, he already existed, however you translate it.

Then you have the R. Hanninah. Disciples of R. Hanninah bring a verse that indicates that they are talking about R. Hanninah from Jeremiah 36:13. Thus each school brings their own Rabbi and puts him forth. After that they bring the unnamed opinion that his name will be **Menahem**, which means the Comforter, as the son of king Hezekiah was called Menahem, and as the verse in Lamentation chapter 1 verse 16 states that he would **menahem**, *that would relieve my soul...* (He would comfort me and he would relieve my soul.)

Then the opinion of the Rabbis is, the collective, the official opinion of the Rabbis is that his name will be called the 'leper scholar' (**'chifrah'** in Hebrew), and to prove it they bring the passage from Isaiah chapter 53 verse 4,

Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him a leper, smitten of God and afflicted.

This is an important place, because it shows a number of important things, that later on in Judaism have been denied and have been cast aside. The first thing

that it shows is that the Rabbis knew and used Isaiah 53 as a messianic text. In other words they knew that Isaiah 53 is talking about the Messiah. Second, they know that the Messiah is a Suffering Servant, that he is not only the royal Messiah of the seed of David that will come and reign and rule over the nations, but that the Royal Messiah at the same time is a Suffering Messiah, and they interpreted the words of Isaiah 53 in verse 4 as one who is leper, because the description is,

He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with grief: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we esteemed him not. Surely he hath borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows; yet we did esteem him stricken...

They translate the word stricken here as the word stricken with leprosy, as it was the worst contagious disease that was very infectious, and caused people even abandon their own family for fear of contracting leprosy. So this despising and rejection that he is ugly and we didn't consider him and we left him alone and he borne our grief and by his stripes we were healed... All these descriptions in Isaiah 53 is considered in these place as the messianic description. The Rabbis say: his name is a 'leper scholar', because this smitten and stricken man that is described in Isaiah chapter 53. So they bring this quotation from Isaiah 53 to describe the name of the Messiah. This is the official rabbinical position.

Over the centuries Jews denied that Isaiah 53 refers to the Messiah. Any time Christians argued with Jews, and they were trying to bring Isaiah 53, Jews basically said: No, no, this is talking about the whole nation of Israel, it is not talking about an individual. That question was already raised in the first century. In Acts chapter 8 we meet Philip the Evangelist, he is commanded by the Holy Spirit to go and meet the chariot, attach himself to a chariot, hitchhike on a chariot that is leaving Jerusalem on

the way towards Gaza. In this chariot there was one of the officials of the Queen of Ethiopia, and he had just bought a scroll of Isaiah and he was reading from Isaiah 53 and his question was: Who is the prophet talking about, about himself or somebody else? There was absolutely no consideration like traditional Judaism said, that he was talking about the nation of Israel. It was the consideration that he was talking about an individual, and in our Talmudic passage the Rabbis hold to this: this is talking about the Messiah, and that is one of the names of the Messiah we call him 'the leper scholar'. In other words he is the scholar with leprosy. I know we talked about this passage already when we talked about R. Judah ben Levi, when he was in front of the cave and he met the Messiah, who had leprosy and he was outside the city. Although we are again reading the same thing during the Talmud, that the Rabbis consider that the Messiah is a leper that suffers for our transgressions and by his stripes we are healed and he is carrying our disease of sinfulness, that is like leprosy upon himself. It is important in my opinion, that we should realize this, that when we and the New Testament quote Isaiah 53 as referring to a Suffering Servant of God, meaning Jesus of Nazareth, who died on the cross for our transgression to redeem us from our sin.

It is very important for us to consider that this is not only in the ancient Talmud, but that passages like these are found in the prayerbook of **Rosh haShanah**, and of **Yom Kippur**, they are found in other literature consistently, even though the official view point of the Jewish people is that Isaiah 53 is talking about the people of Israel as a nation that have suffered all these years in the Diaspora. Logically and historically this doesn't hold water, because the passage deals with the issue of a person who is suffering for our transgressions and whom we did not esteem, whom we considered smitten and afflicted of God.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 11

by Joseph Shulam

We are continuing our study from the tractate Sanhedrin in the Babylonian Talmud and we are continuing from the end of page 98b with R. Simlai's statement, and I am reading.

R. Simlai expounded: *What is meant by, Woe unto you, that desire the day of the Lord! To what end is it for you? The day of the Lord is darkness and not light.?* [this is a quotation from Amos chapter 5 verse 18, that R. Simlai is bringing here in the context of Messianic discussion.] The prophet Amos is saying these words to those who are crying and saying over and over again that they are waiting to the day of the Lord. Of course they are waiting to the day of the Lord with the hope that the Lord will come and vindicate them in their viewpoint, in their world view and in their religious convictions. They won't wait for the day of the Lord with the idea that the Lord will punish them. So the prophet Amos tells these people who were so involved with waiting for the coming of the Lord and for the vengeance upon their enemies which was the primary connotation of the day of the Lord as a day of Judgment. So Amos is telling them: Woe to you that wait for the day of the Lord, for you it will be darkness and not light. In other words, you will be on the wrong side of the judgment, when the Lord comes, or when the day of the Lord takes place. You will not be on the right side, on the side of light but it will be darkness for you.

On this R. Simlai asked the question, what is meant by this statement that Amos made. So the R. Simlai brings a parable to explain the meaning of the day of

the Lord for those who are waiting for him, and he says: This may be compared to a cock and a bat who were hopefully waiting for the light [i.e., dawn]. The cock said to the bat, 'I look forward to the light, because I have sight; but of what use is the light to thee?' And thus a **Min** said to R. Abbahu: 'When will the Messiah come?'

Now we have to explain here the Talmudic use of the word **Min**. This word is used generally for sectarian, somebody who belongs to a sect, somebody who may have cut himself off from the general community of Israel. The Talmud normally uses the word **Min**, however, especially in the Talmudic period and R. Abbahu is in the Talmudic period, to connote the believer in Jesus Christ, in Jesus as the Messiah. So when Talmud speaks of a **Min**, it speaks of somebody who is a believer in Jesus as the Messiah.

So one **Min** asks R. Abbahu, when will the Messiah come? Of course, the Talmud already told us the story of the cock and the bat, and basically, he is comparing here the **Min** to the bat, that is blind, and to the one that says: 'the day of the Lord, the day of the Lord', in the context of the prophet Amos. So, he replied: 'When darkness covers those people'. This phrase is alluding to the person who is questioning R. Abbahu, that means when darkness covers the believers, that is when the Messiah will come. This **Min**, this believer turns to R. Abbahu and says: 'You curse me'. R. Abbahu, of course, being embarrassed by the believer's retort, answers him 'It is but a verse [in other words, I am not really cursing you I am only quoting the Bible and just giving you a verse. So then he quotes the whole verse, that is taken from Isaiah chapter 60 verse 2, which is a very messianic chapter, very messianic prophesy that says: *For behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall shine upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.*' So by doing this R. Abbahu so to speak gets out of the accusation that he cursed the believer. Abbahu

apparently had to backtrack from his words, and his implications, and said: No, I am not cursing you, I am just quoting the Bible, and of course the verse is not really against those that darkness covers them, because it is a verse that says: *behold, the darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall shine upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee.* So in getting out of cursing the believer and speaking against him he ends up, because of his embarrassment, blessing the believer in this context. This of course is an interesting insight into relationship that existed between the establishment of the Jewish Diaspora and the Jewish believers. In other words, R. Abbahu didn't feel comfortable with the Jewish believer thinking that the Rabbi is cursing him. It shows, that the relationship in community was not as bad, as one might think it was. That they still had some mutual respect and relationship within the Jewish community with the believers.

We'll be continuing from the same page in the continuation passage and I am quoting. It has been taught: R. Eliezer said: the days of the Messiah will last forty years, as it is written, *Forty years long shall I take hold of the generation.* R. Eleazar b. Azariah said: Seventy years, as it is written, *And it shall come to pass on that day, that Tyre shall be forgotten seventy years, according to the days of one king.* [There are two quotations, one is taken from Psalm 95 verse 10, the second one is taken from Isaiah 33 verse 15. Both quotations are in a messianic context. The first one is a Psalm, that is quoted in Hebrews chapter 3, and it is clearly a messianic context, and written against those that rebel against God, and God has given them a forty years chance, before he brings upon them the judgment. That is very interesting, because it stands in complete contradiction to the concept of the Messiah that is prevalent in Judaism today. The days of the Messiah, as most Jews today would take them would be the days of Glory and victory and subjugation of the nations

and there will be no death and no illness and no sickness, that's the days of the Messiah for most people. But here, according to all opinions that we've read: R. Eliezer, R. Eleazar b. Azariah, R. Hillel, R. Joseph - all of these Rabbis, both from the **tannaitic** period and the **ammoraitic** period look at the days of the Messiah as the days of affliction, for the nations of the world, if not for Israel. They do not see the days of the Messiah only as the days of victory. They are comparing the days of the Messiah to the suffering and affliction of the forty years in the wilderness. These forty years were not the years of victory, neither were the four hundred years from Abraham to the Exodus from Egypt. In both cases the days of the Messiah are days of suffering and not days of victory. So they are reflecting here the very ancient viewpoint, that is completely in agreement with the New Testament that the days of the Messiah are days of affliction, days of suffering. They are not looking here at the Messiah in the sense of the Davidic king, sitting on the throne and subjugating the nations. They are looking here at the Messiah as the suffering servant, that comes here to earth to dwell among the people and to suffer with them their affliction, their years of wilderness experience and their years of slavery in Egypt. That within itself should open our minds to think in ways that are different than we've been thinking till now.

The second text is from Isaiah, which is the war of God and Israel against Tyre, which lasts seventy years. It is interesting how the Rabbis take these passages, that are totally unrelated to each other. They put them in opposition to one another, in contradiction to one another, and so from them the length of time that the years of the Messiah, the days of the Messiah one earth will be. One says it'll be forty years, the other one says it'll be seventy years. They draw them from passages, that in our eyes don't have anything to do with the Messiah directly, but in the eyes of the Rabbis, they associate them with the Messiah, because they deal with messianic

topics. Now who is the one uniquely distinguished king? The Messiah, of course.

Rabbi said: Three generations; for it is written, *They shall fear thee with the sun, and before the moon* [they shall fear thee], *a generation and generations*. [a quotation from Psalm 72 verse 5, the verse is interpreted: They shall fear thee when Messiah comes, who is referred to as the sun, and they shall fear thee on account of the reign of the house of David, which is likened to the moon, for a generation (one) and generations (two) to come. So because it was generation and generations, as one singular and at least two plural generations, ***mi dor dorim***, in Hebrew. Therefore they say: the Messiah's reign will be three generations of forty years each, which means hundred and forty years.

It is interesting that they are dealing with these issues, how long will the Messiah's reign be. Now it's even more interesting, that in this context none of these Rabbis are bringing the issue of a thousand years, because normally speaking, you would say that the Messiah would be here for a thousand years, like the most Christians argue about the millenium. How long will the Messiah be here, and most Christians say: well the messianic era, the period, in which the Messiah will rule the world will be a thousand years. We have already seen this concept, but in this discussion of how long the Messiah will be here on earth we see, one says - forty years, one says - seventy years, and one now says - three generations, which means a hundred and twenty years. None are mentioning here the thousand year's reign, which shows, that thousand years concept was not the only concept within Judaism, that discusses the reign of the Messiah here on earth. We also see again that the way that the Rabbis fight with each other with verses, they argue and each one brings a verse. In other words, even though the verse is brought sometimes completely from outside circumstances, from the discussion of the Messiah at all, but it still brought

to substantiate their view.

R. Hillel said: There shall be no Messiah for Israel, because they have already enjoyed him in the days of Hezekiah. This statement is repeated many times in the Talmud. This statement by Hillel, which basically says, the promises of the Messiah in the prophets, which we already have mentioned at least once, will have already been consumed in that time, and Messiah didn't come, and therefore he is not coming, or if he is coming, he is coming in a totally different way than we expected him. So Hillel's statement is repeated here in order to bring the discussion by R. Joseph, who said: May God forgive him [for saying so]. R. Joseph here is directly contradicting Hillel, and says, Hillel was wrong in his assessment that the Messiah will not come, that we have eaten the Messiah in the days of Hezekiah. Pretty strong statement, that one Rabbi says about another that preceded him. Now when did Hezekiah flourish? During the first Temple. Yet Zechariah, prophesying in the days of the second, proclaimed, *Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion; shout, O daughter of Jerusalem; behold, thy king cometh unto thee! He is just, and having salvation; lowly, and riding upon an ass, and upon a colt the foal of an ass.* Now the Rabbi Joseph's statement is very interesting, because what does he say? He says, Hillel's statement can not be right. Why? We have prophets, who lived hundreds of years after Hezekiah, who still have messianic expectations, who still give messianic prophesies, for which they are waiting to still happen. So he brings here the famous prophesy from Zechariah, talking about the Messiah coming on a donkey, taken from the chapter 9 verse 9. So, he says: it can not be that Hillel was right, that Israel has lost the messianic era, because we still have prophets that came after Hezekiah, later on during the post exilic period, like Zechariah the prophet, who were still waiting for the Messiah, and were still giving promises, that the Messiah would actually come.

This is a significant disproof of Hillel's view point, that there is no Messiah for Israel in that they have eaten him in the days of Hezekiah. But it is also interesting that he brings this prophesy from Zechariah clearly as a messianic prophesy. That is that the Messiah will come to Jerusalem to bring salvation and to proclaim his justice, and he will come on a donkey, on an ass. It was no accident, that Jesus came into Jerusalem on an ass, as we read in Luke 19. He told his disciples to go and get him an ass, donkey, and bring that donkey to him, so that he can ride him to Jerusalem. He could've walked in to Jerusalem, he didn't need the donkey because he was tired. He just could've walked like the disciples walked with him all along the way, he could have walked into Jerusalem like everybody else did, but no. When he came to the top of the mount of Olives, and the village of Bethany, where Jerusalem was already within sight, he told his disciples: "Go there, you'll see a donkey tied, bring it to me and if somebody asks you: 'Why are you taking it?' - Say: 'The Master has need of it!'" And, of course, that's exactly what happens. They go to untie the donkey and a man that owns the donkey comes and says: 'Listen, what are you doing with my donkey?' They said: 'The Master has need of it,' and the man immediately allows them to take it, which means that the man himself understood what is: 'The Master has need of it'. He understood that this is a donkey that Messiah will ride into Jerusalem, the deliverer will come to Jerusalem on his donkey, and that's why he allowed his donkey to be taken by two Galilean strangers.

Compare that to today if I have my car parked in the side of the road, and I see two people trying to jimmy the lock, and to brake into the car. So I say: 'What are you doing to my car?', and they say: 'The Master has need of it', and I say: 'OK, go ahead and take it'. The only way I would do that if I would recognize who the Master is, his authority, his place and his promise, and when I do that, I don't mind giving my car to somebody that I would recognize as

the Messiah or as the Master. So, that's what happened there in the fulfillment of this prophecy of Zechariah. Our interest is that Talmud here and particularly R. Joseph recognizes that this prophecy is talking about the coming of the Messiah into Jerusalem, like Jesus fulfilled it, without any doubt. It would be very strange today, in an era of cars and jet planes and concords that fly faster than the speed of sound for the Messiah to come to Jerusalem on a donkey. Living in Jerusalem I've seen many people, who are not completely normal coming into Jerusalem on a donkey, and thinking that they are the Messiah, only because they haven't change their clothes for a few weeks and they are riding on a donkey.

We continuing with another **baraita**, an external source belonging to the **tannaitic** period. The Talmud brings another source, another idea on this issue. R. Eliezer said: The days of the Messiah will be forty years. Here it is written, *And he afflicted thee, and suffered thee to hunger, and fed thee with manna;* while else where it is written, *Make us glad, according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us.* These quotations are taken, one from Deuteronomy chapter 8 verse 3. The context of it, of course, is the forty years in the wilderness, that the people of Israel ate manna from heaven. The second one is from Psalm 90 verse 15 also talks about the forty years in the wilderness where they have been ruled by the kingship of God in the wilderness. Because during that period it was considered that Moses was a messenger of God, and the real ruler of Israel and the guide of Israel was God Himself, through the presence that he had over the Tent of the Meeting in the wilderness that Moses had built. So God's presence was constantly over the camp in the pillar of fire at night, and the pillar of cloud by day. God was really their king, Moses and Aaron were only messengers. They didn't serve as the real rulers of the people, but God Himself served as the ruler of the people during that period. So, R. Eliezer's viewpoint

is that the time of the Messiah is forty years. Just like we read earlier from Psalm 95 verse 10 that it said: *Forty years I was offended by that generation.* So as it was earlier said in R. Eliezer's viewpoint brought by R. Eleazar b. Azariah is that it is forty years in the wilderness. And from there he takes the days of the Messiah, and he repeats that viewpoint again, bringing these two verses.

Now, continuing to read from the Talmud. R. Dosa said: Four hundred years [not forty]. It is here written, *And they shall serve them; and they shall afflict them four hundred years;* whilst elsewhere it is written, *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us.* And the four hundred years, of course, is the years of slavery in Egypt. In both cases, the one taken from Genesis chapter 50 verse 13, where God tells Abraham: 'Listen, you will not inherit the Land, and your seed will not inherit the Land until they serve another nation for four hundred years, and only after that I will bring them in to inherit the Land.' The other verse that is taken here is a quotation from Psalm 90 verse 15. In both cases the days of affliction here are the reverse of the days of the Messiah. The days of the Messiah are equivalent in rejoicing as to the days of affliction. That is the way in both cases that a **baraita** brings the same verse, "Make us glad, according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us." (Psalm 90:15) to deduct the length of the time of the Messiah. The concept here is "measure for measure," by the measure that we were afflicted we will also be rewarded during the days of the Messiah. This concept is not so different from the one presented earlier in the name of Rabbi Eliezer, that the days of the Messiah are days that "Darkness shall cover the earth, and gross darkness the people: but the Lord shall shine upon thee, and his glory shall be seen upon thee." But, it is different in the sense that the days of the Messiah will be days of "darkness for the nations," but light and glory for

Israel.

I am continuing the reading. Rab said: Three hundred and sixty five years, even as the days of the solar year, as it is written, *For the day of vengeance is in my heart, and the year of my redemption is come.* This is taken from Isaiah chapter 63 verse 4. It is interesting, because he said here, three hundred and sixty five days, according to the solar year, that raises the whole question, what kind of calendar the Rabbis really go by in the second Temple period. Did they go by the Roman calendar, which was the solar calendar, like the people in Qumran and the Aphines went by, or did they go by the lunar calendar, that modern Judaism today uses and goes by, like the Arab world. It may very well be, that Jews, during the tannaitic period and during the second century even in Babylon went according to the solar calendar. However it is clear here, that he is talking about the days of the solar calendar, and the day of the Messiah will be like a year in the days of the solar calendar, three hundred and sixty five days, in which there will be the years of redemption. The verse, of course, says that each one of these days will be a day of God's vengeance. So the vengeance of God will be the period of the messianic reign. Each year of each day of the mission of the Messiah will be a year of God's vengeance on the world. That fits within the view that we saw earlier, that there is no difference between the days of the Messiah and now, other than the subjugation of the nations. If that's your view then you may be very right to say, that the Messiah will come to carry out vengeance against the nations, who have persecuted Israel and who have been unfaithful to God. However this is a totally different view of what the messianic era suppose to be, and we see that reflected through the discussion of how long the messianic reign will be?

So the Talmud asks the question. What is meant by '*the days of vengeance is in mine heart*'? - R. Johanan said: I have [so to speak] revealed it in mine heart,

but not to my [outer] limbs. [I.e., I have kept my intentions sealed in my heart, not giving expression to them with my tongue, that all my limbs should know thereof.] In other words, I've kept these doctrines, that I am about to reveal to you, says R. Johanan, in my heart. R. Shimon b. Lakish said: I have revealed it to my heart and to the Angels of Heaven I have not revealed it. [He didn't realize that he got that from the angels themselves]. What did he keep?

R. Abimi the son of R. Abbahu taught: The days of Israel's Messiah shall be seven thousand years, as it is written, *As the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee.* [Referring to Isaiah chapter 62 verse 5. The bridegroom's rejoicing is seven days, and God's day is a thousand years. Therefore if the bridegroom rejoices for seven days, for a week over his bride, than God will rejoice over the world for seven thousand years. That is the opinion of these things of R. Abimi the son of R. Abbahu.]

Rab Judah said in Samuel's name: The days of the Messiah shall endure as long as from the Creation until now, as it is written, *[That your days may be multiplied, and the days of your children, in the land which the Lord sware unto your fathers to give to them], as the days of heaven upon the earth.* So R. Juda believes that as long as the earth exists, as we know it today it will also be the messianic era, and he brings this verse from Deutoronomy 9:21 to justify his view.

In summary for this study we see that the Rabbis were occupied with the issue of how long will the Messiah be here on earth. How long his reign will last. For one generation - the shortest to the longest view that he will be as long as the creation until now. Of course, the Rabbis who lived in the fifth and sixth centuries in Babylon didn't realize that the world would exist for another one and a half thousand years. That the world till now has existed almost six

thousand years. So therefore they say the Messiah will come in another six thousand years, that is the longest opinion. The shortest is one generation.

These things are interesting from the point of view that the New Testament actually doesn't deal with this issue very much, actually very little. So the only thing that one could say about the New Testament, that it looks forward to a period, that symbolically, in my opinion, is called the reign of a thousand years, in which Satan will be restricted, and God will have his reign here on earth for a thousand years. However the fact, that there are so many opinions, and that each opinion is bringing a verse to justify it's view, and each Rabbi has his own idea, indicate that we don't have a clear Biblical mandate, that can say, how long will the messianic era last. If they had a verse that would close the arguments, says: 'This is clearly what the Bible says', then they would have nothing to argue about. However each one is drawing his verse from different contexts, from different settings and from different world views. Therefore they have these discussions from forty years to as long as the world lasts up for the Messianic time.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 12

by Joseph Shulam

We are discussing the subject of the Messiah in the Talmud, concentrating mainly on the Messianic section in the tractate Sanhedrin between pages 95 a to a 105 b. We have looked at a number of concepts, at a number of passages that deal with the Messianic concept within Judaism and within the Talmudic world. When we talk about the Talmudic world we mean the Jewish scholars, who discussed the subject of

Jewish Law and tradition sometime between the first century AD and the fifth century AD. The Talmud, as we have said before is a conglomerate of material, some of it early, and even some from the first century BC, and some of them quite late, from Byzantine period, and that conglomerate has been edited and put together by Jewish scholars. The Talmud is based on the Mishnah, the earlier document that was compiled by 210 with the death of R. Judah the President, or as he was called in Hebrew - Judah HaNassi.

So, I will continue our study from tractate Sanhedrin in the Babylonian Talmud p. 100 a, second paragraph, and it reads like this.

R. Jeremiah sat before R. Zera and declared: The Holy One, blessed be He, will bring forth a stream from the Holy of Holies, at the side of which shall be all kinds of delicious fruits, as it is written, and by the river upon that bank thereof, on this side and on that side shall grow all trees for meat, whose leaf shall not fade, neither shall the fruit thereof be consumed: it shall bring forth new fruit, according to its months, because their waters issued out of the sanctuary: and the fruit thereof shall be for meat, and the leaf thereof for medicine. [Ez 47:12] Whereupon a certain old man said to him, 'Well spoken! And R. Johanan taught likewise'.

Let us analyze this first section first, which includes a quotation from prophet Ezekiel chapter 47 verse 12. This quotation speaks of a time in which there will be a river of water flowing from Jerusalem eastward towards the Dead Sea, and on the banks of that river there will be trees with fruit, whose leaves will not wither and not fade, and they shall be green all the year round and they will have fruit and each month they will give new fruit and the leaves of those fruits will be used as medicine. In order to understand the section here, one has to understand a little bit about the geography of Jerusalem and of Israel in general. East of Jerusalem is the Judean

desert. The Judean desert is one of the most desolate deserts of the world, trees are hardly there at all, and it flows to the lowest part on the planet Earth, which is the Dead Sea, and the ground around the Dead Sea is salty, and there it is very difficult to grow anything on that salty parched dry ground. For this reason, when the prophet describes the messianic reign, the messianic kingdom and the last days, he describes them in terms of Jerusalem, which is high up in the mountains, producing the river, that will flow eastward toward the Dead Sea, and it will have fruit year round every months, and the leaves of those trees will be for medicine.

We are told by the Talmud, that R. Jeremiah, who sat before his own Rabbi, R. Zera, in Babylon, and told him this fantastic story from the book of Ezekiel. That a river will flow from Jerusalem, and the trees on its banks will bring fruit. And then speaks a certain old man whom we are not told who he is. When the Talmud normally speaks in this term 'a certain old man', they usually refer as a euphemism to Elijah the Prophet. One of the commentators of the Talmud said, it is Elijah the prophet who comes and says to R. Jeremiah: 'Listen, you speak well, but actually I already heard R. Johanan, an earlier Rabbi, who said the same thing.' Basically what this certain old man is telling R. Jeremiah, that it is the nice thing you are saying, but it is plagiarized. It is taken from R. Johanan's teaching. In that discussion R. Jeremiah said to R. Zera: Such an attitude [of this old man whether it be Elijah or somebody else] savors of irreverence. In other words, it is casting a shadow over the teaching of this Rabbi. R. Zera answers him. He replied: 'But he merely supported you!' In other words, by saying: you've spoken well, and I've already heard it from R. Johanan, he is not really criticizing you, but he is actually agreeing with you that this is something true, even if you have taken it from R. Johanan.

Now, this brings the Talmud to attempt to show by

comparison, how this old man Elijah did not really speak irreverently of R. Jeremiah. So it brings another story of R. Johanan, that shows what really is irreverent in rabbinical context, and this is what it brings.

R. Johanan was sitting and teaching: The Holy One, blessed be He, will bring jewels and precious stones, each thirty cubits long, and thirty cubits high, and make an engraving in them, ten by twenty cubits, and set them up as the gates of Jerusalem, for it is written, And I will make thy windows of agates, and thy gates of carbuncles.

Let's explain a little bit this statement. R. Johanan was sitting and teaching that God is preparing jewels, huge jewels, thirty cubits high and thirty cubits long. Each cubit is about a foot and a half, it means jewels that are forty five feet high and forty five feet long. And for what is he preparing them? For the windows and the gates of Jerusalem, and he brings here a passage from Isaiah chapter 54 verse 12, which speaks that God will make the windows of agates and the gates of Jerusalem of carbuncles, which means here something like jade.

So this was R. Johanan's teaching. A certain disciple derided him saying, 'We do not find a jewel even as large as a dove's egg, yet such huge ones are to exist!' This is an exclamation with a question mark, this disciple did make fun of his Rabbi saying: 'Listen, we can hardly find a jewel that is as large as a dove's egg, much less that you are talking about forty five by forty five feet huge jewel.' The Talmud continues and says.

Some time later he took a sea journey and saw the ministering angels cutting precious stones and pearls. He said unto them: 'For what are these?' They replied: 'The Holy One, blessed be He, will set them up as the gates of Jerusalem.' On his return, he found R. Johanan sitting and teaching. He

said to him: 'Expound, O Master, and it is indeed fitting for you to expound, for even as you did say, so did I myself see.'

In other words the story goes that this disciple went out and found in the reality that there is such a thing, that it is very possible that God will actually make such huge jewels, that will serve as the gates and the windows of the walls of Jerusalem. He confirms the teaching of R. Johanan, so he came back and told him: 'Master, go on teaching, 'cause you've said the right thing, you've been teaching the right things. I saw it myself to be true. The Rabbi replied: 'Wretch! Had you not seen you would not have believed! You deride the words of the Sages!' He set his eyes upon him, and he turned into a heap of bones. This happens as a result of the fact that he was cursed by the Rabbi and directly died of the spot.

This is considered to be a story of what it means to deride, or to disbelieve, or to doubt the words of the Sages. Therefore let's analyze the story a little bit more in depth and try to understand it in its connection to the New Testament in a deeper way. R. Johanan's teaching was that there will be in the city of Jerusalem gates made out of precious stones. We find the same, or very similar teaching, in the New Testament in the book of Revelation chapter 21. I am reading from verse 9.

'Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, and spoke to me, saying, "come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And in the Spirit, he carried me away to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, having the glory of God, its radiance like a most rare jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall, with twelve gates, and at the gates twelve angels, and on the gates the names of twelve tribes of the sons of Israel were inscribed; on the east three

gates, on the north three gates, on the south three gates, and on the west three gates. And the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. And he who talked to me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city and its gates and walls. The city lies foursquare, its length the same as its breadth; and he measured the city with his rod, twelve thousand stadia;'

And we continue reading from verse 18.

'The wall was built of jasper, while the city was pure gold, clear as glass. The foundations of the wall of the city were adorned with every jewel; the first was jasper, the second sapphire, the third agate, the fourth emerald, the fifth onyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysolite, the eleventh jacinth, the twelfth amethyst. And the twelve gates were twelve pearls, each of the gates made of a single pearl, and the street of the city was pure gold, transparent as glass.'

In other words, when we read the passage of R. Johanan and his interpretation of these jewels, and we read the book of Revelation, we see that both are talking about the same thing. Both are talking about the city of Jerusalem, having its gates made from agate, made from precious stones, or pearls. The statement in the Talmud describes, and of course what this certain disciple was doubting is the size of these stones, that is it even possible to get these stones, because he says, before he took this journey into the far country over the sea, he couldn't believe that there are such size stones and pearls. But when he went and he saw the people, or the way he called them they must've been very kind and wonderful people, he called them ministering angels, that were working, carving out these stones, he came back and said to R. Johanan: 'You were right in your teaching, there really is such a thing'. But R. Johanan's response was: 'You are

wretch!' Why? Because you did not believe unless you have seen. And by this you derided the words of the Sages. You did not accept the validity, the authority of the Sages automatically by faith, unless you yourself could see it.'

This is another one of these connections with the New Testament. Jesus said earlier as it is recorded in the gospel of John chapter 20 in the story of Thomas' doubting the resurrection of Jesus and requesting to actually touch the hand of Jesus and to feel the print of the nails in his hands. So Jesus appeared to the disciples in Jerusalem, where Thomas was with the rest, and allows Thomas to see and to touch the wounds. When Thomas does that, he says: 'My Lord and my God!' *Jesus said to him [in verse 29]: "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe."* In other words we have the same situation here with Jesus and his disciple Thomas who also doubted the report, that Jesus rose from the dead, until that he could actually see his hands and his wounds, and then of course he explains that great explanation: 'My Lord and my God!', and then Jesus says to him, not as a compliment: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe!" Jesus doesn't curse Thomas the way that R. Johanan does, according to this story, who curses him and turns him into a heap of bones, but he still says: "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe". Thomas has seen and then believes, which is already a good thing. But it is much better to trust God and his report and his word even if you have not seen with your own eyes the physical evidence of the work of God. In the Talmud one is expected to accept the authority and the integrity of the messengers of God, in this case the Sages, the Rabbis of his day.

We see in these two sections the connection of the world of Jesus Christ. We see that the Jewish Rabbis believed in this new Jerusalem, having gates made out of precious stones, taken from the promise that God gave in Isaiah, and we see the relationship between

the disciple and his Rabbi in relationship to doubting or deriding or taking lightly the report of the Rabbis, and not taking by faith to be true.

I would like to go back to Isaiah chapter 54 and to talk about this whole concept of a new Jerusalem, and its walls and its gates made out of agates and of precious stones. In my opinion this version of the New Jerusalem, and that which appears in the book of Revelation, needs to be understood from its first century Jewish perspective, or shall I say, at least from a Jewish perspective, and not from some mystical apocalyptic viewpoint as it is traditionally understood in many of the Protestant denominations. Let's go back to the verse, that the Talmud quotes over here, that relates to the gates made of agates and carbuncles and walls made of precious stones. It appears of course in Isaiah chapter 54 verse 12. Lets look first at the general context of this chapter, in order to make it even more fascinating before we get into that text, let us look at the idea of a New Jerusalem from the context of the prophet Isaiah. It is Isaiah who first foresees the destruction of this world and the appearance of a new heaven and new earth. In doing so we see, that in Isaiah chapter 60 we are told about the work of God on Zion from verse 15 and on.

'Whereas you have been forsaken and hated, with no one passing though, I will make you majestic for ever, a joy from age to age. You shall suck the milk of nations, you shall suck the breasts of kings; and you shall know that I, the Lord, am your Savior and your Redeemer, the Mighty One of Jacob. Instead of bronze I will bring gold, and instead of iron I will bring silver; instead of wood, bronze, instead of stones, iron. I will make your overseers peace and your taskmasters righteousness. Violence shall no more be heard in your land, devastation or destruction within your borders; you shall call your walls Salvation, and your gates Praise. The sun shall be no more your light by day, not for brightness shall the moon give

light to you by night; but the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your God will be your glory. Your sun shall no more go down, nor your moon withdraw itself; for the Lord will be your everlasting light, and your days of mourning shall be ended. Your people shall all be righteous; they shall possess the land for ever, the shoot of my planting, the work of my hands, that I might be glorified."

This wonderful promise is talking about Zion, about the city of the Lord, about Jerusalem, and the whole context here is that of Jerusalem. Wonderful promise to Jerusalem, that he will change the material nature of Jerusalem, instead of wood there will be bronze, instead of stone there will be iron, instead of bronze there will be gold, and instead of iron there will be silver. He changes the material structure, he changes the cosmic order, because the sun and the moon will pass away and God himself will be the light of Jerusalem and of his people. In this context also appears the whole request of God and the prophet himself in chapter 62:

'For Zion's sake I will not keep silent, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her vindication goes forth as brightness, and her salvation as a burning torch. The nations shall see your vindication and all the kings your glory'.

The whole chapter continues that Zion is going to be glorified, the walls of Jerusalem will be vindicated, there will be watchmen of the walls by day and by night and God will no longer remember the sin of the people, and that gates of Jerusalem will be a passage way of all people to the Lord. This version, which is connected with a new Jerusalem, a different Jerusalem, a changed Jerusalem is the same context, general context of what Isaiah 54 is speaking of blessing to the city of Jerusalem. The chapter starts:

'Sing, O barren one, who did not bear; break forth into singing and cry aloud, you who have not been in

travail! For the children of the desolate one will be more than the children of her that is married, says the Lord. Enlarge the place of your tent, and let the curtains of your habitations be stretched out; hold not back, lengthen your cords and strengthen your stakes.'

Here the prophet is talking to Jerusalem, there will be a major change, instead of desolation, suffering and war there will be joy and glory and celebration with the Lord. It is said in verse 5:

'For your Maker is your husband, the Lord of hosts is his name; and the Holy One of Israel is your Redeemer, the God of the whole earth he is called. For the Lord has called you like a wife forsaken and grieved in spirit, like a wife of youth when she is cast off, says your God. For a brief moment I forsook you but with great compassion I will gather you, In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you, says the Lord, your Redeemer.'

And it is in this context, talking about Jerusalem in this very unusual style, the prophet says: '*I will make your pinnacles* [this word in Hebrew is windows] *of agate, your gates from carbuncles, and all your walls of precious stones.*' [verse 12]. It is the renewing of Jerusalem after long period of God hiding his face from her, after a long period of desolation after which there is a renewal of Jerusalem. This is the context of the passage that brings this promise of God of precious stones being the gates and the walls in the city of Jerusalem. So, out of this context the writer of the book of Revelation takes his description of this new Jerusalem that is supposed to descend from heaven and gulp the old Jerusalem after it is destroyed together with the order of the cosmos, as Isaiah 60 describes it.

In my opinion these connections are important for understanding the messianic concept within the Talmud,

within Judaism of how they saw the coming of the Messiah and his kingdom. It is also interesting for us, of course, to see how the Talmud looks at relationships of a Rabbi and his disciple, and what sin it is, a disciple who has doubt or who derides his Master, in order to understand a little bit of the relationship between the two. We will continue on page 100 a in our next study.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 13

by Joseph Shulam

We are teaching about the Messiah in the Talmud. This section of the Babylonian Talmud the tractate Sanhedrin between p. 95 and p. 105 is mostly messianic teaching, but in it there are embedded all kinds of concepts and all kinds of ideas, that are important for understanding the messianic setting of the Jewish world. We are now in Sanhedrin p. 100 a, we are going to continue this study with the words of R. Judah.

R. Judah, son of Simeon expounded: He who emaciates his face for the sake of the study of the Torah in this world, the Holy One, Blessed be He, will make his luster shine in the next, as it is written, His countenance shall be as the Lebanon, excellent as the cedars.

This is a very interesting statement, but we need to put it a in a little bit broader context. The word 'emaciates' that the Soncino translation of the Talmud uses here is in Hebrew 'blackens', from concentration, from suffering for the sake of the study of the Torah. So we see here a very interesting principle. The rabbis teach, in this case R. Judah the son of R. Simeon, that if a person suffers, of if

a person dedicates himself, the point of pain in the study of the Torah, the Holy One of Israel will make his face to shine in the next world. In other words, if you invest in this world, you will reap in the world to come. If you will dedicate and suffer for the sake of the study of the Torah, for the sake of the Torah in this world, in the world to come you will have your reward. Basically this is what R. Judah, son of R. Simeon says.

This opens up a whole discussion that we are going to get into and see how it is paralleled in the New Testament. First let me again read the verse from which R. Judah draws his conclusion. He takes a verse from Song of Songs chapter 5 verse 15 in order to draw, that in the world to come, the person who emaciates his face, suffers, for the sake of the Torah, will shine brightly like the Lebanon. Lebanon being, by the way, one of the names of one of the seven heavens. I think it is the third heaven in Jewish thinking, and we know from 1 Corinthians 12, that Paul said, that he was caught up in the third heaven. Lebanon is a name of one of the heavens, and that's why he draws that in the world to come his face will shine brightly. Therefore let's go to the Song of Songs chapter 5 and see what happens. The context of chapter 5 is that the bride describes her beloved, starts from verse 10: *'My beloved is white and ruddy, the chief among ten thousand'*. She continues the description of his eyes: *'His eyes are as the eyes of doves by the rivers of waters, washed with mild, and fitly set'*. Then in verse 15 she describes his legs: *'His legs are as pillars of marble, set upon sockets of fine gold: his countenance is as Lebanon, excellent as the cedars'*.

From this verse R. Judah son of R. Simeon draws the fact that his face will be like the Lebanon, and meaning here Lebanon the third heaven. Now of course the context of this passage has nothing to do with the world to come in its simple understanding of the text. So, how did R. Judah son of R. Simeon, who was

not stupid, how did he get from this verse to this kind of teaching? This is called a midrash, it means that they used the words of the text, devoid of their context and making application of something that is sometimes totally disconnected. We see the same type of usage of the Old Testament in the New Testament. When the Gospel of Matthew says: '*Out of Egypt have I called My Son*', to refer to the fact that the baby Jesus went to Egypt with his father and mother, and then when Herod died, and the news got to Egypt that Herod was dead, the baby Jesus, his mother and father came out of Egypt. On that Matthew says: He is fulfilling the verse from Hosea '*Out of Egypt have I called My Son*', which in reality has nothing to do with Jesus, has nothing to do, in fact, with the Messiah.

The same kind of usage we see here, that R. Judah making of this verse in the Song of Songs. Now to the western mind that would seem ridiculous, why would he do that? However the concepts behind the usage of the text of the Bible in the Jewish world were quite different then our modern attitude toward the text of the Bible. The Rabbis, already in the time of Jesus, and probably Matthew, and probably Jesus himself had a very Jewish view of Scriptures. Having a Jewish view of the Scriptures, they felt that not only the simple logical understanding of the text is applicable, but that in the words of the text themselves there are hints, there are what is called in Hebrew **remes**, a hint, a whiff, like a whiff of smell of deeper thinking, that can be applied in different contexts, where the simple understanding is not the main thing, but what it hints at is a valid understanding. So that's how R. Judah uses this verse from the Song of Songs, and we called that a **midrash**. There are many kinds of **midrashim**, this is just one kind of midrash, that is being used here by R. Judah to make his point. The Talmud actually continues the same theme from different sources. In other words, editors of the Talmud collected different Rabbis, from different periods, that taught, more or less the same idea. So

we continue.

R. Tanhum b. R. Hanilai said: He who starves himself for the sake of the study of the Torah on this world, the Holy One, blessed be He, will fully satisfy him in the next, as it is written, They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

We see the same formula that R. Judah uses here this time by R. Tanhum, where he says, if somebody starves themselves for the sake of the study of the Torah, in other words, he doesn't work, he satisfies himself with very little. In the modern Jewish orthodox world that means he makes study of the Torah his wife work, and he spends the time with the boys in the **Yeshivah**, studying the Torah. Therefore the idea is the same as the previous idea, if somebody suffers for the sake of the study of the Torah, God will richly reward him, and he will abundantly satisfy himself in the *fatness of thy house*, of the house of God that means, and *drink of the river of thy pleasures*. This is a quotation from Psalms 36 verse 9, which of course there again, the context is the same type of **midrashic** thinking as in the previous verse. The ideas here are very similar to the previous one, just in the first one it was emaciates his face, or blackens his face, and in this one, who is starving himself for the sake of the Torah. In the next one we have the discussion continuing.

When R. Dimi [R. Dimi's name means 'the one who packs a load'], he said: The Holy One, blessed be He, will give every righteous man His full hand [of reward], for it is written, Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation selah.

This verse is brought from Psalm 68:20. When we say these numbers of the Psalms, I have to mention, that sometimes the Hebrew numbering of the Psalms is different then the English numbering. It could be a

verse forward, or the verse backward, in some sections of the book of Psalms even a whole psalm forward or backward, and so be aware of this when you look for the references. Now, R. Dimi's statement brings in another dimension. It says, that God will load every righteous man, give him His full hand. What is R. Dimi's argument in this case? The previous ones saw the reward as a counter balance, to the kind of suffering that you had in this world. One said, if you blacken your face - your face will shine brightly. The other one said, if you starving in this world for the study of the Torah - you will have food and drink.

In other words, it was like 'this for that', but R. Dimi brings in another dimension. He says: it is not cause and effect, strictly counter balance of the reward, but God will give every righteous person his full hand, not according to the measure or to the aspect of your suffering in this world but a full measure. He will fill your hands with all of his glory, and not only in respect to your suffering in this world. This is a new dimension, that R. Dimi brings into the picture, and we need to look at this verse, that adds another aspect to exact reward for exact suffering. The verse itself, that R. Dimi brings says: *Blessed be the Lord, who daily loads us with benefits, even the God of our salvation Selah.* In other words, the real reward for R. Dimi is not only in the world to come, 'measure for measure'. It is not merely 'tit for tat', but it is that daily, even now, God rewards us with his benefits, but in the world to come - his salvation. In other words, it is a very new idea, that R. Dimi is introducing, while the formula is still the same. The difference lies in the dimensions of it. It is not only in the world to come, but daily, and in the world to come, salvation. Not if you give up food, you get food, but of you do what's right by God, and you live in his righteousness, then you receive now - daily bread, the way Jesus said: *Give us*

today our daily bread, and also salvation.

Abaye, one of the famous Babylonian Rabbis demurred, in other words, he objected to R. Dimi's broadening of the scope of this relationship.

Abaye demurred: But it is possible to say thus: is it not written, Who hath measured the waters in the hollow of his hand, and meted out heaven with his span?

This verse is taken from Isaiah 40 verse 12. In other words, Abaye disagrees with R. Dimi. His objection to R. Dimi is this. R. Dimi says: God will fill your hands, 'fill your hands' is not an exact measure. If you are righteous, God will give you everything. He'll give you, like a Gospel of Luke says in chapter 6, verses 37, 38. The Gospel of Luke teaches the exact same thing that R. Dimi taught, but also the exact same thing, that R. Abaye is trying to demure. Verse 37 is on the basis of 'by the measure you measure you will be measured', it will be exact measurement of what you give you will get.

Luke says: 'Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven'. But in verse 38 Luke says like R. Dimi: 'Give, and it shall be given unto you; good measure, pressed down, and shaken together, and running over, shall men give into your bosom. For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall measured to you again'. In other words there is a kind of contradiction between the two halves of the verse, and that same contradiction is what caused the disagreement between R. Dimi and R. Abaye. On the one hand it says: 'by the measure you measure you will be measured', you will receive what you give. However, on the other hand, what does it mean: '...pressed down, and shaken together,' the impression is that you get more then you give. That is the point that Luke is making. This contradiction, this logical problem is the cause of demurring between R. Dimi and

Abaye.

We'll get back to the text of Luke and the text of Matthew in our discussion on that issue. Let's go back to the Talmud for now, and see how it deals with this situation. We'll read the reply of R. Dimi or of the Talmud on Abaye's objection.

He replied, Why are you not found familiar with the **aggadah**? [**Aggadah** means here the teachings of the Rabbis, that are brought outside of the **Mishnah** and outside of the context of the **Hallachic** discussions]. For it was said in the West West here meaning the Land of Israel, the East - Babylon. It doesn't mean New York, Brooklyn Heights. The West means the Land of Israel, because for the Rabbis that lived in Babylon, like Abaye and R. Dimi, during the **amoraic** period, that means - after the **Mishnah**, after 210 and on. For those Rabbis the West was Israel. In fact, the Sonsino translation that was made that was made by Jews at the turn of the century in England, much to my regret, it reads [i.e. Palestine]. But we are living in the state of Israel, and we are living in the west of Babylon, and so I'm just explaining the English translation of the text for those that will listen or read this in the English text.

For it was said in the West in the name of Raba b. Mari: The Holy One, blessed be He, will give to every righteous man 310 worlds, as it is written That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance [Hebrew. **yesh**] and I will fill their treasures: now the numerical value of **yesh** is 310.

Here you see a glimpse into the world of the Rabbis, especially in Babylon, and especially in the third - fourth century. The objection that Abaye brings here says that it is not endless unlimited giving of God a reward in the world to come, but it has a measure. This measure is in the word **yesh**, which in numerical value is 310. So, that's what a righteous man will inherit - 310 worlds, taken from the verse,

That I may cause those that love me to inherit substance and I will fill their treasures, taken from Proverbs chapter 8 verse 21, where Wisdom is describing our function. Now it is interesting that they took the numerical value of the word **yesh**, and they said that's how many worlds the righteous man will inherit. That describes a little bit the world of the Rabbis, which to us in modern thinking seems a bit ridiculous, but in the orthodox Jewish world even today they say: 'Oh, what a great wisdom there is here. He took a verse, and from the numerical value of this small word - 'to have' [the word **yesh** means to have, to be], he draws the conclusion, that there is going to be 310 worlds that the righteous man will inherit, not an unlimited amount.

I'm going to continue reading now in the Talmud, but then I will get back to the significance of parallels of the same teaching in the New Testament.

It has been taught, R. Meir said: In the measure which one measures, so will there be [measured out] to him, as it is written, *In measure, when it shooteth forth, thou wilt contend with it.* [That is a verse taken from Isaiah chapter 7 verse 8, meaning according to the Talmud: in the same measure that sin spreads, so it is punished, and conversely, the same holds good for righteousness - the conception of 'measure for measure'. With this word of R. Meir I want to go to the New Testament a little bit, before we enter in to the words of R. Judah, in the Talmud for the conclusion of this lesson.

In the New Testament we see that in the passage that we read already in Luke, that '*Judge not, and ye shall not be judged: condemn not, and ye shall not be condemned: forgive, and ye shall be forgiven*', this is clearly the concept of measure for measure, but in the words of Jesus himself, in verse 38: '*For with the same measure that ye mete withal it shall be measured to you again*'. The same teaching is repeated in the Sermon of the Mount, in Matthew chapter 7, verses 1 and

2: 'Judge not, that ye be not judged, For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, ye shall be measured to you again'. The word again is not in the original text, it is just the English stylistic edition, but the text says- 'by the measure you measure, you will be measured'.

Same thing, that R. Meir, this very early Rabbi that live at the end of the first, beginning of the second century [in other words he is not an **amora** but rather he is a **tanna**], and he says the same words, that Jesus says in the Sermon of the Mount, and it is a part of the main moral teaching of the New Testament. Now, that's a very interesting thing, if we ask, who took from who? Did Jesus take from the Rabbis, or did the Rabbis take this teaching from Jesus. Jesus precedes R. Meir by about 80-90 years, when he taught this teaching. It is interesting to think in these terms, but we don't have to think in these terms right now. What we do need to think about is how this relates to the passage in the Talmud and to our lives. Here you see in the New Testament this concept of measure for measure, judge not, so that you will not be judged, condemn not, so that you will not be condemned, by the measure you measure, you will be measured yourself. We have parables of Jesus that deal with this teaching. For example the parable of the man who wouldn't forgive his debtor, and then the king calls him back, after he had been forgiven by the king. The king says, 'You didn't forgive your brother. Therefore you are going to pay your debt fully to me. And he sent him to the jail until he paid in full'. All these parables and stories in the New Testament, that deal with this issue come from the principle of **meda kenegned meda**, measure for measure. It is the same idea that we see in the rabbinical world and which we find in the world of Jesus.

However, let's go back to the first half of our lesson, which dealt with the same principle on the

basis of those who sacrifice in this world, and inherit in the world to come. The section that we read in the beginning of this lesson, where the Rabbis - R. Judah son of R. Simeon, and R. Tanhum b. Hanilai, that held the same position. If we read again in the Sermon of the Mount in Matthew chapter 6, we see this [verse 19]:

'Lay not up for yourselves treasures upon the earth, where moth and rust doth corrupt [consume], and where thieves break through and steal: But lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust doth corrupt [consume], and where thieves do not break through nor steal: For where your treasure is, there will be your heart also.'

Here we see the principle, that is very similar to the one that we read by R. Judah son of R. Simeon. In other words, he says, if you suffer in this world for the sake of Torah, in this for the sake of the kingdom of heaven and the Gospel, you will be rewarded. First of all, because everything you set up in this world is corruptible, it spoils, it rusts, it's stolen by thieves, it is not of permanent value. However, whatever you do for the kingdom of God, is of permanent value, that means, that you will have permanent reward for it, very similar to what the Talmud was saying. The same continues in Matthew 6 later in the teaching of Jesus, and comes to it's conclusion in verse 33. *'But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you'*.

It is a very interesting difference between this teaching, and what the Talmud teaches. Notice, Jesus does say the same thing that R. Judah said, and R. Tanhum said, 'if you will starve yourself for the sake of study of the Torah you will get your reward', but it doesn't say you will get your reward in heaven. The reward here is not in heaven, the reward here is, probably, both in heaven and on earth. He says, if you put first the kingdom of God and his

righteousness, all these things, that he is being talking about till now, bringing a very famous quotation from a king, that was converted to Judaism, by the name of Mombus, in which he said consider the birds of the air, and the lilies of the field. They don't work for the food, God takes care of them, they don't work for the cloth, God dresses them. This principle of course is brought forth not to tell people not to work, but it is brought forth to tell you that God rewards those, who put the Kingdom of Heaven first. The same principle, that we read, that if you emaciate your face, if you blacken your face, if you suffer in this world to do the will of God, to study the Torah, then God will take care of you. If will starve to study the Torah, if you deprive yourself, if you make yourself suffer for the study of the Torah, God will reward you richly. The difference in the words of Jesus in Matthew 6:33 is, that he doesn't say in heaven. He doesn't say you will be rewarded only in heaven. The reward will come, that God will add to you all these things that you need in order to live now on this earth, whether it is food or clothing, we learn from the context, the larger context of Matthew 6. Therefore the principle of 'measure for measure', the way you act and what you give to God, you will reap the same. It is a principle that goes throughout all of the New Testament.

The Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 9 deals with this in the same way, as we have talked about it in the rabbinical world in our section. He says, those who sows sparely, will reap sparely. It says, whatever you sow, you will reap. That is the exact same principle, as measure for measure. You sow much seed in the ground you will reap much. The interesting thing is that it is not only in the context of giving your money to the Church, or to the ministry, or to the evangelist, or to the Christian TV, the context is everything in life. Judging your brother - by the measure your judge your brother you will be judged, condemning you brother - by measure

what you condemn your brother you also will be condemned. That principle is taught very little, and we need to reiterate it, and repeat it constantly in our lives, because this could be a wonderful motivation for us to do what is godly and what is right in the Kingdom of Heaven, because if we don't want others to condemn us, let's not condemn them, it want others to bless us, let's bless them. This valid Jewish principle goes throughout the whole New Testament: the Epistles, the Gospels, and all the way through the teaching of Jesus Christ.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 14

by Joseph Shulam

We are in the fourteenth lesson of the Messiah in the Talmud, in which we are basically studying sections from the Babylonian Talmud between pages 95 to 105. We are trying to go consecutively page after page, but obviously we couldn't touch every single sentence and every single idea that the Talmud presents, because we are concentrating on the messianic idea. In the last lesson we were discussing the statement of R. Judah the son of R. Simeon about people putting themselves in suffering because of the study of the Torah and as a result gain a blessing. This brings us to the principle that R. Meir brought of measure against measure. In other words, that God measures us as we measures others, and that life and relationships are based on measure against measure, one expression says 'one hand washes the other'. In other words, what you give is what you get, what goes around - comes around, these are expressions that basically in modern terms reflects the principle, that R. Meir brought here. Yeshua,

Jesus, taught the principle of measure for measure in the Sermon on the Mount very explicitly, and we have talked about that.

We didn't finish the last section, that is R. Judah's statement. I want to finish that statement, and then go on to some other section on page 100 b and 101 a in the tractate Sanhedrin. This will be kind of a shotgun approach, because there are sections that don't really interest us in the last parts of page 100 and 101. Therefore we are going to skip from here to there, in order to make progress in messianic idea, and how these things contribute to the discussion of the messianic idea. So we are on p. 100 a in the tractate Sanhedrin, and we are towards the bottom of the page and reading the statement of R. Judah.

R. Judah said: But can we say thus [that means measure against measure], if one gives a handful [of charity] to a poor man in this world, shall the Holy One, blessed be He give him His hand full in the next?

This is a very important question that also is relevant to the study of the New Testament which we discussed earlier. In other words, is this principle of measure against measure an exact principle? In other words, if you give ten thousand here, will you get ten thousand in heaven? Yeshua said, and we had spoken about this earlier, to lay up for your self treasures not where rust and where moth and where thieves can steal them and they can be corrupted and so forth, but lay up for yourself treasures in heaven. So, R. Judah's question is a very legitimate question, which asks: "OK, I'm willing to invest in heaven, but how does that work? Does it mean that if I give ten thousand here, will I get ten thousand back? If I give a loaf of bread here, will I get the loaf of bread in return? Is this principle an exact mathematical economic capitalist principle? That's R. Judah's question, and as a part of his question here he retorts and says:

Surely it is written, "and meted out heaven with the span?"

This is a part of a verse that we read earlier from Isaiah chapter 40 verse 12, and the part of the verse says: '*... and he meted out heaven with the span?*' In other words, he measured the heavens with His span. God has a measure, he has a standard, he has some way of measuring, and therefore the question is, when we talk about the principle of measure against measure, what is God's measure? The words of R. Judah here and of Yeshua are the same - measure against measure, by the measure you measure you will be measured. Now it says in Isaiah that God has a span, that he has a measuring stick. Is this measure cause and effect, equal payment? Is it some thing that can be measured?

[He replied:] Do you not admit this? [Now consider:] Which measure is greater? That of goodness [i.e. reward] or of punishment? Surely the measure of reward is greater than that of punishment, for with respect to the measure of goodness it is written, *And he commanded the clouds from above, and opened the doors of heaven, And rained down manna upon them to eat; whilst of the measure of punishment it is written, And the windows of heaven were opened.* [taken from Genesis chapter 7 verse 11].

Concerning the manna in the wilderness it says: *He opened the doors of heaven, and rained down manna upon them to eat.* And when he punished them in the flood, it says the *windows of heaven.* So, what is greater? The Talmud making a word play implies that the door is greater, that God's measure of giving goodness of reward is greater than God's measure of punishment, because one says the door for the blessing, and the other one says the window for the punishment. Therefore the Rabbis conclude, that God's measure of reward is greater then the measure of punishment.

Now continuing reading from page 100 b, it says:

Yet, in respect of the measure even of punishment it is written, And they shall go forth, and look upon the carcasses of the men that have transgressed against me, for their worm shall not die, neither shall their fire be quenched: and they shall be an abhorring unto all flesh.

This is a verse taken from Isaiah chapter 66, verse 24, so the Rabbis retort that the punishment is as great as the reward.

But if one puts his fingers into the fire in this world, it is immediately burned! - But just as the Holy One, blessed be he gives the wicked the strength to receive punishment, so does He give the righteous the capacity to receive reward. [I.e. that in both cases they are endowed with abnormal receptiveness, that God gives to each one - to the wicked the ability to receive the punishment, and to the righteous the ability to receive reward].

I want to elaborate a little bit on this discussion that we are talking about, because this concept of "measure for measure" is something that has been misused, especially in modern times in the west by people that try to raise money for good religious causes. So, some churches and some TV evangelists have viewed this idea that if you give to their ministry, then it is like depositing money in the slot-machine. You put in the coin, and God gives you hundred-fold, based on Luke 6 the passage, that deals with this "measure for measure." They have misused these principles in order to raise funds, promising people, that 'if you give me 10 dollars - God will give you a hundred, if you will give me a \$100 - you'll get \$1000, you'll be blessed richly because of the principle of "measure for measure".

Now it is interesting, that this discussion of the Rabbis upon R. Judah's statement, because R. Judah

says, that God must have some measure. It is not "measure against measure" applying that there are some reciprocal relationship between what you do and what you get. It's true in punishment and it's also true in reward, but the discussion here is about the proportion of this "measure for measure". R. Judah's idea is that it is equal, what you give is what you get, what you sow is what you reap. This principle is a good Biblical principle of the Old Testament and of New Testament. We see in 2 Corinthians chapter 9 verse 6 that Paul uses the principle of measure for measure and says: *'He which soweth sparingly shall reap also sparingly; and he which soweth bountifully shall reap also bountifully'*.

However it doesn't work mechanically. There are other considerations that need to be taken into account when one discusses this theme. I would say that it is not a simple equation, because into the giving go many different aspects. One of the aspects is if a person gives cheerfully, if he gives from his own desire, if he gives because there is a real need, and not in order to get a reward. The Ethics of the Fathers, **Perkey Avot**, one of the tractates of the Mishnah says very clearly, do not give in order to get a reward, give as glory to God, not in order to get a reward. If you give as glory to God you will get reward from God that will have eternal consequences, and if you give for other reasons you will get your reward from the other reasons, but you will lose the main reward that God, who is the rewarder of all, can give you.

This principle is important. When you give you have to give out of a pure heart, out of your love and out of a real need, and not out of desire to manipulate God into giving you more, which happens quite often. You can not manipulate God, because God looks into the heart. So, when you give, and when you do a good deeds, and when you keep commandments, all of these things have to be done with your heart. So do not be like the Pharisees, who give in order to be

seen by men. Yeshua teaches in the Sermon of the Mountain, that if you give, give in secret, so that your right hand knows not what the left is doing. You have to give as if you give to Yeshua himself, because in the judgment scene in Matthew chapter 25 verse 45 Yeshua said to the people who came and said: *'...When saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked ... and we ministered unto thee?'* He said: *'Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these of my brethren, ye have done it unto me'*.

In other words, the principle "measure against measure" has many aspects, and one of them is the sincerity of the gift. Second is the publicity, that a person gets or receives from his good deeds or his giving. Third, of course, is the principle - under what circumstances does one give? Did he give to be seen by men? Then he will receive his reward from men, but he will get no effect or reward, as far as God's economy is concerned. Also another principle is - what does he give from? We learn that from the parable in Luke of the Rich men and the widow, that went to the Temple. The widow that gave two pennies gave more in the eyes of God than the rich that gave from their surplus. This principle is important when we give.

So, when we say "measure against measure", it is not a mathematical measure of how much you gave in relationship of what you will receive, but how much in relationship of what you can give, and of what you ought to give, and in what kind of state of your heart you did the giving. All these things come into play when we talk about "measure for measure". It is not a mathematical formula, like an interest in the bank that you get on deposit of your savings, you know that you will get 9% interest. It is more to do with the total picture of you being in relationship to God as of what measure you will receive from what measure you give. It is even more complicated than what I am trying to make it in this teaching.

I am going to continue reading the following passage of the Talmud which goes back to the Mishnah. We have here what's called an opening statement, **optichtah**, with a quotation from the Mishnah. What was the Mishnah talking about? In all these sections the last four or five lessons we were dealing with a Mishnah that states who is going to have eternal life, and who will lose eternal life? One of the people that will lose their portion in the world to come are the heretics, the **apikorus** in Hebrew. So, in continuing with this section, we will deal with the question of who is an **apikorus**?

R. Akiba said; Also he who reads uncannical books [In Hebrew 'outside books', apocryphal books]. A Tanna taught [here they are bringing in a Braita, an source outside of the Mishnah, from some anonymous Rabbi, in the period before 210 AD] [This means] the books of the Sadducees.

What uncannical books is he talking about? The books of the Sadducees that this Tanna taught about were the uncannical books. Now this is a very strange thing, because by the time of R. Akiba there were no more Sadducees, say in any kind of function, or surviving in fact, as a group. Rashi explains that the books of the Sadducees are the books of those who blaspheme or deny the living God. The Soncino commentary which is eclectic or draws from different Jewish sources says: 'This probably refers to the works of the Judeo-Christians, i.e. the New Testament. There were no Sadducees after the destruction of the Temple, so 'Sadducees' is probably a censor's emendation for sectarians of Gentiles. (He gives references, and one of the references from Herford, the title of his book, written at the turn of the century was *Christianity in the Talmud*, p. 333, on which Herford emends the reading here not Sadducees, but **Minim**, meaning the believers in Jesus, sectarians).

So here you have a statement, that a Tanna brings,

that he who reads the sectarian books, the New Testament, loses his portion in the world to come. We have R. Akiba, by the way, making the similar statement in his name in the Talmud, in which he states: 'Anybody who reads the **Evangelionim**, and he pronounces it **Avon Gilayon**, which means sinful pages'. So R. Akiba says, anybody who reads the sinful pages, referring of course to the Jewish-Christian writings, which are the New Testament, he will lose his portion in the world to come.

R. Joseph said: It is also forbidden to read the book of Ben Sira [The Wisdom of Ben Sira, which is one of the apocryphal books, and this opens the discussion] Abaye said to him: Why so? Shall we say because there is written therein, 'Do not strip the skin [of a fish] even from its ear, lest thou spoil it, but roast it [all, the fish with the skin] in the fire, and eat therewith two [twisted] loaves'?

What's bothering Abaye? It's bothering him, what's wrong with the book of Ben Sira, why shouldn't we read the book of Ben Sira? This opens up a whole interesting discussion of the relationship of the Rabbis to the apocryphal writings. We know for sure, that in the first century, 1 century BC and 1 century AD, the apocryphal books were very popular reading among Jews. They were literature written in Greek in the Diaspora, not in the Land of Israel, and people considered them the bestsellers of the day. So, when there was the reaction, after the destruction of the Temple, against the Hellenization of the Jewish community, that these books were also forbidden, because they were considered liberal or Hellenistic. As a result of that R. Akiba, who was a convert to Judaism from the pagan world, becomes more radical, and said, that anybody who reads these books has lost in the world to come. Abaye in the Babylon later says: "Why? We have been reading these books..." Basically a person wouldn't say why, unless he has been reading the books. He says: "We have been reading these books as a part of our corpus of

literature, Jewish literature of the period, why are they forbidden?" So he brings up the idea that maybe because what had been written in Ben Sira was not to skin the fish, but roast the fish whole. Maybe this was understood by the Rabbis as an injunction against wasting food, because if you rip the skin you can rip part of the flesh, and so burn part of it in the fire, and so it is a waste. But that's the opinion of Abaye. The Rabbis reply to Abaye: 'But in the Torah we have the same instructions.

Now, if [you object to it in] its literal sense, the Torah too states, Thou shalt not destroy the trees thereof.

This is a very interesting verse from the book of Deuteronomy, that you shall not destroy the trees thereof, and in Hebrew it is complicated, cause the reason given is **ki haAdam ets hasade**, for man is like tree of the field, and so you should not destroy trees of the field as you shouldn't destroy men.

I am going to conclude this discussion by saying, we see here already in the Talmud the enmity, the beginning of the rift, that started already in the days of R. Akiba between the writings of the early Church and the Jewish community, in which they say **apicorus**, the heretic is any one who reads in the writings of the believers, the writings of the sectarians, the Jewish Christians. That's how the commentators of the nineteenth century interpreted it. We see Herford, who is a Christian, interpreted it that way. The rift came between the two communities because the Messianic Jews did not participate with R. Akiba in the Bar-Kokchba rebellion. R. Akiba developed quite a mean attitude towards them, because of their rejection of his false messiah, Bar Kokchhba.

The Talmud then continues with the discussion of the value of women, the value of having sons over daughters, and we are going to skip this section and

go to another section that deals with the idea that we had above, who is an **apicorus**. On page 101 a. It states:

Our Rabbis taught: He who recites a verse of the Song of Songs and treats it as a [secular] air, and one who recites a verse at the banqueting table unseasonably, brings evil upon the world. Because the Torah girds itself in sack cloth, and stands before the Holy One, blessed be He, and laments before Him, 'Sovereign of the Universe! Thy children have made me as a harp upon which they frivolously play.' He replies, 'My daughter, when they are eating and drinking, wherewith shall they occupy themselves?' To which she rejoins, 'Sovereign of the Universe! If they possess Scriptural knowledge, let them occupy themselves with the Torah, the Prophets and the Writings; if they are students of the Mishnah, with Mishnah, **halachot**, and **haggadot**; if students of the Talmud, let them engage in the laws of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles on the respective Festivals. R. Simeon b. Eleazar testified on the authority of R. Simeon b. Hanina: He who reads a verse in season [as just defined] brings good to the world, as it is written, **and a word spoken in season, how good is it.** [quoted from Proverbs chapter 15 verse 23.]

I want to analyze this a little bit. Who is the heretic? One who reads from the Songs of Songs secularly, as a secular song, or recites it like a joke in the banquet table unseasonably, he is a heretic. In other words, the use of scripture secularly in a banquet or on a party and making fun of the Scripture is considered heretical, taking lightly the Scriptures. Now, this is a very interesting discussion, because the Rabbis themselves in the generation of R. Akiba and his teachers discussed, when they were in Jamnia, **Yavne** in Hebrew, whether the Songs of Songs at all should be in the Bible or not. Many did not believe that it should be in the Bible. They thought that the Song of Songs should not be in the Bible, because it was secular music, secular

love songs. So there was a fight to keep it in the Scriptures, and R. Akiba was one of the many people who fought. It says that he went up to the attic of his house, to the roof of his house, and he stayed there until he explained every verse of the Song of Songs and when he came down he said that the Song of Songs is holier than any other book, more holy than any other book in the Bible. With this R. Akiba, according to the Jewish sources was able to keep the Song of Songs as a part of the Canon. What he did basically was to make an allegory of it, instead of making talk about man and woman and love between man and woman, he made it, that the man is God and the woman is Israel. He made the Song of Songs a story of the relationship of God with Israel by allegorizing it. Allegorizing is a pagan thing of Akiba's former days. He was very astute in allegorical interpretation, like all the Greeks of his day, and by allegorizing the book of Song of Songs he was able to make it stay in the Canon. Of course all these discussions were theoretical, but there were discussions, where Rabbis try to explain to themselves, why these books are there. So R. Akiba was instrumental in keeping the Songs of Songs in the cannon.

So the Rabbis after R. Akiba, the *ammoraim*, that lived after the conclusion of the Mishnah, are discussing now, what it means when he says: 'Using the Scripture secularly makes you a heretic.' They bring a very interesting parable, that the Torah is now before God as a person. They make it anthropomorphic, they make the Torah like a human being. The Torah is now in the presence of God and laments before him, saying: 'Sovereign of the Universe! Thy children have made me as a harp upon which they play frivolously'. In other words, they use me as musical instrument for their parties, as an frivolous entertainment for their parties. So God replies: 'My daughter, when they are eating and drinking, what should they do?' The Greek banquet, on which upon our Passover Seder is based, the format was, that they had first orders, and then

they had questions and answers, in which were witty jokes, an entertainment of wisdom. In other words, they entertain themselves with all kinds of riddles, with all kinds of questions. We see that already in the Philistine period. In the banquet that Dalila made for Samson, he put a riddle to the Philistines, and they had to answer this riddle, and that was a cultural Greeceo-Roman thing to do in the dinners, poetry and entertainment. It was before they had television. So, God answers to the Torah, saying: 'My daughter, what do you want for my children, that they should occupy themselves when they eat and drink?' To which the Torah rejoins: 'Sovereign of the Universe! If they possess Scriptural knowledge, let them occupy themselves with the Torah, and with the Prophets, and with the Writings.' Here you have the division, the TaNaCh, **Torah, Neveem, Ktuvim** - Torah, Prophets and Writings. '... and if they are students of Mishnah, with Mishnah, *halachoth, and haggadoth*, but if they are students of the Talmud, let them engage in the laws of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles..'

We know that this allegory of God and the Torah talking to each other was written certainly after the Mishnah, and probably in the late Amoraic period. Then they bring this statement of R. Simeon b. Hanina, who said, that anytime that you can bring a word in its right place, in its right context, in an honorable setting, a quotation from the word of God, you've done a good thing to the world, as it is written, and a word spoken in season, how good is it, it is like apples of gold on trays of silver. That's the second half of the quotation from the book of Proverbs.

Again we see here the discussion of who is the heretic, and we see that a heretic is one who reads the New Testament. We see that the heretic is one who misuses, misquotes, in the wrong places, in the wrong contexts the word of God.

The Talmud also continues to discuss the same issue of

who is an **apicorus**, and says it like this:

Also he who whispers over a wound etc. R.Johanan said: But only if he expectorates in doing so, because the Divine Name may not be expressed in conjunction with expectoration.

Where expectoration in plane English is spitting. He says, who is a heretic? The one who whispers over a wound in order to see a healing, and at the same time he spits. While he says the Name of God he spits, and he uses the spittle as a means of healing. The footnote here in the Sonsino edition is interesting. It says like that: In uttering a charm one generally expectorated, the charm itself being usually a Biblical verse containing the Name of God. The actual enchantment was done by means of the Biblical verse. A similar kind of enchantment was practiced by the Essines. In the opinion of some scholars, expectoration was the essential part of the charm, and L. Blau maintains that **ורוקק** (expectorates) belongs to the original text of the Mishnah.

Now, this becomes even more interesting, if we take into account the story of the healing of the blind man that appears in John chapter 9. We read in John chapter 9 verse 2 that the disciples of Jesus come to him saying.

'And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither hath this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him. I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night cometh, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay, And said unto him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent) He went his way

therefore, and washed, and came seeing'.

Now, here you have a case, in which Jesus prompted by the question of his disciples meets this blind man, spits on the ground, mixes the clay, puts it on the blind man eyes, and sends him to the pool of Siloam to wash, and when he comes back, this man was able to see. At first sight, if we compare this statement of R. Johanan of the Mishnah, it sounds like that's exactly what Yeshua did. That he spat and he put mud, he didn't whisper, as far as we know, anything upon this man, he didn't make an incantation of some verse upon this man along with the spittle, but at least he spat and mixed it with the mud. Now, the discussion, that ensues, that continues from the Rabbis on this issue, makes it even more interesting.

It has been said, Rab declared: Even [the verse], When the plague of leprosy.. [talking about a verse from Leviticus chapter 13 verse 9 that contains the Divine name, and may be used like a formula for healing, even this verse is forbidden] R. Hanina said: Even, And he called unto Moses. [In other words, even invoking the name of Moses for purposes of healing is forbidden].

Our Rabbis taught: One may oil and massage the bowels [of an invalid] on the Sabbath, and snakes and serpents may be charmed [to render them tame and harmless] on the Sabbath, and an article may be placed over the eye on the Sabbath [to protect it]. R. Simeon b. Gamaliel said: This applies only to articles which may be handled [This applies to a key, food-knife, a ring and other such articles, that may be handled by a person even on the Sabbath]; but those that which may not be handled are forbidden; [In other words, things that are forbidden to be handled on the Sabbath, like working tools, are forbidden to be used, even to be put on the eye on a sick person] nor may demons be consulted on the Sabbath. R. Jose said: This is forbidden even on week-days. [In other words, forbidden to consult demons even on week-days, obviously it is also on the Sabbath forbidden to

consult demons]. R. Huna said: The halachah is not as R. Jose, and even he said it only on account of its danger, as in the case of R. Isaac b. Joseph, who was swallowed up in a cedar tree, but a miracle was wrought for him, the cedar splitting and casting him forth.

He is talking about the story that happen to R. Isaac b. Joseph, somehow he got caught in the cedar tree, and he consulted the demons, it happen on the Sabbath, and the cedar tree splits and releases the man from its grips. So you have two opinions, more ancient opinion that you not even suppose to use demons in healing, and another opinion that says: you can use healing, because we have this story about R. Joseph, who used demons in healing, makes an incantation of the names of demons when he was caught in the cedar tree, and the cedar tree split and released him. So it was a miracle that happens, and therefore it's allowed.

It is interesting that the whole discussion here is ensuing, coming forth from the permission that Rabbis taught that the bowels may be oiled and massaged on the Sabbath, if this is not done as on the week-days. In other words, you should make it in some way that when you put on the medicine and massage the body that it be not like it is done usually. For the Sabbath you have to distinguish from the normal way of doing it, and the suggestion that R. Johanan in the end is that you put the oil while you are massaging, not put the oil first and then massage, but while you are massaging at the same time put the oil, that makes it OK. So you can massage and do healing on the Sabbath day with oil, and comfort the sick person on the Sabbath day.

Of course, these Rabbis were not the same Rabbis that Yeshua was talking about. These are Rabbis who lived a couple of hundred years later or more. In the mean time, of course, what Yeshua did was perfectly OK. Why? He didn't use the Name of God, he didn't

make an incantation, he strictly put mud and spittle on the eyes of the person and told him go and wash in the pool of Siloam. There is no incantation involved here, so one can not accuse Jesus, Yeshua, using incantation or charms for the purpose of healing, like these Rabbis were doing, calling verses with the Holy Name of God, pronouncing the Name of God, and at the same time spitting and putting all kinds of items on the persons eye for the purpose of healing.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 15

by Joseph Shulam

We are in lesson number 15, we are continuing in Babylonian Talmud tractate Sanhedrin p. 101 a. We are dealing still with the issue of the Messiah in the Talmud, and we have come to this section with the issues of dealing with devine healing, and we saw in the last lesson some connections between the ways that Yeshua healed and what the Rabbis described for healing, what they allow, what they forbid. Now we have come to an interesting section that deals with R. Eliezer. The Talmud in a number of sources and locations and tractates oftentimes mentions R. Eliezer, who fell sick. There are numerous stories of R. Eliezer falling sick. Let me just read two of them quickly and then read another one from another tractate. So I am going to read now from p. 101 a in the Babylonian Talmud tractate Sanhedrin.

Rabbah b. bar Hana said: When R. Eliezer fell sick, his disciples entered [his house] to visit him. He said to them, 'There is a fierce wrath in the world.' They broke into tears, but R. Akiba laughed. 'Why dost thou laugh?' they enquired of him 'Why do ye weep?' he retorted. They answered, 'Shall

the Scroll of the Torah lie in pain, and we not weep?' - He replied, 'For that very reason I rejoice. As long as I saw that my master's wine did not turn sour, nor was his flax smitten, nor his oil putrefied, nor his honey become rancid, I thought, God forbid, that he may have received all his reward in this world [leaving nothing for the next]; but now that I see him lying in pain, I rejoice [knowing that his reward has been treasured up for him in the next].' He [R. Eliezer] said to him, 'Akiba, have I neglected anything of the whole Torah?' - He replied, 'Thou, O Master, hast taught us, For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.'

This last verse is taken from Ecclesiastes chapter 7 verse 20. Now continuing with the second story

Our Rabbis taught: When R. Eliezer fell sick, four elders went to visit him, viz. , R. Tarfon, R. Joshua, R. Eleazar b. Azariah, and R. Akiba. R. Tarfon observed, 'Thou art more valuable to Israel than rain; for rain is [precious] in this world, whereas thou art [so] for this world and the next. R. Joshua observed, 'Thou art more valuable to Israel than the sun's disc: the sun's disc is but for this world, whilst my master is for this world and the next. ' T. Eleazar b. Azariah observed, 'Thou art better to Israel than a father and a mother: these are for this world, whereas my master is for this world and the next. ' But R. Akiba observed, 'Suffering is precious.' Thereupon he [the sick man] said to them, 'Support me, that I may hear the words of Akiba, my disciple, who said, "Suffering is precious. " Akiba,' queried he, 'whence dost thou know this?' - He replied, 'I interpret a verse: Mannasseh was twelve years old when he began to reign, and he reigned fifty and five years in Jerusalem etc. and he did that which evil in the sight of the Lord. (2 Kings 21:1) Now it is [elsewhere] written, These are also the proverbs of Solomon, which the men of Hezekiah king of Judah copied out. (Proverbs 25:1) Now would Hezekiah

king of Judah have taught the Torah to the whole world, yet not his own son Manasseh? But all the pains he spent upon him, and all the labours he lavished upon him did not bring him back to the right path, save suffering alone, as it is written, And the Lord spoke to the Manasseh and to his people: but they would not hearken unto him. Wherefore the Lord brought upon them the captains of the host of the king of Assyria, which took Manasseh among the thorns, and bound him with fetters, and carried him to Babylon. And it is further written, And when he was in affliction, he besought the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, And prayed unto him, and he was entreated of him, and heard his supplication, and brought him again to Jerusalem unto his kingdom, and Manasseh knew that the Lord he was God. Thus thou learnest how precious is suffering.

This last is a quotation from the 2 Chronicles chapter 33 verse 10 and following. We saw now two different stories about R. Eliezer falling sick. There are a lot of things in common in these stories. First of all, there are two main figures in both of these stories that the Talmud brings. One is R. Akiba, who seems to be the bright, smart, intelligent disciple of R. Eliezer, second one is R. Eliezer. In both stories we see another point that is in common, in both stories R. Akiba has a completely different prospective then the rest of the Rabbis. In both stories R. Eliezer, who was sick is interested to hear R. Akiba's viewpoint. In other words, these stories were not written here to tell us how sick R. Eliezer was, but how smart, intelligent R. Akiba was in comparison with the other Rabbis who were there - with R. Tarfon and R. Eleazar b. Azariah, and R. Joshua. It is interesting to note the interesting conceptual things that these stories bring.

In the first story all the disciples of R. Eliezer cried. Why? They said: 'How could we see the Scroll of the Torah lie in sick and not cry about?' R. Akiba

laughed. It is an interesting thing, because we know, that R. Akiba's character was very very different. When all of Israel on the 9th of Av, **tisha b'Av**, was mourning the destruction of the first Temple and the destruction of the second Temple, R. Akiba also laughed and rejoiced and celebrated it. So, when they asked him: 'Why are you rejoicing and celebrating, when all of Israel is fasting and mourning for the destruction of the Temple?' His answer was 'As the promise of God to destroy the Temple was fulfilled, we also know that his promise to rebuild it will be fulfilled'. So, R. Akiba's perspective on many things was very different then the rest of the Rabbis, and we see this in these stories. When all the Rabbis are weeping for R. Eliezer's sickness, he laughs, he comes rejoicing, and his prospective is interesting. He says: 'Listen, till now I haven't seen R. Eliezer suffer, and if I don't see him suffer I have a fear, that may be he is receiving the reward of all the good that he has done now, in this life. Therefore now, when I see him sick, then I know, he is paying for some of his sin in this world, and all of his good that he has done is stored for him for the world to come'. We are going to talk about this concept, because this is a very New Testament concept. Very different of what we are used to think on this prospective.

The second story has some similarity. Again, R. Eliezer is falling sick. He must been a very sickly man, this R. Eliezer, because as I've said there are many stories in the Talmud and Jewish sources, that talk about R. Eliezer falling sick. Four of his disciples come, among them R. Akiba. Three of these disciples praise R. Eliezer, saying that he is like the rain for Israel, he is like the sun for Israel, he is better then the father and mother for Israel, and of course, the point that they all bring is that the sun is for this world, the rain is four this world, father and mother are for this world, but R. Eliezer is also has benefit to the world to come. Not just for now, but later in the world to come. R. Akiba

comes in and instead of saying this platitude, this great compliment to R. Eliezer on his sick bed, he says: 'Suffering is precious.' 'Oh, how wonderful that you are suffering!' He comes to the sick man and says to him: 'Listen, it's wonderful that you are suffering'. The other Rabbis are shocked, they don't know how to understand this, and R. Akiba doesn't explain it until R. Eliezer rises from his sick bed and says: 'Let me hear what you have said R. Akiba. Why are you saying "Suffering is precious"?' Then R. Akiba brings two verses, one verse from 2 Kings chapter 21 verse 1, talking about Manasseh going to exile, and then another verse from 2 Chronicles, that we had mentioned before, talking about Manassiah coming back from exile to Jerusalem. R. Akiba says like this: 'I interpreted these two verses to mean that the suffering that Hezekiah had, and the suffering that Manassiah had that took him out to the *Galut*, was not because they were evil people, but because they were righteous people. Like in the verse that was spoken in the first story that is taken from Ecclesiastes, *For there is not a just man upon the earth, that doeth good and sinneth not.*

In other words, we are not talking now about people who are suffering because they are evil people, we are talking now, R. Akiba says, about the suffering of the righteous, like R. Eliezer, like Manassiah king of Judah. Their suffering is for the purpose of allowing them in the world to come to inherit only good. The formula that is behind these two stories is the same formula that is behind the story of rich man and Lazarus in the gospel of Luke. The formula is that the righteous people pay for the evil that they do in this world. When they come to the judgment day of the world to come all they have is reward, without any blemish, because whatever blemish they have they already have paid for by their own suffering in this world. Suffering, the Talmud says, smoothes out sin. It offsets sin. We see this, by the way, in the New Testament, not only in the story of the rich man

and Lazarus, which we will elaborate upon later, also an epistle of James. In chapter 5 verses 13 and 15 of James we read: *' Is any among you afflicted [suffering] let him pray. Is any merry let him sing psalms [praise]. Is any sick among you let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him'*. It seems here to indicate that the suffering of this man came as the result of his sin. The prayer of the elders and the anointing of the elders brings forth healing, and his sins are forgiven. For there is a relationship between the believer, (we are talking about the believers now, not unbelievers,) between his suffering on earth and his relationship to God, and the cause - sin. The believer falls sick, he calls the elders, and they come and anoint the believer with oil, and the believer's sins are forgiven by the prayer, by the anointing of oil, and of course, the implication is here, by the sickness, by his affliction, and the affliction brings forgiveness of his sin.

That's a very similar concept to the one we read here, the one that R. Akiba brings, the concept is reiterated that in this world the righteous suffer. Why? Since there is no righteous in this world that sins not. The deeds of a righteous man may be very good, but he will surely have some sin. Jewish literature recognizes that the opposite is also true. There is no one that is evil that doesn't do some good. So, of course any good that the person does has to receive his reward in eternity, because if he is in the eternal hell, when will the evil man receive his reward? The answer is in this world, like we see in the story of Lazarus. The rich man lived in wealth, Lazarus was poor, he suffered in this world, he ate the crumbs off the rich man's table, but in the world to come Lazarus was rewarded in the bosom of Abraham. The rich man was in hadies,

in hell, and when he asks for Lazarus to come Abraham tells him: 'You have already received your reward in your life time. Lazarus suffered. So now, Lazarus is in heaven, in the bosom of Abraham, that what literally the text says, and the rich man is suffering'. This is the concept that R. Akiba brings in relationship to R. Eliezer's sickness.

Now, there is another very interesting story related to the same R. Eliezer, that is recorded in the Babylonian Talmud in the tractate **Avodah Zarah** p. 16b and 17a. I am reading this story now.

The Rabbis have handed down the following: When R. Eliezer was about to be imprisoned on account of heresy [**Minuth**, a leaning towards the forbidden Christian religion], he was brought to the [Roman] court of justice to be tried.

One must point out here that during the early part of the second century and the first century for sure, the Romans had a few religions that were legal, or recognized by the Roman Empire as legal religions, they were called **religolisica**. No new religions were allowed to be brought into Rome or into the area of the Empire. Judaism was one of this **religolisica**, and the Early Church very much wanted to remain under the auspices of the Jewish Synagogue, because they didn't want to be considered a new religion and not have any rights. When we read the books of Acts, we see that Paul constantly says to the Romans and to the Jewish court: 'I brought nothing new. What I am teaching, that what the Law and the Prophets teach. It is not a new religion, we are talking about the old time religion, the same religion that Moses and the Prophets were teaching'. That was the situation in the days of the early part of the second century, the days of R. Akiba and R. Eliezer. So R. Eliezer was brought to the Roman court, being accused of having a new religion. We continue reading.

The judge said to him: Does a man of mature years like

thee busy himself with such nullities? Eliezer replied; The Judge is just towards me.

This is a play on words. He doesn't say which judge, the Roman judge, or the Judge in Heaven. 'The judge is OK', he says.

The judge thought that Eliezer was speaking of him; but he thought upon his Father in heaven. Then spake the judge: Since I believe thee, thou art acquitted. Now when Eliezer came home, his disciples presented themselves to console him, but he admitted no consolation. Then R. Akiba said to him: Permit me to tell thee something of what thou hast taught me. He answered: Say on. Then said R. Akiba: Perchance thou hast once given ear to a heresy, which pleased thee; on account of which thou wast now about to be imprisoned for heresy. Eliezer replied: Akiba, thou remindest me, I was once walking in the upper street of Sepphoris; there I met with one of the disciples of Jesus the Nazarene, by the name Jacob of K'phar S'khanya [By the way the K'phar S'khanya today is the Arab village of Sachnin in the middle of the Gallile.] who said to me: It is found in your law (Deut. 23:19) "Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore... into the house of... thy God. " May a retiring place for the high-priest be made out of such gifts? I knew not what to answer him to this. Then he said to me: Thus Jesus of Nazareth taught me: "Of the hire of an harlot hath she gathered them, and unto the hire of an harlot shall they return" (Mic. 1:7). From offal it has come; to the place of offal shall it go. This explanation pleased me, and on this account have I been impeached for heresy, because I transgressed the Scripture: "Remove thy way far from her" (Prov. 5:8), from her, i. e. from heresy.

Now, this story is complex. This is one version of this story. It appears in other places as well in Talmud, with differences in version. For the sake of time I am not going to get into the differences of

versions, but I am going to try to collate this story together, and tell it in my own plain words.

R. Eliezer was asked by a disciple of Jesus Christ by name of Jakob, that lives in the Galilee in the village calls Sachnin or S'khanya, in the Talmudic Byzantine period, and he has asked him **hallachic** question. The question was: 'What shall we do with the tithes that a whore brings, or a man who raises dogs, when he sells the dogs, and he wants to give the tenth to the Lord, as the Torah commands. What shall we do with this money, because it says in the Torah: *'Thou shalt not bring the hire of a whore, of the price of a dog into the house of the Lord thy God...'* These commands are from the Torah, and so therefore the hallachic question. On one hand, when it's commanded in Deuteronomy chapter 23 verse 19 not to bring the price of a dog or a hire of a harlot into a Temple of God. On the other hand all of Israel is commanded to tithe, to give money to the Temple of God, to come and offer sacrifices into the Temple of God. So, how can a harlot, who is a part of Israel, or a man who raises dogs, who is a part of Israel, give his tithe. This is a hallachic question, a kind of dilemma.

So, R. Eliezer had asked this disciple of Jesus: 'What would your Master say on this hallachic problem?' The disciple of Jesus says: 'I heard, that my master say that this money came from the filth, let it go to the filth. Build a bathroom for the high-priest'. The bathroom is something impure, the money came from impurity - the price of a dog or a hire of a harlot. So, that's how you resolve the hallachic question. You still allow them to give the tithe, but then you use it for something that is still connected to the Temple and to the high-priest, but something impure - the bathroom for the high-priest.

R. Eliezer was impressed when he heard this hallacha, this teaching of Jesus. There is no trace of it in the New Testament, but we know that Jesus had taught

many things that we don't have recorded in the New Testament. Some of them are recorded in apocryphal gospels and other things. So, R. Eliezer was so impressed with this teaching of Jesus, that he was caught in heresy. In other words he was so impressed with Jesus, that he became, accused at least, of believing in Christianity, and for that he was brought to court in front of a Roman Magistrate. Now, who prys this information out of him? R. Akiba. Again the story comes here to show, how great Akiba was, that he was able to remind or admonish his teacher, not considering that actually R. Akiba is taking the side of the Roman court. Saying that it is impossible that you'd been accused for nothing. There had to be some reason why you had been accused. So, R. Eliezer remembers this encounter that he had with Jacob from K'phar S'khanya, and we see the same pattern, that we saw in tractate Sanhedrin.

I think we have to study another story in the next lesson, related to R. Eliezer and R. Akiba and Jesus and his teaching, or at least there is another story of Eleazar ben Dama, another Rabbi, who has a similar experience with healing and Jesus.

Yeshua in the Talmud

Lesson 16

by Joseph Shulam

We are continuing to study the Messiah in the Talmud. In the last lesson we studied the section from the Babylonian Talmud tractate ***Avoda Zarah*** p. 16 b and 17 a, which deal with R. Eliezer, who was imprisoned on account of heresy. Here heresy meaning that he believed in Jesus. Now we are going to study another story, also about R. Eliezer, but this time not about the R. Eliezer ben Horkinus, the earlier

Rabbi, who was the pupil of Johanan ben Zakkai and a teacher of R. Akiba. But now we are going to study about later Rabbi, R. Eliezer ben Dama, but both of the stories have some similarity. This time it is not going to be from the Babylonian Talmud, but from the Jerusalem Talmud, tractate Shabbat, section D. Let me read the text in its entirety and then try to analyze it before we come back to our section in Babylonian Talmud tractate Sanhedrin p. 101.

It happened that R. Eliezer b. Dama was bitten by a serpent. Then came Jacob of K'phar Sama, to heal him in the name of Jesus Pandera. But R. Ishmael suffered him not. Eliezer said to him: I will bring thee a proof, that he has a right to heal me. But he had no more time to utter the proof: for he died. R. Ishmael said to him: Blessed art thou, ben Dama, that you went in peace from this world, and did not break through a fence of a sage, because it is written: 'And whoever breaks through a fence, a serpent shall bite him,' not, a serpent has bitten him, but [it means that] a serpent should not bite him in the time to come.

This story appears again in a different version in the Babylonian Talmud, but let us try to understand and to analyze the version from the Palestinian or the Jerusalem Talmud, the way it is called today, that is a little bit earlier than the Babylonian Talmud. We have again a story of a healing, sometime toward the late second century. So R. Eliezer was bitten by a serpent, and there comes a person by the name Jacob from Galilean village called K'phar Sama, and he proposes to heal R. Eliezer in the name of Jesus. It is said here 'Jesus Pandera'. The term Pandera is a bit complicated, but we will try to explain a little bit for this lesson, and maybe in subsequent lesson we can deal with it more extensively. It developed in Jewish tradition, mainly in late second and third century, that Jesus was the son of a Roman soldier, that his mother was really Miriam, and his father was not the Holy Spirit, the way Christians reported, and the New Testament states it, but his father was a

Roman soldier by the name of Pandera. This tradition continues over into the Byzantine period in the fourth and fifth century, and there are many discussions of who is the father of Jesus.

There are passages in the Talmud that report that the father of Jesus was a man Judah b. Papos. Another passage reports that he is a person by name of Ben Stadah, there is another passage that reports that his father was a Roman soldier by the name of Pandera. So in this passage, that is reported by the name of R. Eliezer b. Dama, the writer of the Jerusalem Talmud states here that the Jacob, the comes out of the village K'phar Sama in the Galilee, proposing to heal R. Eliezer from the snake bite in the name of Jesus Pandera. Now, where is the origin of the name Pandera. It is reported by Joseph Klausner, and also by other Jewish scholars, that are experts of the Second Temple period, that what we have here really is a later warping of the Greek term **Parthenos**. **Parthenos** in Greek means virgin. The Parthenon in Athens is the house of Athena, the ethereal virgin, the Goddess of Greece, her name was Athena, and her title was Parthane, which means virgin, and her house was called the Parthenon, and it stands until today. So when Jacob is described here as a disciple of Jesus, the name of Jesus is given as Pandera, because it became known, and his reputation in the Jewish world was, whether it was with tongue in cheek or not, that he is the son of the virgin. Slowly slowly, within as the Jewish community separated itself from the Greko-Roman world and leaned more and more towards Aramaic and towards eastern world, Babylonian culture, and the centers of Jewish learning were moved to Babylon, then the Greek term Parthenos became Pandera, because some letters in Greek can not be pronounced in Hebrew or Aramaic. Later generations supposed, that Pandera was a Roman soldier, because Pandera is like the word Pander in modern English.

So we have this report of the Talmud, about the person

by the name of Jacob from a village in the Galilee, sometime in the second century is coming to propose to R. Eliezer b. Dama, who was bitten by a serpent, a healing by the name of Jesus. This in itself is a very interesting historical note, because we have here a famous Rabbi in the Galilee, and a Jew by name of Jacob, who was a disciple of Jesus. This Rabbi Eliezer brings the opinion, that there is power of healing in the name of Jesus. The fact that they allow or entertain the possibility that R. Eliezer can be healed in the name of Jesus means, that the Jewish believers in Yeshua have a reputation in the Jewish community in the Galilee, that there is healing power in the name of Jesus. That is in the second century. This man Jacob is brought and proposes to heal R. Eliezer. The disciple of R. Eliezer R. Ishmael comes and says: 'Don't let him do it, don't let this Jacob heal you in the name of Jesus'. And R. Eliezer's words here in the Talmud are: 'I will bring you a proof that he has the right to heal me'. We don't know what proof it was, but for R. Eliezer b. Dama, like for R. Eliezer b. Horkinus, for both of them in the second century they have a relationship to some degree with Jews who believe in Jesus. That come and go in front of them, and in fact have developed a reputation that there can be healing in the name of Jesus. It is undeniable that R. Eliezer thinks not only that there can be healing in the name of Jesus, but also that he can bring proof that it is OK that there is a right this Jacob has to heal him in the name of Jesus.

This is a very interesting historical note, because today, after 2000 years of Christianity, we all cope with the problem of how to be Jews and to believe in Jesus at the same time, and not to have a bad relationship with the Orthodox religious Jewish establishment. Here we see, that it is possible, it was possible even in the second century for Jews to have some respect for the disciples of the Jesus Christ in the community.

R. Ishmael of course is here playing a role very similar to R. Akiba in this case. He wants to prevent R. Eliezer b. Dama from appropriating a healing in the name of Jesus. So, according to him, R. Eliezer was lucky, that he died before he got healed. So the words of R. Ishmael were: Blessed art thou, ben Dama, that you went in peace from this world, and did not break through a fence of a sage, because it is written: *'And whoever breaks through a fence, a serpent shall bite him,'* not, a serpent has bitten him, but [it means that] a serpent should not bite him in the time to come. In other words, because the text doesn't fit the occasion, they have to reinterpret the text and say, that he is not referring to the bite that he had in the past, but he is referring to the future, that the snake will not bite him in the life to come. This is an interesting phenomena. You have the time until R. Eliezer b. Dama, and then you have the time from his disciple R. Ishmael after which there is enmity between Jewish establishment and the Jewish disciples of Jesus Christ. More than enmity. The term, that R. Ishmael is using here says, that R. Eliezer was blessed, that he died, he went in peace and did not break through the fence of the sages. This term is very important for us today, because it describes how the Rabbis in the late second century would have looked at the believers. They regard them as those who broke through the fence. That Judaism has a fence around it nobody would argue, that this is a fence that the Rabbis put up, and the believer in Yeshua has broken through the fence. They have gone outside the camp.

This imagery is already hinted at in the New Testament itself. In Hebrews chapter 13 verses 12 and on we read: *'Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate. Let us go forth therefore unto him without the camp, bearing his reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving*

thanks [which make confession] to his name'

The imagery here is in very few words, but the imagery is very clear and associated with many different aspects in the Law of Moses. In the first place, as you see, they are teaching that Jesus was crucified outside the gate, and the call is 'Let us also go outside the gate', outside the camp in his reproach. The original imagery taken from the two distinct Biblical pictures that deal with atonement. The one is, they have atonement in the scapegoat that was taken outside the camp, outside the city gate, and sent into the wilderness to take away the sins of Israel. The second one that also deals with purity and atonement is the red heifer. The red heifer was offered outside the gate, the ashes of the red heifer were taken to a place of purification outside the gate, outside the fence, outside the camp. I am using these different terminologies, because different translations call it differently. So the two major occasions for atonement in Biblical history took place outside the camp. The writer of the book of Hebrews is inviting his readers to be willing to go outside the camp to the place of atonement, not only for their sake, but for the sake of Israel as well, because that's where the atonement is made - outside the camp.

R. Ishmael in this case, when he is praising R. Eliezer for dying before he could be healed in the name of Jesus says: 'You are lucky you died, left this world and you did not break through the fence of the sages. You did not go outside the camp.' That is the imagery that the late second century rabbinical writers have of the Jewish believers. They did not say, 'They are not Jews', but they say, 'They have gone outside the camp, beyond the fence. Now this is interesting that it says 'the fence of the sages', meaning the fence that the Rabbis built. The Torah is considered to be in need of fences, and the Rabbis themselves testify to the fact that their job is **laasot siag la Torah** in Hebrew, to build a fence

around the Torah. So of course that fence is a man made fence, it is not a divinely given fence, even though the Rabbis claim that it is a part of the oral Law, oral tradition. However, basically this is a fence that even the Rabbis themselves in a few of their more sane moments admit that it was something that developed through history, developed through the circumstances in which Judaism was found, but not revealed, like the word of God which is revealed by the Holy Spirit. They claim, that it is something that develops and is constantly developing. This development is a result of the fact that they believed that God gave them the authority to build these fences to protect the Torah. So, it is implied to the Jewish believers here, that they were outside the fence of the sages. They have somehow chosen to go out, according to the writer of the book of Hebrews, chosen to go out together with Jesus, outside the gate of the city for the reason that they would find atonement, the sanctification through the blood of Jesus. They were willing to bear his reproach, according to Hebrews 13:13, outside the camp, outside the community of Israel. Today we are seeing the opposite phenomena. The Jewish believers and many Gentile believers are seeking for ways to return into the camp. In other words, they don't want to be outside the camp but are seeking every way possible to return back into the camp, to come into, to be behind the fence on the inside and not on the outside. That's phenomena that could be wonderful, but it also could be dangerous, if we forget what our calling really is.

The same story, that appears in the Jerusalem Talmud, appears also in the Babylonian Talmud in the tractate **Avodah Zarah** p. 27 b, but the wording there is a little bit different than a wording in the Jerusalem Talmud. This is how it is reported to us in the Babylonian Talmud.

It happened that ben Dama, son of R. Ishmael's sister, was bitten by a serpent. Then came Jacob of **K'phar**

S'kanya to heal him. But R. Ishmael suffered him not. Ben Dama said: R. Ishmael, my brother, allow me to be healed by him, and I will bring thee a verse from the Torah, showing that it is allowed. But he had not time to complete what he was saying: for his spirit departed from him and he died. Then R. Ishmael exclaimed over him: Happy art thou, ben Dama, that thy body is pure and that thy spirit has passed away in purity and that thou hast not transgressed the words of thy companions.

What is revealed in the later edition, that appears in the Babylonian Talmud? It is what ben Dama would have transgressed had he being healed by the name of Jesus. It was not the Torah but the words of his companions which are interpreted in Jerusalem Talmud as the words of the sages. In other words, it had become a social problem to believe in Jesus. The Jewish believers did not want to leave the Jewish community. They wanted to stay in the Jewish community, but there are the Rabbis that have pushed them out of the community and rejected them. Not because they had no power, which is an interesting insight into both of these passages in the Talmud. But rather the Rabbis said, 'Don't allow them to be healed'. The Talmud in both stories reports that there was power of healing in the name of Jesus, and R. Eliezer ben Dama in both of the stories seems to have a Biblical proof for why it is OK to use the name of Jesus for healing. The easiest thing would've been, if R. Ishmael to say: 'Oh, this is a bunch of mumbo-jumbo, no results, no power'. But R. Ishmael doesn't say: 'There is no power in the name of Jesus', rather he admits that there is power in the name of Jesus, but it is better not to use it, because it will defile you body, or tempt your soul.

We have learned a lot of things here. First of all, we learned, that the disciples of Jesus in the first century, and in the second century and into the third century still believed in the promises that the New Testament gives. The promises, that his disciples

will do miracles like He, that they will have the power of the Holy Spirit to heal the sick. This is something that was lost in the tradition of Christianity. Only within the Pentecostal and Charismatic movement, have we seen these things return into the forefront. Many Christians have believed, like people in the Baptist churches, and in the Churches of Christ, and Presbyterians and others that with the end of the Canon of the New Testament all the miraculous works of God stopped, but here we have in the Talmud stories of healing in the name of Jesus, and speaking **halachah** in the name of Jesus, as we saw in the last lesson. Miracles had not ceased. It continued to have power enough so that the enemies of the Gospel, rabbinical Jews, especially in the second century during the Bar Kochba revolt and later could not deny the fact that there is power to heal in the name of Jesus. The Jewish disciples of Jesus in the second century could use this power even to heal the unbelievers.

Today when we see the Pentecostals, and if someone doesn't get healed, they say that he has not enough faith, only believers supposedly get healed. We are seeing here that the power of Jesus, like in the New Testament, could heal unbelievers. The sons, the cousins, the nephews and the Rabbis themselves, were the ones unquestionably healed in the name of Jesus.

